

Innovative traineeship for young Londoners to enter architecture launches and needs industry support

1 year ago



Now in its third year, [Build The Way](#) (BTW) a nine-month architecture traineeship, has launched in London's architecture and built environment sectors. Established as a trial in 2021, the programme aims to help young adults from under-represented groups enter the architecture profession in a more tenable and financially feasible way.

To date, BTW has successfully supported three trainees at three separate studios, and has one programme alumna now formally studying architecture. The 2024/25 programme has now begun with 5 trainees across 5 London-based architecture practices. This year, the scheme has gained momentum, with Camden Council & Brent Cross Town (partnership with Related Argent & Barnet Council) as a local authority funder, and strategic partnerships with Solus Ceramics and Kronospan Foundation.

Now, Build The Way is keen to engage with practices across London to understand why accessible entry-level opportunities such as the Level 6 apprenticeship are so low. Its aim is to shape the traineeship to provide the relevant core workplace and architecture skills required to work in an architecture office and create the ideal candidate for either a Level 6 apprenticeship or an entry level position in practice.

Led by volunteers within five architecture organisations Child Graddon Lewis, HUT, GPAD, Morrow + Lorraine and shedkm, in conjunction with the POoR Collective & the London School of Architecture, the programme's purpose is to provide alternative routes into the industry. More broadly it wants to diversify the profession to ensure cities are designed by those who inhabit them. "Inadequate representation in a profession that designs for diverse community populations, often without a similar lived experience to the

people using their designs, is increasingly problematic”, says Rachael Davidson, Programme Director.

ARB’s 2023 Equality and Diversity survey based on a sample of 77.5% of UK registered architects illustrates that 20% of architects come from minority ethnic backgrounds and only one-third of architects are female. Traditionally, a career in architecture has relied on an individual’s ability to fund multiple university degrees and having connections within the industry. This lack of accessibility, support and diversity is increasingly found to compound negative culture-sensitive solutions with urbanism design.

While there has been an increase in initiatives in the industry to date, there are still few opportunities for young people to be employed in an architectural practice before they have completed higher education. This can lead to further financial and contact network barriers. Build The Way hopes to be a part of the movement and debate around architectural education and training and is looking for industry support in tackling accessible routes.

Level 6 & 7 architecture apprenticeships allow individuals to earn while they learn with four days in practice and one day at university. This initiative has proven successful for Level 7 apprenticeships (postgrad) with many universities and practices offering positions. However, Level 6 apprenticeships (undergrad) are extremely competitive, with fewer employers hiring positions and few universities offering the training. Following the Government’s recently announced budget, the programme coordinator hopes to see a shift in funding and support for SMEs to hire young professionals through schemes such as Build The Way and Level 6 Apprenticeship scheme.

About the traineeship

Running from October to June, the yearly BTW programme provides valuable workplace experience. 37 weeks of a 32-hour week paid at London Living Wage will provide trainees with 1187 hours of practice work experience in a supportive studio setting. With no experience-based barriers to application, places are offered to those who can show a passion, drive and curiosity for design and cities.

Trainees receive creative and technical support, with mentorship by industry professionals [POoR Collective](#) and career advice in-house. By the end of the 9 months, trainees will have acquired vital professional experience and employable skills, an EPQ, an architectural portfolio, technical training, and have made key industry connections.

All trainees are enrolled at the London School of Architecture’s Extended Programme Qualification (EPQ), worth up to 28 UCAS points for higher education. Upon completion, this formalised education component offers the trainees experience in the practice of spatial design as a collective endeavour, with a focus on context and sustainability.

“The most rewarding part of the traineeship so far is having access to a wide range of connections within the industry. Having the privilege of being the first BTW Intern gave me a foundation to build on and I hope will inspire others to take other unconventional routes. I also received support from my colleagues and mentors from POoR so that I can boost my profile”, says Chloe Mawette, the first BTW trainee, who is now studying at the London Metropolitan University.

The programme requires further support from London-based small to medium-sized architecture practices with the equivalent of 50 employees or fewer who are willing to take on trainees. Studios are requested to register their interest in being involved for the 2025/26 intake.

Trainee applicants must be eligible to work in the UK and over the age of 18 years.