

Creating an Inclusive Environment:

A Cultural Review of Professional Services

WHY DO IT?

Bringing in staff from diverse backgrounds is essential for diversity in thought and innovation, therefore making an environment where all feel welcome is paramount. MART has opened up opportunities for honest and open conversations about race, and thinking of new ways to promote inclusion, which has allowed for interesting thought.

"Its been really interesting [it's allowed] a whole new way of looking at things" Quote from interview, Cultural Review

METHODOLOGY

- We invited all Professional Services staff (P.S.s) involved in EDI and MART to be interviewed. We conducted 5 interviews and met with interviewees to form a presentation.
- Invited staff to discuss inclusion in team meetings and create a Padlet
- We then sent the padlet to all P.S.s to complete optional questions where we had just over 80 responses

The Padlet included these 3 questions:

- What does inclusion mean to you?
- Examples of things that have made you feel included
- Things you'd like to see in the School to increase inclusion

What does Inclusion mean to you

- Feeling respected, treated equally and listened to
- Being valued, feeling safe, and free from fear of rejection
- Staff wanted to feel included no matter their demographic, social status, or seniority
- To be included in conversations and decision making

"Embracing uncomfortable conversations"

"Being adaptive to people's invisible disabilities and chronic health conditions
"Seeing yourself represented showing that there's space for you to belong"

"Acknowledge the hardships that some groups face"

"Somewhere where everyone can feel part of the team and everyone having the same chances to succeed"

EXAMPLES OF THINGS THAT HAVE MADE YOU FEEL INCLUDED

- Open support for LGBT+** such as gender neutral toilets, and staff using pronouns in their emails
- Environment **adapting for invisible disabilities and chronic illnesses**
- Existence of groups like MART/ EDI** and getting involved in EDI projects/ seeing them move forward, with projects being published in the newsletter
- Knowing that the School is supportive of flexible arrangements** to support family commitments
- Being able to **express personal beliefs on topics**
- No hierarchical attitudes**, always feel treated with respect and value, and being encouraged to speak in meetings and come to discussion events
- Management and leadership **showing inclusive values**
- Positive action recruitment** pilot with apprentices

FACILITATORS

Le what you should think we do

Improved communication on what EDI work is being done

- Greater online presence
- A bulletin
- Information that you don't have to go out of your way for

Process review

- Diversity in recruitment
- Review of PEEP process
- Clearer/ transparent process for raising complaints

Dedicated time for EDI work and career dev.

- BAME tend to be in lower grades so less opportunities to be mentored
- Dedicating paid time for EDI work

EDI spaces, training and self-reflection

- Open discussions. Recognising different people's backgrounds
- Inclusivity training
 - The university has a duty of care and responsibility, particularly to students
 - Uni lacking an intersectional approach
 - Training on respecting pronouns, neurodiversity and chronic illness
- Self reflection and ownership
 - It's okay to admit what you're lacking knowledge about. That's the only way to learn.
 - Realise that EDI training isn't a one-time course. You're continuously learning

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Terminology

LGBT+ :-standing for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/questioning and other identities
BAME :- standing for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
Cisgender :- someone's gender identity aligns with the sex assigned at birth
Neurodiversity :- Someone who thinks differently from the way the majority expect
Othering :- Where some Individuals or groups are defined and labeled as not fitting in with the social norm
MART :- Medical School Anti-Racism Group
EDI :- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (committee)

THINGS YOU'D LIKE TO SEE IN THE SCHOOL TO INCREASE INCLUSION

Improved Communication on what EDI work is being done

- MART being involved for/with change
- Ensuring inclusive groups are prominent enough
- Adding a bulletin with work that the EDI is/ has done
- Creating a greater online presence to promote greater outreach for minority groups

Process review

- Diversity in recruitment at every level (including changes in written communication, person specifications etc.)
- Review of the PEEP process
- Clearer and more transparent process for raising complaints
 - We want to make it more clear to make a complaint so no one is reluctant to submit one due to confusion
 - And we want to ensure that no one is hesitant to speak up for fear of causing commotion

Support for Professional Services

- BAME are often in lower grade roles meaning they are not being given opportunities to be mentored. Something we can dedicate (paid) time to fix.
- And we wish to support a culture which recognises people have ambitions and goals, as many professional staff are on limited term contracts in common with research staff, hindering progression

EDI spaces, self-reflection and training

- Creating Opportunities for staff to have open discussions
 - Creating better understanding of backgrounds and allow introductions where people can become familiar with one another
- Inclusivity training
 - The university has a duty of care and responsibility with students feeling welcome
 - Recognising that the university lacks an intersectional approach
 - Training on respecting pronouns, neurodiversity and chronic-illness
- Self engagement with EDI
 - There needs to be some self ownership and acknowledge that we are all ignorant in some ways and want to learn
 - Realise that EDI training isn't just a 1-off essential training course, but is a constant learning experience.

Barriers

Naturally, there would be some barriers to in creating an inclusive environment and it is important that we identify them in order to make the process easier.

EDI as emotional labour

- "It's an extra workload and it's extra time[...] it's **emotional labour** to a part of the spaces"
- "lot of the **labour goes on professional services** [...] I want to do the work, but the vast majority of that work doesn't focus on me, my colleagues and the people I see day in, day out.
- "It can be difficult to advocate for yourself [...] I'm afraid there might be some interrogation"

Perceptions of the working environment

- EDI work and professionalism
 - "If I left to go to an EDI discussion, would it be **seen as avoiding work**? Is it a proper part of the work day?"
 - "You don't get these moment where you can talk about wellbeing because you're trying to provide the service"
- perceptions that Professional Services staff are treated differently to academics
 - "I feel like when we talk about inclusivity, it's very academic and student focused and centred. **Professional services can sometimes feel like an afterthought**".
 - "Why put professional services at the end of meeting agendas, why be an afterthought?"

Policies and environment

- Implementation of policy can exclude**
 - "...in the very first days where I met people in person, people weren't expecting me. For example, I had to fill in a risk assessment if the fire alarm went off. Not long after, there was a fire alarm, and I was outside the building quicker than quite a few people. [...] People at the beginning weren't sure of my abilities or life experience. People **now treat me as a normal work colleague** where my disability isn't relevant, just part of who I am"
- Built environment**
 - "things like that [poor accessibility], they **make you stand out**"

Recruitment, and representation

- Lack of representation in the hierarchy, particularly of BAME and LGBT