



Diversity and Inclusion

Actionable Recommendations

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Introduction

Defining the terms

Introduction

This pack outlines guidelines and suggestions when considering implementation of a Diversity and Inclusion policy. Designed by Viable Corporate Services, we intend this resource to be a useful and actionable document to support your internal team in formulating an approach toward implementation of diversity and inclusion in your workforce.

Please note, this pack is by no means a substitute for a Diversity and Inclusion policy, nor is it intended to be a "one-size fits all" solution to Diversity and Inclusion policies. Every organisation has different needs, and every team has different characteristics that need addressed on a firm-specific level. We therefore suggest that you use this pack to inform your thinking and actions when constructing your own Diversity and Inclusion policy in your organisation.

Defining the terms

Before considering a strategic approach to the implementation of a diversity and inclusion policy, it is key to first understand and define the terms.

Diversity

Diversity can be defined as "recognising difference. It's acknowledging the benefit of having a range of perspectives in decision-making and the workforce being representative of the organisation's customers." (CIPD, 2021)

Inclusion

Inclusion can be defined as "where people's differences are valued and used to enable everyone to thrive at work. An inclusive working environment is one in which everyone feels that they belong without having to conform, that their contribution matters and they are able to perform to their full potential, no matter their background, identity or circumstances. An inclusive workplace has fair policies and practices in place and enables a diverse range of people to work together effectively." (CIPD, 2021)

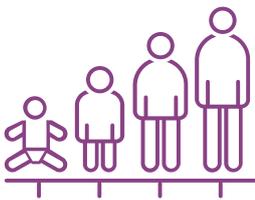
Differences

In both definitions, the importance of "differences" must be emphasised. Often, both diversity and inclusion go hand-in-hand, and whilst they are similar, they are very distinctive practices. It is key to understand what CIPD mean by "differences" before highlighting any recommendations.

Protected Characteristic Groups

The "differences" in the definitions can be defined understand protect characteristic groups. In the UK, under Discrimination Law, there are certain characteristics under which individuals' rights are protected, and any ill-treatment or unfair workplace treatment due to those characteristics can be categorised as discrimination.

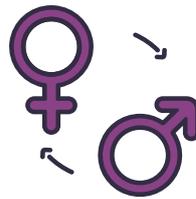
These groups are:



Age



Disability



**Gender
Reassignment**



**Marriage and Civil
Partnership**



**Pregnancy
and Maternity**



Race



**Religion
and Belief**



**Sex and Sexual
Orientation**

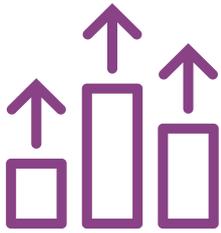
Under discrimination law, it is unlawful to discriminate or ill-treat anyone as a result of any of the above characteristics they may have. For example, an employer cannot discriminate against individuals as a result of being older or younger, having a certain religious belief, or as a result of sexual orientation.

Any attitude in workplace that does discriminate an individual for having certain characteristics is unlawful, and may result in the workplace and employer being held accountable under discrimination law, which may result in legal proceedings, negative corporate reputation and business cost to the organisation.



Why implement Diversity and Inclusion? The benefits

Improves business performance



- Organisations with gender diverse team compositions are 15% more likely to outperform competition that do not embrace diversity and inclusion (McKinsey, 2015).
- Organisations with ethnically diverse team compositions are 35% more likely to outperform competition that do not embrace diversity and inclusion (McKinsey, 2015).

Attracts top talent



- Diverse and inclusive organisations are more likely to attract top talent, which in turn widens their organisational capabilities and drives success (McKinsey, 2015).
- Furthermore, having a diverse workforce improves customer orientation, employee satisfaction and firm decision making, all of which contributes toward overall organisational success (McKinsey, 2015).

Corporate Reputation



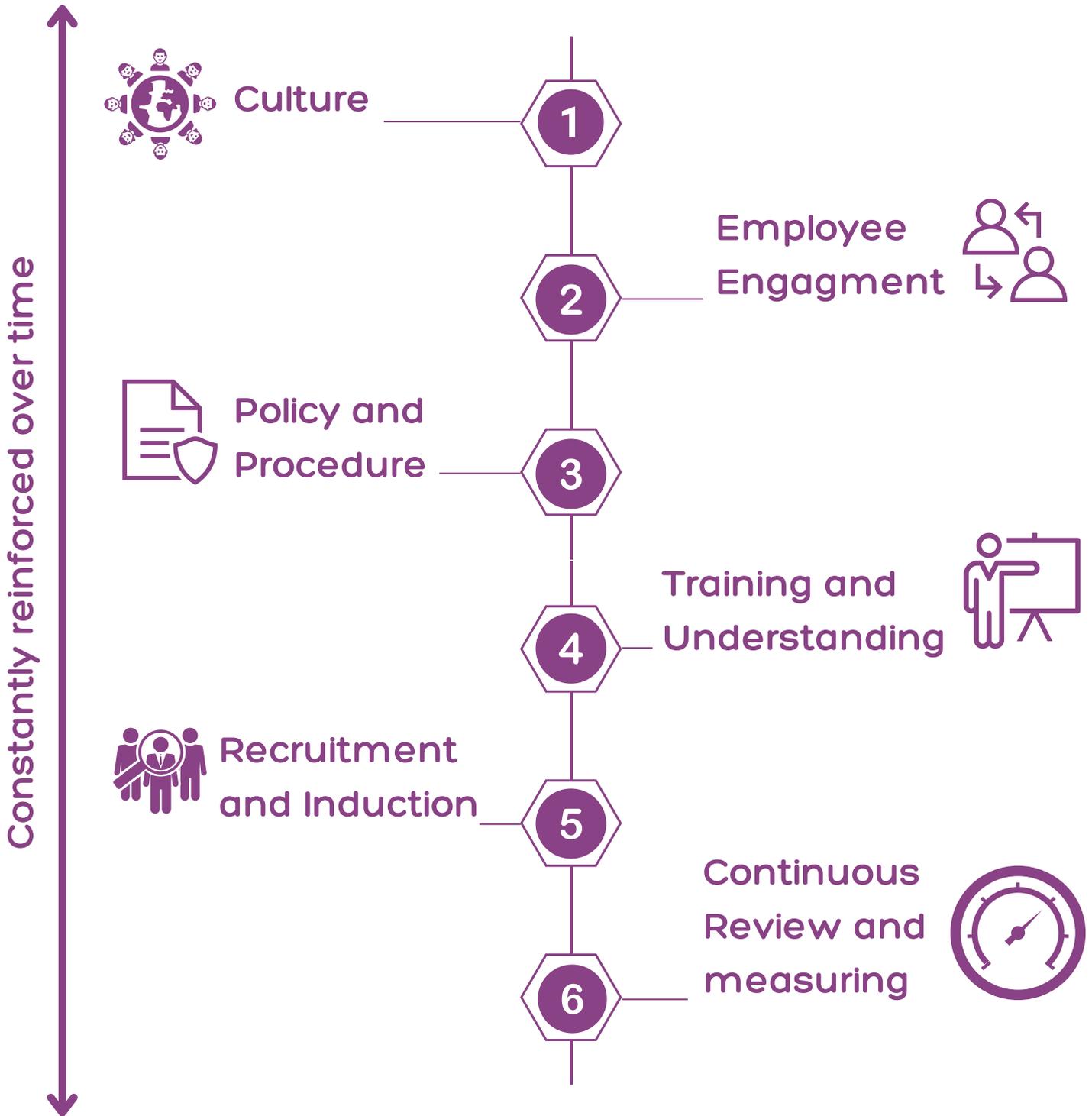
- CIPD highlight the importance of businesses remembering to consider their corporate responsibility (CR).
- Whilst historically organisations view CSR as terms around Pro-Environmentalism, some employers are now moving beyond Planet, and considering how their organisation is perceived and appears.
- Known as employer branding, this approach to business considers the wider benefits that being a diverse and inclusive employer can provide for your organisation.
- Consider Investors in People, and other accreditations that drive diverse workplaces, and how that changes your perception as an individual of that organisation.



Critical Pathway and Actionable Recommendations

Critical Pathway

In reviewing your approach to Diversity and Inclusion, we propose the implementation of the following critical pathway. You should discuss your perspectives and approach to Diversity and Inclusion under each of these areas, in this order, and consider the actions throughout the remainder of this document when formulating your strategic HR approach.



Initiating cultural change:

- A cultural shift must occur from the top down. Senior management must lead the effort, and drive calls for Diversity and Inclusivity behaviours.
- During this period of initial change, senior management should outline
 - An agenda for change.
 - Why the change is happening.
 - What the key milestones are.
 - What the goals and objectives are for the change.
- This helps to eliminate and dissuade feelings of unease in the face of change, and lower the impact of uncertainty (Hofstede, 2001).

Leading by example:

- Acting as effective role models, senior management must adopt inclusive leadership styles, which in turn will lead to staff emulating that behaviour, and drive workplace inclusivity (Nishii and Mayer, 2009; Stoermer, Hildisch and Froese, 2016).
- This helps to eliminate perceived "advantage" and "disadvantaged" groups in the workplace. If employees view that superiors view all the team as equal, then they too will view their peers as equal to themselves, creating equalities and breaking down divides in the workplace (Guillame et al, 2014).
- Put simply, senior management must take ownership of the shift, lead by example and live by the change in approach in order to stimulate change in other subordinates.
- Change required will depend on the current culture and barriers that the current culture creates in relation to Diversity and Inclusion i.e. high power-distance culture, highly masculine or feminine, individualistic or collective? (Hofstede, 2001).

Employee engagement

Surveying, focus groups and employee involvement:

- in order to effectively implement inclusivity, employees must feel included in the implementation process.
- Diversity is no longer just about upholding the rights of minority groups, but now must be about involving everyone in the process toward shared mutual respect for one another.
- Therefore, in any implementation of Diversity and Inclusion policy, both minority and majority groups should be surveyed, diverse focus groups conducted and employee input should be taken in to consideration in the construction of policy, training and firm strategy (Cox, 1991; Ely and Thomas, 2001; Shore et al, 2011).
- Involving employees in the process gives them ownership over the firm direction, and therefore over the actual implementation of Diversity and Inclusion itself. Employee engagement makes every employee accountable and answerable to the strategy.

Diversity, inclusivity and wellbeing surveys:

- As well as an initial survey to implement the approach, and include staff, efforts should be made to review employee perceptions each year to ensure that the Diversity and Inclusion strategy is being implemented and actioned effectively.
- Staff should be given the opportunity to speak openly and express any discomfort or concern where they feel that they are being discriminated against, or being excluded for being from a certain characteristic group.
- Where a staff member does approach with concerns, policy should reflect:
 - What actions are implemented upon that occasion?
 - Who is responsible for resolving the issue?
 - Disciplinary procedures for anyone violating diversity policy.
 - Follow up and review with excluded or harrassed employees to ensure that inclusivity is upheld.

Policy and procedure

Policy and procedure development and communication:

- Policies must be constructed by senior management, Middle Management, and Board, taking influence from staff in the formulation of policy to ensure all stakeholders have a say in the development of policy.
- This ensures that staff are included and involved in the process from the start, making implementation of the policy later easier.
- The policy must be accessible, easy to read, clear, and concise.
- After the policy is constructed, it must be distributed and communicated to all staff. All staff must be aware of the contents of the policy, employer expectations, and act and behave within the parameters of the policy.

Living and leading by the policy:

- Writing the policy is effective, but ineffective if the policy is not lived by, and lead by management.
- Senior management must reinforce the policy where possible, communication must be outlined on organisation premises, and accompanying campaigns and activity must be implemented in order to integrate the policy into cultural life.
- In organisational activities, away days, trips and excursions, or perhaps training sessions and events, management must intervene to ensure teams have diverse compositions that foster inclusivity. This means that groups must be from different characteristic groups, encouraging cross-characteristic relationships, and building sympathetic and empathetic thinking.
- In turn, this will open minds in the organisation, and encourage individuals to converse and build relations outside their typical social dynamics and comfort zones.

Training and understanding

Training sessions:

- Training should be conducted after employees have been surveyed, focus groups conducted and policy implemented.
- Ideally, employees should attend training in diverse groups. Doing so ensures that employees can:
 - See the diversity of their workforce and learn alongside a diverse group.
 - Consider the views of others in their organisation throughout training, and the importance of mutual respect in the workplace.

Developing understanding and opening minds:

- Throughout training, individuals must become aware of the differences that individuals experience, and how those experiences can impact their colleagues in terms of:
 - Wellbeing
 - Willingness to work
 - Feeling of involvement
 - Company performance
 - Staff turnover
 - Creates resentment in cases of harrassment
- It is key for individuals in work contexts to understand each other, understand the challenges that different people face and then work together to overcome those challenges and foster supportive environments.
- By educating individuals on the challenges that everyone faces at work, we can normalise behaviour, and ensure that everyone acts in a way that the company deems fit to protect and uphold the rights of all, equally, at all times.

Recruitment and induction

Recruiting for Diversity and Inclusion:

- When shortlisting candidates for interviews, HR will want to ensure they are producing and completing Equal Opportunities monitoring forms. These forms should not be completed simply as a checkbox exercise, but should be then employed by recruiters in decision making, aiming to ensure that they are:
 - Recruiting within the guidelines of the Fair Employment Code of Practice..
 - Recruiting to foster diversity in the workplace
 - Considering where diversity gaps exist in their workforce, and trying to fill those gaps to ensure the workforce is widely represented
- Recruitment stages themselves must also consider the needs of candidates and external stakeholders
 - Are interviews accessible for everyone?
 - Are any online testing or screening methods made accessible for users?
 - Are interviews online or in-person? Consider whether every candidate will be able to interview online and what contingencies exist if that is not possible.
 - How do you strike the balance between keeping the recruitment process inclusive, but also ensuring that all candidates are fairly tested or screened to ensure the right candidate is selected?

Inducting correctly:

- With the candidate selected and appointed, it is key to ensure that processes implemented during the cultural change and in policy and procedure are upheld.
- Every onboarded employee must read and be aware of the policy around Diversity and Inclusion, and ensure that they work within those parameters in all that they do.
- Ensuring employees are aware of company policy from day one, and then constantly offering follow-up training annually or bi-annually thereafter ensures that the policy remains fresh in the employees' minds.

Continuous review and measuring

Follow-up training:

- Follow-up training should be conducted annually with employees. This may involve a brief video, a re-read of the policy around Diversity and Inclusion, or an outsourced Management Training session.
 - Consider priorities and issues in the team - if there has been a range of complaints or issues, it may be worth investing more in training to ensure employees understand the importance and gravity of the issue being discussed.
- Where issues arise, staff should be re-trained by management in order to reinforce learnings and adjust behaviour.

Identifying issues:

- Annual wellbeing surveys that include questions around Diversity and Inclusion are a great way to gauge how the efforts are performing, and identifying any problems that may be arising throughout the process.
- In the first year, quarterly or bi-annual surveys may be beneficial to monitor the rollout of the organisational change and identifying warning signs early on.
- Where warning signs arise, whether that be individuals are excluded, harrassed, or feel uncomfortable at work, interventions should be immediately sanctioned by HR in order to ensure that harmony is restored.
 - Individuals who do not follow company policy must have 1 to 1 retraining.
 - Where constant repeat offences occur, grievance or disciplinary procedures may be implemented in order to ensure staff understand the gravity of their words and the offence.

Summary

To summarise, implementing Diversity and Inclusion is not a simple checkbox exercise. Diversity and Inclusion implementation is more than just a policy change. In order to foster Diversity, you have to ensure that the change comes from the top down, that is measured, sustained and impactful. Cultural shifts require everyone to be working from the same handbook and expectations, and work collectively in order to endorse and support the change.

Key Recommendations:

- Consider each stage of the process carefully, reviewing our suggested Critical Path and every point as you progress.
- Do not just write a policy and forget about it - make it accountable.
- Ensure staff are supported through the Cultural Shift, and that everyone works in unison to achieve it.
- Training is key, and ensuring that training opens minds to the difficulties others face - stimulate empathetic and sympathetic thinking.
- When recruiting, consider the organisational shift and what is required to support it, whether that be in the form of people or capabilities.
- Senior management must drive the effort, and lead by example.
- Ensure employees are engaged, and a part of the process.



About Viable
Corporate Services
How we can support you.


Viable
CORPORATE SERVICES

Introduction to Viable Corporate Services

Viable Corporate Services are a Social Enterprise based in Belfast. We work with a wide range of Charity, Social Enterprises, and SMEs across Northern Ireland, providing services in Bookkeeping, Payroll, Human Resources, and Marketing.

We're more than just professional services however, with 100% of our profits supporting Young People in Care and those from disadvantaged backgrounds across Northern Ireland.

We're on a mission for change - changing business, changing lives. If you want to learn more about our work, you can browse our website below, where you can read more about each of our portfolios, who we have worked with.

Click the links below to visit our website, or reach out via any of the contact methods below:



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Staff Handbooks

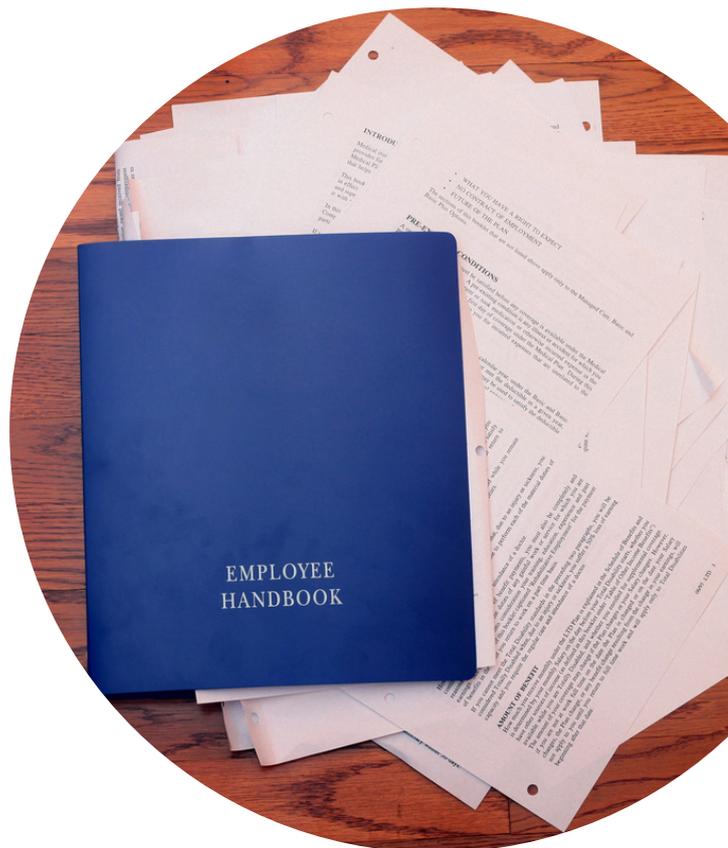
Our HR experts work with teams all across Northern Ireland to support the development of HR Strategy and Employee Handbooks.

Whether you simply need one new policy, a current policy reviewed, or perhaps an entire Staff Handbook for your organisation, our team can provide assistance.

If you are reading this pack and considering implementing new policies and procedures to support your teams, please do not hesitate to reach out via the information below.

You can read more about our HR Services over our website by following this link:

www.viablecs.org/our-services/human-resources



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