DIVERSITY IN LEADERSHIP

DIVERSITY TOOLKIT

Introduction

The Diversity toolkit is designed to help colleges and training organisations increase and maintain the diversity of their staff, and use it for the benefit of the organisation, staff and learners.

There are four episodes in the toolkit.

The videos within the toolkit were scripted and filmed during the Covid-19 crisis and the spring 2020 lockdown. That is relevant because the crisis itself has exposed some serious examples of structural discrimination and, in particular, institutional racism.

The structural discrimination has impacted in particular on care and health workers, people with disabilities, women and older people, and the racism has severely affected BAME communities. In general, the crisis has exposed again the effects of health inequalities, poverty and institutional discrimination.

In addition, in the spring of 2020 we have seen the rise of the Black Lives Matters movement in the US and here, along with the recent tragedies and neglectful aftermaths of Grenfell and Windrush, and too many examples of the disproportionate and aggressive policing of Black communities.

All this forms part of the diversity and inclusion context because it touches the lives of many of our staff and students.

2020 is also the 21st anniversary of the Inquiry into Stephen Lawrence's murder which introduced us to the concept of institutional racism and structural discrimination.

This toolkit is about structural discrimination, about organisations and culture change. It is not about individual prejudice or biases – whether conscious or unconscious.

In February 2020, the author of the Windrush Report, Wendy Williams, wrote: *'the Home Office's failings on Windrush demonstrate an institutional ignorance and thoughtlessness towards the issue of racism… consistent with some elements of the definition of institutional racism.'* For that we can read not just racism but all forms of discrimination and the resulting inequality and exclusion.

John Barnes, the former footballer, said recently that people expect racism to be acted out by *'people in pointy-hats'*, in other words, for it to be crude and obvious. But we see discrimination at the institutional level more likely to be based on a collective unknowingness of the life experience of others, on disbelief, discomfort and denial when faced with it, and on complacency and procrastination in dealing with it.

This toolkit sets out an organisational challenge to this type of discrimination.

The focus is diversity-friendly leadership and line management because these are two factors which are critical for eliminating discrimination and increasing diversity and inclusion.

There are four sections in the toolkit:

1. Diversity context – for senior leadership teams
2. Diversity traps – for all line managers
3. Diversity practice – for all line managers
4. Diversity organisation – for senior leadership teams

As the toolkit is primarily about leadership, its audience is, by definition, senior managers and not staff further down the line.

It is for those with the power to make change – and those charged with the responsibility and authority to do so.

The videos can be viewed online, on your own or as a group activity, for example, as part of a team meeting or training session.

All the situations are real; all the examples are real. They are based on stories we have heard in many versions in the last 25 years.

And finally, the toolkit provides a chance to build on all the examples of good equality practice over the decades which individuals have achieved, often against the odds. It's dedicated to them for their creative, imaginative and brave work. Some of you, like me, will have worked for them and been inspired by them.

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Diversity context

This section sets out the organisational context for effective line management.

It covers the three criteria for good practice on diversity and line management:

1.1 A consistent line management scheme.
1.2 Strong diversity leadership.
1.3 Clear diversity narrative.

1.1 A CONSISTENT LINE MANAGEMENT SCHEME

Here are some questions to set the scene on line management:

1. Do you have an explicit line management scheme?

How do new managers know what is expected of them?

What styles of management are rewarded?

2. What is the recommended format and frequency of line management meetings?

How are they monitored?

3. How is diversity included in the process?

How is it talked about?

How are issues dealt with?

The answers to these questions may well be covered in the organisation's line management guidance. Some organisations have a *'line management contract'* – a written statement which details responsibilities and entitlements on both sides. It is signed by the manager and the staff member – a contract between them. It is this contract which is monitored by the senior ['grandparent'] manager. In our experience, the idea of a contract can work well if it is put together through a collaborative and consultative process throughout the organisation.

A line management scheme or contract can support diversity because:

– It ensures consistency of support for staff and clarity on their entitlements.
– It promotes a specific management style.
– It makes discretion more accountable and less susceptible to personal bias. It makes it less likely that individual managers are able 'do things their own way'.

It is often in areas of line management discretion that discrimination occurs, wittingly or not.

A uniform style of line management can also rein in negative behaviours such as:

– An over-zealous pursuit of targets,
– Setting inconsiderate work overloads
– Bullying and micro-aggressive patterns of behaviour

And finally

Line management has to be **accountable**, and a scheme or contract can more easily be checked by a senior manager – checked that it is happening regularly, fairly and within the framework of the organisation's values, and that it pro-actively covers equality and well-being as well as targets and performance.

1.2 STRONG LEADERSHIP ON DIVERSITY

There is a link between line management, leadership and diversity because talking about it in line management meetings is much easier when there is already a familiar public and positive conversation about it in the organisation.

Setting out this narrative is where leadership comes in. Without strong leadership, diversity becomes much harder for individual managers to support.

This style of leadership has a good chance of preventing a diversity vacuum which may become filled with personal views and random biases.

We are on solid ground here because experience shows that organisations with strong diversity leadership do make the most progress on it.

Strong leadership on diversity has four important features:

- Firstly, it uses a narrative which is **positive** rather than negative – and which is about what we can do rather than what we **mustn't do**.

- Secondly, it is **professional** – it's about what staff do in their jobs not about their personal attitudes and preferences. It is based on the organisation's values not the personal views of staff.

- Thirdly, it's **pro-active** – like all good leadership, it takes a stand, takes a lead and shows the way to go.

- And lastly, it's **practical** – it's about getting the things done which make a difference.

1.3 CLEAR NARRATIVE ON DIVERSITY

Thirdly, diversity thrives on clarity – everyone knowing what it means and is able to use the language to talk about it with ease and confidence.

This starts with senior managers providing straightforward definitions of what **equality, diversity, inequality** and **inclusion** mean without using equal opportunities jargon:

- Saying things in a way that makes sense to the audience.

- Using simple language which avoids over-used clichés.

Diversity needs to be talked about:

- In **practical ways** - with the reasons, practice and benefits clearly described.

- In **confident ways** – with language which is un-embarrassed and up-to-date. This takes away the trepidation – the sense of 'walking on egg shells'.

- In **specific ways** – this helps to avoid general, impersonal categories such as '*communities*' or '*the disadvantaged*', and instead using people words, for example '*Black and Asian students*', '*trans and non-binary staff*' etc.

- In **human ways** - by talking about people rather than issues – so '*poor families*' is better than '*the hard to reach*', using a narrative which paints pictures and which encourages understanding and empathy.

- And finally, in **inclusive ways** – talking about '*us*' and '*we*' rather than '*them*'.

Above all though, the way we talk has to be clear and about what is expected of each of us – described as actions and outcomes and who benefits from them, rather than commitment and intentions which can be vague and unfulfilled - remembering that no one benefits from our commitment.

SUMMARY

In summary, this section has covered three important pre-requisites for success on diversity:

1. A clear line management scheme

2. Strong diversity leadership

3. A clear diversity narrative

Here are two questions for discussion:

1. How could your leadership on equality and diversity be strengthened?

2. What language do you use to describe students and staff from working class backgrounds?

Equality traps

In this second section of the Diversity toolkit, we are looking at some frequent traps that can trip us up when line-managing diversity.

In the corresponding video, Anne-Marie Senior, an experienced equality consultant, is talking to Derek Hooper about her experiences of racism, sexism and disability discrimination at work.

THE CONVERSATION COVERS GUIDANCE ON AVOIDING FIVE FREQUENT EQUALITY TRAPS:

1. Intention and effect

Remember that effect is more important than intention; this also mirrors the law on bullying and harassment.

2. Same behaviour different impact

Knowledge that the same behaviour can impact differently on different people, so bad behaviour such as bullying can be experienced as aggressive behaviour by one person and as homophobia or sexism by another.

3. Offence and values

Avoid using personal 'offence' as the yardstick for assessing equality. It can be arbitrary, personal and random. It is the organisation's values that provide the standards for acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

4. Diversions – personality clash or performance

Steer around two diversions – reframing discrimination as a personality conflict, or turning it into a performance issue.

And be alert to management by over-zealous scrutiny of our managees who raise issues of discrimination.

5. Issues in competition

Don't let issues be used to compete with each other.

A general rule of thumb is: human rights and essential needs over-ride inconvenience, for example, the potential conflict on buses between people who use wheelchairs and people with buggies.

The interview also covers the features of good organisational practice on diversity:

• Auditing line management for effective diversity content
• Setting up Staff Forums
• Appointing 'champions'
• Setting up an Equality Committee with the right balance of responsibility and authority
• Understanding that institutional discrimination is about patterns of behaviour not just individual events

These 'good practice' points are covered in some detail in the professional development programme 'Organisation culture change for diversity and inclusion'

All these examples of equality traps are included in the films in section 3 of the toolkit.

Diversity practice

The third section consists of four short films which are extracts from line management meetings. They illustrate some of the Equality Traps covered in section 2. The films are semi-scripted and improvised by actors. We have chosen to use situations which recur frequently in our experience.

The discrimination shown here is not dramatic and crude but quite subtle and insidious. The films do show the traps that managers are frequently drawn into when handling equality issues.

Each film has some ideas for discussion and some points of good practice. Similar scenes have been used extensively in management development programmes for managers at all levels. You may want to use these short films in a similar way.

FILM 1 | NAMING BEHAVIOUR

Gareth Corke is the line manager and Maxine Finch is the staff member

This clip is about the importance of naming behaviour – naming it as racism, sexism etc. Naming is empowering but has to be handled with delicacy and tact. The film also illustrates intersectionality – how we have more than one identity and these can all contribute to a composite discrimination. In Maxine's case, she says the disrespect she experiences is because of her race and gender combined.

Her manager avoids shifting the conversation to blaming her for the quality of her work and to seeing her as responsible for the audience's behaviour, another frequent reaction of managers.

At the end, the question for discussion is:

'What are the pros and cons of naming behaviour?'

FILM 2 | 'TRUMPED!'

Maxine Finch is the senior manager and Fox Fisher is the team leader

This film is about trans/non-binary issues, the use of toilets and pro-nouns and essentially about one issue 'trumping another'. In this case it is the 'sexist language' being used to override trans issues.

It also covers the issue of 'offence' – people saying that they or others [often others not present] are offended. The film shows that the organisation's values are the yardstick for behaviour not individual's feelings of being offended or not. The theme of this toolkit is that organisational discrimination is our focus not individual behaviours or responses.

At the end, the question for discussion is:

'What would a strategy look like?'
'Why is 'being offended' not an appropriate response to discrimination?'

And the good practice is summarised:

• Values guide behaviours, not personal offence
• Avoid asking staff to tell others about issues
• Understand how issues are used to 'compete' with each other
• 'Solidarity', not 'divide and rule'

FILM 3 | 'ARE YOU SAYING I'M…'

Anna Mottram is the line manager and Morris Findley is the staff member

This film shows how a line manager deals with a member of staff who raises a complaint about her discriminatory behaviour in a meeting. In this case it is homophobia but could equally well be about racism, sexism or another issue. It also raises the point that we all experience behaviour differently, often in the light of previous experiences, because what one member of staff may experience as bullying, another may experience as homophobia. Both experiences are real and both have to be handled just as they are described by the staff member not how the manager rationalises them.

The essential point of the film is that discrimination is about effect not intention, about the person's experience of the situation not the intentions or motives of the other person.

The question for discussion at the end of the film is:

'Why is discrimination about effect not intention?'

And the good practice highlighted is:

- Say sorry for the behaviour
- Agree a way forward
- Avoid being defensive

FILM 4 | 'NEGATIVE SWIRL'

Anna Mottram is the managing director and Anne-Marie Senior is the senior consultant

This film is about victimisation and harassment on the basis of disability, race and gender. It shows how disability and 'reasonable adjustments' are often excused away, delayed or re-framed as 'budget' issues.

It also shows how complaints or challenges are turned back on the person raising them as performance issues or personality conflict.

It's about victimization and procrastination. It is based on a true story.

The effect is to build up a 'negative swirl' around the member of staff where they can do nothing right or everything they do is 'not good enough'. This is often where disciplinary and grievance cases start.

At the end, the viewer is asked:

'If you inherited this situation, what would you do?'

And the good practice highlighted is:

- Be aware how 'positive auras' and 'negative swirls' build up
- 'Everything she does is perfect' / 'Everything she does is wrong'
- Deal with equality issues separately from performance

There are further films available from
E: derekhooper3@icloud.com

SECTION 4:
Diversity organisation

Welcome to the fourth section of the Diversity toolkit.

This last section looks at how the **whole organisation** may need adjusting to enhance and support diversity and make the place of work more diversity-friendly.

This is also the central theme of the training programme for senior leaders 'Organisation culture change for diversity and inclusion'.

The starting point is to understand that increasing diversity is about much more than recruitment and selection, and representation ['who's round the table'].

It's about creating **a diversity-ready and diversity-friendly organisation.**

This means altering what we value and how we do things, altering the organisational behaviours by changing the culture – and therefore shifting what it feels like to work there.

We will need to look at these three steps, in this sequence:

– What we do
– How we do it
– Who does what

What we do in terms of *teaching and learning* is the curriculum. That's the subject for another toolkit.

What we do in terms of *staff* means our approach to human resources and line management. And that is the focus here.

Getting the whole organisation **diversity-ready** is the first challenge.

And then with a bit of a nudge in recruitment and selection, we can recruit and retain a greater diversity of staff at all levels.

Being diversity-ready is a lot more than where to place the job adverts.

Institutional discrimination

– Culture and ambiance

– Patterns of behaviour

– Policies, processes and procedures

Tackling discrimination at the organisational level is timely as 2020 is the 21st anniversary of the Inquiry into Stephen Lawrence's murder which introduced the terms *institutional racism and institutional discrimination.*

This means a diversity-ready organisation is more about culture, leadership, values and processes than the conscious or unconscious biases of individuals and how they behave.

It is recognising that the organisation's culture is a powerful determinant on the behaviour of the people who work there.

Managers' behaviours have to be aligned to the organisation's values. The task of a leadership team is to achieve this alignment.

How staff are managed is one of the most powerful influences on how they experience the culture of the organisation.

Hence the importance of line management because it can encourage or discourage diversity-friendly behaviours.

The question is:

'How do we make the culture diversity-friendly and the organisation diversity-ready?'

If leadership provides the *poetry* for diversity [see section 1], this section is about how management provides the prose.

ONCE THE DIVERSITY LEADERSHIP IS IN PLACE WE CAN LOOK AT THE COMPONENT PARTS OF THE ORGANISATION WHICH OIL THE WHEELS OF WHAT WE DO AND HOW WE DO IT.

Culture change model

TO ACHIEVE A CULTURE SHIFT, ALL THE COMPONENTS PLAY A PART:

Values and ways of working – how we manage, for example, the preferred 'management style'.

Processes – how we do what we do, for example, how we roll out a policy.

Policies – the ethical and legal framework, for example, how the managers' duty of care works.

Procedures – how decisions are made and then processed, for example, the return to work after a period of sick leave.

Structure – who answers to whom in the hierarchy, for example, the line management flow-chart.

And combined, they make up how the place does its work, how it functions.

All these components can aid or hinder diversity. None of them are diversity neutral.

To make the culture more diversity-friendly and diversity-ready, these components may need to be recalibrated. The question is how and by how much?

WE CAN USE AS AN EXAMPLE WORKING STYLES.

Here is an example of using the organisational diagram to strengthen 'collaborative working' across the organisation.

Collaborative working is beneficial to diversity because it is more inclusive. It uses consultation and engagement to inform decision-making, and from that, to build a creative consensus. It makes the organisation more diversity-friendly and more diversity-ready.

With collaborative working, if handled well, a variety of professional views and life experiences inform decision-making. This serves to make decisions more relevant and more likely to match the needs of diverse users.

'People who make policies without involving others must think they know best.'

Research also shows that collaborative management generates more creative decision-making.

Enhancing collaborative working means making changes to the **leadership** narrative – for example, by defining clearly what it *is* and what it *isn't*, and giving it *importance*.

It might also mean redesigning **structures** - making rigid department structures more porous, and making sure that the responsibility for success is matched by the authority and resources to make it happen.

For example, changing who holds the budget and the nature of the targets can be used to encourage cross-departmental working.

And **processes and procedures:** it may mean altering job descriptions, person specifications and ways of assessing candidates applying for jobs, to give the skills of collaborative working more emphasis.

And finally, it may mean re-thinking what we **value** and how we evaluate and support performance - by placing, for example, more emphasis on **process**, how things happen, as much as what we do and what the result is, the outcomes or outputs.

And finally, as we looked at in the Organisational Culture Change training programme, it may mean alteringthe way we design and process meetings.

Cumulatively these changes can create the necessary shift in the culture and a stronger focus on more collaborative behaviours.

A positive outcome would certainly make the workplace more diversity-friendly.

This **holistic approach** to organisational change avoids the tokenism, and avoids the revolving door of diversity – where as soon as a wider range of people are recruited, they leave because the culture remains essentially monochrome and unintentionally unwelcoming – a place where we just don't feel we belong, and where we don't feel we have any voice or worth.

An organisation-wide approach has the potential to make the place diversity-ready and diversity-friendly. It can guarantee that all-important *'sense of belonging'*.

That brings us to the conclusion of the toolkit.

Conclusion

Throughout these four sections, and on the training programmes, we have shared a lot of best practice ideas from the forty or more colleges we have worked with over the last decade and more.

For change to happen, we believe we need senior managers to really care, to be determined to change how things are done, and to have the skill to use the organisation's levers to realise change.

These are the attributes needed by leaders who want to mount a challenge to institutional discrimination.

If you would like any support to develop these ideas or to move forward on diversity and equality, please do get in touch.

We hope that the toolkit has proved practical and useful, sparked discussion, strengthened determination and, more significantly, has acted as a catalyst for substantive change.

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