

London Borough of Hackney:
Inclusive Leadership and
Workforce Diversity- changing
the mindset of the organisation

INCLUSIVE



Changing the mindset of the organisation

- Hackney Council's workforce equality and diversity challenge and why it was important for the council and the wider community to make changes
- What did the Council do to build inclusive leadership and create and support a more diverse workforce, who was involved in this work across the council and is success been measured
- Tips for creating systemic, cultural change in an organisation

Defining the issues and challenges

- Early 2018 - Equality Framework for Local Government re-rated Hackney Council as excellent but we had already identified workforce as area for development;
- Summer 2018 - research undertaken to establish Hackney's position, reasons and possible solutions;
- Managers equality survey identified high levels of confidence, but a desire to know more about race, disability, flexible working, religion, social class;
- Autumn 2018 - Staff Focus Groups showed relatively high confidence in policy and community relations, but less on managers' self-awareness and fairness, collaboration.
- Commitment to inclusion and diversity embedded in Single Equality Scheme in November 2018
- Winter 2018 Staff survey: Frontline staff less likely than senior managers to agree that "Council is committed to inclusivity at senior levels" and average was 38% overall
- Jan 2019 - Hackney Management Team agreed Corporate Equality Programme

Defining the issues and challenges

The **Corporate Equalities Programme** seeks to increase workforce diversity at all levels and promote a culture of inclusive leadership across the organisation:

Workforce diversity

- Under-representation of Black and Minority Ethnic and disabled staff at senior levels
- Under-representation of disabled staff at all levels
- Variations in workforce diversity between different directorates
- Need to protect the current gender equality at senior levels, given the structural inequalities which exist for women in the labour market more broadly

Staff satisfaction

- Much lower rates of satisfaction amongst disabled staff and (to a lesser extent) for Black and Minority Ethnic staff - specifically black staff

Hidden inequalities

- Class and social background is difficult to measure. But we should try to address likely inequality by considering how we support inclusivity and progression.

Our approach and why it matters

- Moral imperative - that those making decisions affecting the lives of our diverse communities should reflect the diversity and we are likely to be more trusted
- The work we have led on tackling inequality in Hackney continually comes back with urgency to the reality that structures and systems do not work for all. A leadership that reflects the diversity of the population, with lived experience, can begin question these mindsets.
- Our workforce are not happy with the way things are - in terms of progression for staff and because they feel we are letting down communities.
- But looking at workforce diversity is not enough. We are taking a dual focus:
 - promoting workforce diversity - seeing people from all backgrounds represented at all levels
 - promoting an inclusive leadership culture - everyone thinks more openly and inclusively, regardless of their background
- INCLUSIVE is one of our vision and values

Key indicators of success

- The gap is closed between the 82% (81% in 2016) of staff who feel Council is committed to Equality *in policy* and 69% (who feel the Council is committed *in practice*);
- There are a higher proportion of disabled staff working at the Council
- Senior management is more reflective of Hackney's diversity
- Managers feel more confident and competent in promoting equality and addressing workforce diversity (need baseline)
- Disabled staff are more satisfied with the Council as an employer and higher proportion feel Council is committed to Equality in practice

Promoting an inclusive leadership culture

- Designed an **inclusive leadership culture change programme** -
- Recruited and trained champions from across the Council who then took over 100 senior managers through workshops on inclusive leadership and then cascaded to the next level of leadership (500+)
- Now delivering follow up training that gets leaders to think about behaviours, attitudes and leadership style and what has informed this e.g. inclusive language, discussing the problem with “BAME,” talking about intersectionality
- Now moving specifically to anti-racism training
- Developed interactive communications - a virtual community, pod casts, post
- Working with champions to:
 - Embed change in their divisions and cascade training
 - Identify ways to make the employee journey more inclusive by embedding the features of inclusive leadership - also worked on group director recruitment
- Now developing champions’ role in new year as diversity coaches, advisers, systems change advocates and influencing management standards



Increasing diversity at senior level

Focus groups between black and minority ethnic staff and Directors held to better understand particular concerns (over 330 engaged)

An online survey was available for those not able to attend focus groups;

Series of working groups looked at issues arising from this and previous staff dialogue like recruitment and career development- some open to all staff (to create allyship)

Key findings from focus groups

- Reinforced what came out of inclusive leadership work about what we value in leadership
- Managers' behaviours vary - negatively impacts staff
- Workplace culture and dynamics critical and variable
- Managers not confident about talking about racism or dealing with issue
- Inaction, minimising or drawing comparisons to their experience can cause huge stress
- Career progression - can lack transparency
- Disadvantage due to intersectionality
- Cumulative impact of organisational change can contribute to lack of diversity at senior levels
- Working in teams when in a minority can be isolating and stressful
- Staff make strong links between workforce diversity at senior levels and better meeting community need

Key actions

Agreed in January 2020 - just before lockdown - all the more important now

Identify opportunities to make the different stages of the employee journey more inclusive to attract and retain diverse staff, especially at a senior level.

- Developing an inclusive management toolkit to consolidate all actions agreed
- Trialling new approaches - e.g. recent group director recruitment

Ensuring employee progression is more open and transparent

Developing our workforce profile - really granular with dashboards

Reinforcing importance of inclusive leaderships work

Developing employee voice and visibility

Anti-racism training

Constant communications underpinning this from top level and from staff co-creating materials

Tips for creating systemic, cultural change in an organisation

Making the case, owning the issues

- Intelligence driven forensic approach - leaves less room for endless debate
- Getting away from the “one thing” way of thinking and unconscious bias training is not the solution on its own!
- Ensure there is committed, authentic leadership - officer and political
- Look to develop solutions that are in the long term owned in house - bringing in experts to give independence, challenge, scrutiny, expertise or offer staff someone independent to speak to
- Proactively to know who you are and work on challenging and shifting biases, assumptions, mindsets
- Set clear measures of success and actions - and iterate these with staff - workforce profile and survey work

Involve staff

Make this a movement as well as a managed process

Give your staff a platform to speak out; involve them at every stage

Recognise role - given them visibility

Tips for creating systemic, cultural change in an organisation

Tailor solutions

- Understand the specific dynamics in your sector and in your workforce
- Don't lump all equality groups in together the reasons that different groups are discriminated and disadvantaged are specific and rooted in different societal contexts and drivers

Level the playing field

- Equality means treating people fairly - not treating everyone the same - some staff are more likely to need encouragement, nurturing
- We have delivered all our work in house - only bringing in some outside views on a few occasions to offer critical reflection and expert insight - this is partly a cost consideration - but is more about wanting truly to understand the issues, distribute leadership and own the actions.

Embed into HR policy and practice but HR and management mindset is key