

A short guide on addressing Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion for recruiting businesses



Equality

Equality is all about making sure everyone has the same opportunities and rights. It means giving everyone a fair chance, regardless of where they come from, their beliefs, gender, skin colour, or if they have a disability.



Diversity

Diversity is about celebrating our differences and recognising that every person is unique and has their own positive contribution to make.



Inclusion

Finally, inclusion is an extension of both things. It means every single person, without any exceptions, has the right to be included, respected, and valued in our community.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) in recruitment is a big deal. It's crucial to understand why it's important and how it benefits us all. In this short guide, we'll walk you through why it's so important to build a diverse workforce, the legislation around EDI in recruitment, and how you can make your recruitment process more inclusive. So, let's dive in!

Why's it important to build a diverse workforce?

We all deserve to be treated with respect, kindness, and dignity at work. And when all colleagues feel they are treated with respect, they'll be able to better collaborate and demonstrate their skills and talents, contributing to both personal and business success.

Embracing EDI means looking beyond our stereotypes and the categories we often put people in; instead, seeing each person as an individual with a unique mixture of skills, talents, and ideas. When we do this in the workplace, we can turn these individual differences into very real advantages! Being open and inclusive has huge benefits for both the organisation and the individuals who work there.

By building a diverse workforce, where individuals come from a variety of backgrounds, you can benefit from your team's wide range of skills and experiences. Recognising and using these skills and talents, as well as recognising people's different perspectives and approaches, helps businesses to become more innovative and creative, as well as being able to better solve problems.

Having a diverse crew can also help an organisation to have a better understanding of the needs and desires of their customers, and it enables them to tailor and market their products more effectively, especially if members of the team are also in the same demographic as the target audience.

But the cherry on top is that a workplace that respects and appreciates everyone, no matter who they are, leads to increased staff commitment, improved staff retention, increased return on training investment, and a more supportive culture where everyone can thrive. Ultimately, it creates a happier environment which encourages innovation, loyalty and greater success!



The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 was created to simplify, strengthen, and harmonise existing legislation to provide Britain with a new legal framework for tackling discrimination; not only to help protect individuals from inequitable treatment but also to provide and promote a more fair and equal society.

Originally there were around 9 major pieces of equality law, and 100 or so smaller versions. The updated legislation seeks to move away from a complicated mess of multiple legislation and provide one coherent set of guidelines for employers and employees alike to follow.

'Protected characteristics' form the basis of the Equality Act, to discriminate against any of the following characteristics is a breach of the law.



Age



Pregnancy and Maternity
(including breastfeeding mothers)



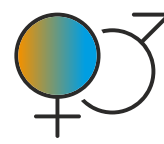
Religion or Belief



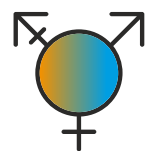
Disability



Marriage and
Civil Partnership



Sex



Gender
Reassignment



Race



Sexual
Orientation



Understanding the types of discrimination

When it comes to recruitment, there are two different kinds of discrimination that we're going to focus on - **direct** and **indirect discrimination**.

Direct discrimination is when somebody is treated less favourably than another candidate because of a protected characteristic. You should avoid asking questions about a person's protected characteristics because a candidate could make a direct discrimination claim if they believed that some of the information they were asked to share with you was used against them - even if it wasn't.

Direct discrimination in recruitment could be:

- Asking for somebody's date of birth on an application form - the candidate could feel discriminated against due to age
- Asking whether a candidate plans on having children - the candidate could feel discriminated against due to pregnancy and maternity, or sex
- Asking about a candidate's cultural background - the candidate could feel discriminated against due to race

To avoid or defend a claim of direct discrimination, there's three main things you can do:

- Fairly consider all applicants
- Carefully avoid all forms of discrimination and bias, or anything that could be perceived as such
- Make your recruitment decisions based on merit alone

To base your decision on merit, means to consider what makes somebody worthy of the role they're applying for - in other words, their skills, talents, abilities, and experiences and not something irrelevant like their age, sex, or religion.



Indirect discrimination is when a policy, rule, or procedure (or “provision, criterion or practice” in the wording of the Equality Act) is applied equally to everyone but unfairly disadvantages people with a particular protected characteristic as a result. For example, imagine you have a rule that bans all headwear at work. Even though it’s applied equally to everyone, it will discriminate against people who wear headwear for cultural or religious reasons.

Indirect discrimination in recruitment could be:

- Asking for candidates to have at least 10 years of experience - they may feel discriminated against due to age
- Asking for candidates with UK based qualifications only - they may feel discriminated against due to race
- Holding all interviews on the top floor of a building without a lift - they may feel discriminated against due to disability

Most of the time indirect discrimination is accidental and isn’t a deliberate attempt to do harm. This is why it’s so important to pay close attention to the words you use and the rules you establish. But remember, if your rules and policies are necessary for you to achieve a legitimate purpose, and don’t go beyond what is necessary to achieve that purpose, you can avoid indirect discrimination.

For example, think back to the no headwear rule. If your workplace has lots of dangerous machinery where headwear can become entangled, you can reasonably claim that the purpose of this rule is to protect people’s health & safety.





How to make your recruitment more inclusive

Now you understand your legal responsibilities and the types of discrimination that could occur in recruitment, you can begin to make changes to make your recruitment process more inclusive. Here are our top tips...

Avoiding discrimination in job advertisements

When you advertise your vacancy, be careful to avoid using certain language that could be considered discriminatory. For example, avoid saying "This role is suitable for school leavers" as it could be considered age discrimination.

Even using words, like "energetic", "unattached", or "mature" could all be considered biased against certain protected characteristics. If in doubt, take a little more time to write the advert and get a colleague or HR to read it before you post it. Words are powerful!

Even though all your decisions should be based on merit alone, there are some situations where making a decision based on a protected characteristic is acceptable and relevant. This is known as Positive Action.

For example, if you have two candidates who are equally qualified for a role and nothing separates them, other than the fact that one of them has a protected characteristic that you believe is under-represented in your team, then you can allow this information to influence your final decision.

It's important to note that Positive Action is not the same as Positive Discrimination, which is still illegal under the Equality Act.

This means that you are not allowed to offer a role to a less-suitable candidate simply because they have a protected characteristic which is under-represented within your workplace.

Set diversity targets for recruitment

It's difficult to achieve meaningful change with a vague target such as 'increase the proportion of women in senior roles'. Adding more specific details, including the baseline, percentage increase, and where you want to get to, as well as a specific target date, makes it more likely that a target will be successful.

A well-designed target should be:

- Accountable
- Specific
- Time-bound
- Challenging but realistic
- Public
- Monitored



Training staff in EDI

Training surrounding EDI helps to raise awareness of workplace issues surrounding Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. Many of your team members may not be fully aware of unfair treatment or discrimination that could happen, and it's important for both managers and employees to know how to address the issue.

By offering staff high-quality training, you can ensure they have a solid understanding of good practice and how to implement it. Good training will suggest what improvements can be made at your place of work and how they can benefit your organisation.

Training also helps employers with making sure that no one behaves unlawfully at work. If an organisation ever does have to defend its position regarding a discrimination or harassment claim, they will have to show that they took all reasonably practicable steps to prevent any wrongdoing - one of these steps is ensuring that all employees have undergone training, and it has been kept up to date with periodic refreshers.



Our friends over at iHasco offer a range of online training courses that are designed to help your business create and maintain a more equal, diverse, and inclusive workplace. These courses include:

- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Training
- Sexual Harassment Awareness Training
- Gender Identity & Expression Training
- Bullying & Harassment Training
- Disability Awareness & Inclusion Training
- Unconscious Bias Training

Interested in training your managers and staff in EDI?

Reach out to iHasco today on **01344 867088** or **request a quote** today.



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