Championing Inclusion:

Lessons learnt from leaders who have nurtured inclusive workplaces that value diversity

Cordelia Osewa-Ediae

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Clore Social
Leadership

About the Clore Social Leadership Programme

The Clore Social Leadership Programme develops leaders with a social purpose so that they can transform their communities, organisations and the world around them. This research report is published as part of Cordelia Osewa-Ediae's Clore Social Fellowship. As part of the Programme, each Fellow is required to undertake a piece of practice-based research. The aim is to help develop Fellows' skills as critical users of research and contribute to the evidence base for the sector as a whole. The research focus, methodology and output are chosen by the Fellow.

About Cordelia Osewa-Ediae

Cordelia is a Strategy Consultant and Programme Director. She is passionate about social justice and issues that affect young people, women and immigrants. She has worked with the Metropolitan Police, University of Greenwich and NSPCC to support communities, nurture talent, promote diversity and contribute to social change. Her past roles have also included being the Operations Director at The Adab Trust and Business Development Manager at UK online centres. A keen social researcher, Cordelia is a contributing author to a global multidisciplinary forum, the World Association for Sustainable Development. She also mentors young people and leads interventions aimed at developing young women.

Acknowledgements

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Julie is the Chief Executive of the leading UK charity for Girls and Young Women – Girlguiding. Prior to joining Girlguiding in 2012, Julie was CEO of the sexual health charity, FPA. During her tenure at FPA, Julie was a member of the Government's Teenage Pregnancy Independent Advisory Group and the Independent Advisory Group on Sexual Health and HIV. Her previous roles have included being CEO of The Suzy Lamplugh Trust, Director of Corporate Services for the substance misuse charity ARP and Assistant Director of the voluntary sector settlement Charterhouse in Southwark. Julie is also a Trustee of Shelter. In 2014, Julie was voted 5th on the Women's Hour Game Changers list. In the same year, she also received the Third Sector Award for Britain's most admired CEO.

Sharon White

Sharon White is the Chief Executive of the Office of Communications (Ofcom). Ofcom is the communications regulator in the UK. Prior to joining Ofcom, Sharon was the Second Permanent Secretary at HM Treasury. Her previous roles have included being Director General for Public Spending at HM Treasury and Director General at the Ministry of Justice. Sharon has also had spells in Washington, with the Downing Street Policy Unit, the World Bank and The Department for International Development (DFID). Sharon was the first woman – and the first Black person – to be appointed as a permanent secretary at the Treasury.

Simon Blake

Simon Blake OBE is Chief Executive of National Union of Students. The National Union of Students is a voluntary membership organisation comprising of 600 students' unions in the UK. Prior to NUS, Simon was Chief Executive of Brook, the young people's sexual health charity. He has previously worked at the National Children's Bureau where he held a number of positions including Assistant Director of Children's Development and Director of the Sex Education Forum. In 2004 Simon was seconded to the Department of Health as an advisor on children's public health. Simon is also currently the deputy chair of Stonewall.

Sue Owen

Sue Owen is the Permanent Secretary for Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The Department's priorities include growing the economy, connecting the UK,
encouraging participation, sustaining excellence, promoting Britain, supporting our media
and ensuring social responsibility. As Permanent Secretary, Sue is responsible for the overall management of the department. Her previous roles have included being Director General of Strategy at the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP); Director General for Corporate Performance, at the Department for International Development (DFID); Director, EMU Policy, Euro Preparations and Debt Management at HM Treasury and Counsellor Economic at the British Embassy in Washington. Sue has also acted as an Adviser on family policy with Downing Street's Policy Unit and as a Lecturer in Economics at University College, Cardiff.
In 2014, Sue became the Civil Service LGB & T Champion and in July 2015, she became overall Civil Service diversity champion.

Tunde Ogungbesan

Tunde Ogungbesan is the Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Succession at the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Established by a Royal Charter, the BBC is the world's leading public service broadcaster funded by the licence fee paid by UK households. As the BBC's Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Succession, Tunde is responsible for overseeing the Corporation's Diversity, Inclusion and senior succession agenda to ensure that the BBC meets its goal of being the most creative organisation in the world – and reflects the diversity of the UK in its workforce, on TV, radio and in its content. Prior to joining the BBC, Tunde worked with Shell where he was responsible for leading their global Diversity and Inclusion strategy.

"Management is doing things right;

Leadership is doing the right things"

Peter Drucker

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Research has shown that workplaces have a significant role to play in building a fairer society because employment facilitates social cohesion. Several studies have also reiterated the benefits of having a diverse workforce. While this research acknowledges the importance of diversity in the workplace, it goes a step further to highlight how workplace inclusion is even more critical in ensuring that all employees feel valued – no matter their difference. This is because nurturing inclusive workplaces that value diversity, not only makes good business sense but facilitates social cohesion and social mobility.

In my work, social integration and cohesion has always interested me. Working with young people from underrepresented groups, I have been struck by how many job-seekers continue to feel 'different' or alienated from the majority. Even among those of them who work, some still feel excluded because their workplaces appear to tolerate, not value, their difference.

Evidence does show that certain groups are still excluded from many UK workplaces and this continues to cost us, as a society, dearly. The Social Integration Commission (2014) estimates that long term-unemployment costs the economy approximately £1.5 billion each year, while blocked opportunities in the labour market costs us £700 million annually.

This research was borne out of a desire to explore how leaders and organisations could nurture inclusive organisations that value diversity. By highlighting lessons learnt from leaders who have nurtured inclusive environments, the aim is that other leaders and managers could learn from good practice. The five leaders interviewed for this research were identified by colleagues and peers as individuals who have consistently taken active steps to create inclusive workplaces. Face-to-face interviews were conducted and they all responded to the same questions:

- **Question 1:** Why are you especially passionate about promoting equality?
- **Question 2:** What does Inclusion in the workplace mean to you?
- **Question 3:** In relation to your work to promote equality, what has been your proudest achievement, so far?
- **Question 4:** What are the main leadership challenges you have faced in working to promote diversity and inclusion?
- **Question 5:** What 3 tips would you give to any leader who seeks to make their organisation/work more inclusive?

All the leaders interviewed for this study displayed a personal commitment to inclusion and this fuelled their resilience in the face of challenge. Following analysis of their responses, this study makes **EIGHT recommendations** to other leaders seeking to nurture inclusive environments:

1. **Be the role model:** A leader who seeks to build an inclusive workplace has to be a visible, credible and authentic inclusion role model – persevering in the face of challenge.

2. **Nurture the Culture:** Proper inclusion can only occur if the organisational intentionally values difference and encourages diverse opinions. Policies and processes which facilitate workplace inclusion should be embedded in the organisation's ways of working.

3. **Introspection:** The journey towards becoming an inclusive workplace should begin with some honest introspection to assess how diversity is already being promoted in the workplace, and where various groups are excluded and disadvantaged. As many stakeholders as possible should be engaged.

4. **Listen Consistently:** Leaders and managers who want to build inclusive workplaces must be prepared to objectively listen to, and digest feedback from a wide range of employees. Discussions have to explore difficult issues and inclusion barriers in a safe, non-judgmental environment that is open to learning.

5. **Communication:** Regular and open communications with internal and external stakeholders should help mitigate against situations where certain individuals or groups do not feel valued, heard or engaged. Assumptions should not be made that everyone naturally appreciates the value of an inclusive workplace, as some employees are likely to feel threatened by the changes that are being planned.

6. **Training and Education:** Regular education and training efforts should aim to provide opportunities for all employees, especially the leaders, to reflect and learn about how to intentionally build inclusive workplaces. It is recommended that initial training and education efforts should be delivered by external experts.

7. **Auditing:** Data and feedback should be routinely collected to identify and address where diversity and inclusion gaps exist. The data and feedback should also be used monitor progress, or lack of progress, in relation to any diversity and inclusion goals and targets. Progress reporting should be shared widely and transparently, to demonstrate accountability and motivate all involved in driving positive change.

8. **Succession Planning and Sustainability:** As leaders are likely to move on to other roles or opportunities, steps should be taken to develop successors who will continue to drive the work needed to maintain an inclusive workplace and organisational culture. It is essential that any progress made is not lost when a leader moves on.

Equality in the Workplace

Equality forms the foundation of inclusion and it is about taking into account differences appropriately.

The 2010 Equality Act covers England, Scotland and Wales builds on existing law and highlights nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, maternity and pregnancy, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation. The Equality Act prohibits direct and/or indirect discrimination because of any of these protected characteristics. [1]

Employers in England, Scotland and Wales have a legal obligation to comply with the Equality Act by eliminating discrimination from their workplaces and making reasonable adjustments for employees.

For example, an employer has the duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that, as far as is reasonable, a disabled worker has the same access to everything that is involved in doing and keeping a job, as a non-disabled person. [2]

Diversity in the Workplace

Diversity is about recognising and valuing difference. Diversity in the workplace is about ensuring that the people who work within and throughout an organisation are representative of the customers, clients and communities that an organisation interacts with, or serves.

While the 2010 Equality Act focuses on nine protected characteristics, it is important to note that other characteristics can also affect a person's ability to feel included, or how much they face disadvantage in the workplace. For examples, a person's socio-economic background, caring responsibilities and ability to speak the same language should be part of plans to improve diversity in workplaces.

Inclusion in the Workplace

Inclusion in the workplace is about ensuring that in the workplace, no one feels left out because of their age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, or other factors such as social background.

An inclusive working environment allows people to be themselves at work. [4]

Social Integration

Social integration refers to the extent to which people interact with others who are different to themselves. 'Difference' can relate to age, social grade and ethnicity. [5]

In seeking to build a fairer society, evidence suggests that workplaces have a significant role to play. Indeed, cross-country research has shown that employment plays a key role in fostering social cohesion.[6]

> *"The distribution of jobs within society and perceptions about who has access to opportunities, and why, can shape people's expectations and aspirations for the future, their sense of having a stake in society, and perceptions of fairness. Job loss or lack of access to jobs is associated with lower levels of trust and civic engagement."*
>
> (World Bank, 2013, p. 126)

A diverse workforce then becomes even more critical in ensuring workplaces contribute to social cohesion. The benefits of a diverse workforce have been highlighted time and time again with compelling evidence showing that diversity in the workplace boosts innovation and stimulates market growth.[7] Other benefits of a diverse workforce include increased customer satisfaction, improved market position, better decision-making, the ability to attain strategic goals, improved organisational outcomes and higher net profits. [8]

As a first generation immigrant living in London, social integration has always fascinated me. Working with young people, I have been struck by how many of them do not go after their dream jobs because they feel 'different' or alienated from the majority. Even among those of them who work, some still feel excluded because their workplaces appear to tolerate, not value, their difference. Indeed, evidence shows that certain groups are still excluded from many UK workplaces:

- Above the age of 22, women have consistently lower employment rates than men.[9]
- People with disabilities are less likely to be in employment than those without.[10]
- 34% of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in the UK choose not to disclose their sexuality at work for fear of homophobia, exclusion or being overlooked for promotions.[11]
- The unemployment rate for young black people aged 16-24 was 27.5% in 2015. This is more than double the youth unemployment rate of 13.1% for white people (the lowest). The rate for people from an Asian ethnic background was 24.3%.[12]
- Unemployment rates for Muslims are more than twice that of the general population (12.8% compared to 5.4%).[13]

The exclusion of these groups from our workplaces hampers social integration and cohesion, and continues to cost us, as a society, dearly. Estimates indicate that long term-unemployment costs the UK economy approximately £1.5 billion each year, while blocked opportunities in the labour market costs the economy £700 million annually.[14]

This research was borne out of a desire to explore how leaders and organisations could create environments that value diversity and nurture inclusion. While acknowledging the importance of diversity in the workplace, this study notes that the ability to nurture inclusion is even more critical in ensuring that all employees feel valued – no matter their difference. Diversity is not enough.[15]

> "*While many organizations are better about creating diversity, many have not yet figured out how to make the environment inclusive—that is, create an atmosphere in which all people feel valued and respected and have access to the same opportunities.*"

> (Riordan, C. M. 2014)

This study makes a distinction between organisations that seek to develop diverse workforce and those that seek to nurture inclusive workplaces. This is because nurturing inclusive workplaces not only makes good business sense but facilitates social integration, cohesion and mobility. This study highlights lessons learnt from leaders who have nurtured inclusive environments so others can learn from good practice.

The five leaders interviewed for this research were identified by colleagues and peers as individuals who had taken active steps to make their work and organisations more inclusive. They all responded to the same five questions. Following analysis of their responses, key lessons learnt were then highlighted. These lessons should be invaluable to leaders and managers who wish to make their work and organisations and work more inclusive.

A triangulation approach was adopted for this research. This involved using mixed methods to access a variety of view-points.

Secondary research involved the collation and analysis of existing research into Equality and Diversity in the workplace; the disadvantages certain groups continue to face in securing and/or retaining employment; and social integration and cohesion issues in the UK. Research was also carried out to assess how various organisations have sought to create inclusive environments.

Primary research involved face to face interviews with the five leaders who had been identified by their colleagues and peers as having taken active steps to make their work and organisations more inclusive. They all responded to the same questions:

- **Question 1:** Why are you especially passionate about promoting equality?
- **Question 2:** What does Inclusion in the workplace mean to you?
- **Question 3:** In relation to your work to promote equality, what has been your proudest achievement, so far?
- **Question 4:** What are the main leadership challenges you have faced in working to promote diversity and inclusion?
- **Question 5:** What 3 tips would you give to any leader who seeks to make their organisation/work more inclusive?

Question one explored what motivates these leaders to promote equality and champion inclusion. Question two allowed them to proffer their own interpretation of what an 'inclusive workplace' should look and/or feel like. Question three explored some of their personal achievements in relation to their work to promote equality. Question four explored any leadership challenges they had faced in their work to promote diversity and inclusion. Finally, question five asked them to offer tips for other leaders and managers seeking to nurture inclusive organisations.

Sections E – I of this report analyse all the responses to these questions and highlight key lessons learnt. Section J then pulls together all the lessons learnt into a conclusion and makes practical recommendations for other leaders and managers seeking to make their organisations more inclusive.

The first research question explored what motivates these leaders to champion inclusion by working to promote equality. Understanding their motivation was seen as important because leaders' motivations have been linked to their effectiveness in leading change:[16]

"If there is one trait that virtually all effective leaders have, it is motivation – a variety of self-management whereby we mobilise our positive emotions to drive us toward our goals. Motivated leaders are driven to achieve beyond expectations."

(Daniel Goleman, 2014)

Below are the responses given to the question: *"Why are you especially passionate about promoting equality?"*

"**My initial reaction is to wonder why anyone wouldn't be passionate about equality**. Being passionate about diversity and equality is a no-brainer to me and my view is that it is irrelevant who you are, what matters is the core of an individual, in terms of their internal moral compass. Proper diversity creates a much more interesting, accepting and constructive environment whether that is in the workplace or wider society.

Inequality is unfair. I realise that some people do not understand the importance of diversity and equality and this makes me angry because we should all be committed to fairness. It is too simple to assume that these people come from a particular group. My experience is that anyone can be a bigot and I have heard the most bigoted statements from people I expected to know better. This initially surprised me. However, I have come to realise that in most cases, these people speak out of ignorance."

Julie Bentley

"**Promoting equality is deeply personal to me** . It is no surprise that there are more gay people working in HIV and more black people working in Equality and Diversity. This is because they are likely to have experienced the raw end of the deal when things are not equal.

I believe people have the right to be treated equally. **There are so many barriers that society puts in the way of people.** We need to work hard to remove these barriers because if we don't, we are living in a socially unjust world and I would like us to live in a just world where every human being has the chance to be the best that they can be.

I recall that when I came out, it was illegal. The age of consent was unequal, section 28 still existed and it was the beginning of the HIV epidemic. This was a difficult time and it wasn't very nice. I feel that it does not have to be that way for anybody.

This lies at the root of my passion for promoting equality. It is personal, political and just fundamental to my beliefs."

Simon Blake

"I am passionate about equality and diversity because it really matters to me that people who have the innate ability do the jobs that tap into their potential and enable them to be successful, have an opportunity to do so. It is not a colour issue or race issue or socio economic issue – a leader should ensure that people are being promoted or recruited into jobs because of their ability regardless of their sexuality, race or any other background factors.

I have been in teams with lots of women and in other teams where we had lots of men. The most cohesive, challenging, productive and successful teams are the most diverse teams. "

Sharon White

"Throughout my career, the Equality theme has been important to me – consciously and unconsciously. As an academic, my research was on the life time costs of being a woman in terms of lost earnings. When I was working at the Treasury, it was a male-dominated environment with hardly any female leaders. When I was leaving, several women told me that they saw me as a role model. This surprised me and it struck me that women should act as role models to other women – no matter their grade.

At the Foreign Office in Washington, my work was on women owned small businesses which were the fastest growing part of the American economy. This prompted me to put forward the business case to Gordon Brown, for us to ensure women are equipped and supported to become business owners.

As I have taken up more leadership roles, I have done a lot more work about equality, not just around gender but championing disabled people, LGBTI, BME issues and I am now the overall Civil Service diversity Champion. I guess I am now more conscious about championing equality, diversity and inclusion, whereas in the past, I did this unconsciously."

Sue Owen

"I am more passionate about Diversity and Inclusion. Equal Opportunities and Diversity and Inclusion are two wings on the same plane but I prefer the 'Diversity and Inclusion' angle because… 'Equality' does not adequately address inclusion issues in the workplace.

'Equality' could be interpreted as a situation where every individual is given an opportunity to apply for a job, without consideration being given to the fact that one applicant could possess the advantage of having received more support to develop professionally and personally. Diversity and inclusion means that all individuals are given the same support to develop professionally and personally throughout their career.

I was the first black child in my primary school and my family was one of the first black families in Banbury so I truly understand the importance of promoting diversity and inclusion. I get it that it is the right thing to do but I also acknowledge the benefits of having a diverse workforce and community."

Tunde Ogungbesan

Key Lesson Learnt: All the interviewees drew on their life experiences to illustrate their motivation for promoting equality and championing inclusion. While their experiences differed, it was evident that their passion for promoting equality was not motivated by a need to satisfy a legal requirement or a compulsion to respond to external pressure. This was personal.

In commencing this study, initial discussions and secondary research had shown that people had varying interpretations for what an inclusive workplace should look or feel like. To avoid making any assumptions that a consensus existed among the interviewees, regarding what an inclusive workplace should look or feel like, the second question posed to the five leaders was – *"What does Inclusion in the workplace mean to you?"*

"It is about ensuring that every job opportunity is accessible to all people from all backgrounds, that there aren't any barriers to people accessing those roles. Beyond just the recruitment process, the culture in the workplace should be embracing and welcoming of all people from all backgrounds.

In organisations, the leaders have a duty to nurture a culture where people feel able to be themselves in the workplace, and not hide who they are.

Some people might feel that in an organisation, the job of promoting inclusion should fall on individuals who are likely to feel excluded e.g. those who are disabled, gay or black.
However, this should not be the case."

Julie Bentley

"Inclusion would mean that everyone in the organisation feel that they can participate fully and do their best. An inclusive organisation would be one where people feel that they
want to work there and they feel they are able to work there. The organisation should do what it can to make it possible for them to work there.

However, the most important factor would be the culture of the organisation because sometimes we underestimate how exclusive places can feel to people. An inclusive organisation would have the right combination of intent, policies and procedure to make sure that people felt they could participate fully to do their best as employees."

Simon Blake

"In the BBC Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2016-20,[17] I define diversity and inclusion. However off the top of my head, I believe inclusion is all about valuing differences.

It is about creating an organisation where people's differences are valued and people are given an opportunity to bring their ALL to the office.

An inclusive organisation also encourages people to have a voice and provides them with an opportunity to develop their skills and talents."

Tunde Ogungbesan

"In an inclusive workplace, people should feel valued. When I was at the Treasury, I never thought I was as smart as a lot of my male colleagues. However, I knew that I was good at running a home alongside a career compared to some of my male colleagues who could only do their jobs. This made me realise that a lot of the skills most women take for granted as 'out of work skills' i.e. managing a home or family are actually akin to valuable 'work skills' eg project or stakeholder management.

So, I encourage people to celebrate their 'out-of-work skills'. If everybody at work can be themselves at work, they are going to have more fun at work, and invariably, perform better.

I have always been a leader that wants to know about people, to know what drives them. Most times when people are not performing well at work, it is usually due to an issue in their personal life and a good leader should possess the emotional intelligence to notice this. One of the things I have done at the DCMS is to put a lot of emphasis on leadership and encourage people at any grade to come forward with any idea they might have."

Sue Owen

"For me an inclusive workplace is an environment where people feel their voices are heard. It sounds easy to say this but in reality it can be difficult in environments where hierarchies or a dominant culture exists.

In an organisation you might be a newly arrived graduate, middle ranking employee or a part-time worker but whatever the circumstances, you must feel that whatever expertise you bring to a subject you have the confidence to air your views. This confidence should exist not only because you know that your voice will be heard but because you know that your views will be taken into consideration in the operational and policy making decisions within in the organisation.

It is important to me that even newly arrived employees feel confident to air their views.
A leader who wishes to create an inclusive organisation should strive to ensure that people feel free, able and confident to contribute their views without any fear of retribution. There are no rights or wrongs but the focus is enabling lots of people to contribute their views so one can choose to make the best decisions."

Sharon White

Key Lesson Learnt: All the interviewees were adamant that for an organisation to be truly inclusive, it should go beyond just ensuring its recruitment processes do not exclude certain groups. A lot of emphasis was placed on these organisations ensuring that they develop a culture that values difference and welcomes diverse opinions. All employees should feel confident enough to air their views.

The interviewees also felt that leaders need to play a critical role in developing a culture of inclusion – by acting as role models and champions.

As this study aims to share lessons learnt with other leaders seeking to make their organisations more inclusive, the third question sought to highlight any tangible achievements the interviewees might have, in relation to their work to promote equality. Below are the responses received to the third question – "*In relation to your work to promote equality, what has been your proudest achievement, so far?*"

"As the Chief Exec of the Family Planning Association (FPA), I am proud of the work we did with regards to a woman's right to reproductive choices in Northern Ireland. While I am disappointed that the changes we advocated for have not been fully realised,
I am proud of the work we did to challenge entrenched societal and religious
views around what was right or wrong to happen to a woman's body.

I am also proud of the work we did around people with learning disabilities and their rights to be sexual beings. In society, there are attitudes towards adults with learning disabilities that keep them childlike and doesn't recognise that they are adults with physical desires and feelings in relation to sex– same as any other adult. I do acknowledge that it can be challenging to tackle
the issue of sex with a young adult who has learning disabilities.
However, these conversations are needed so they understand important
issues like the need to protect themselves, consent and sexually transmitted diseases.

At FPA, we ran sexual health awareness projects and a big campaign around people with learning disabilities as sexual beings. The campaign featured several individuals and couples
in posters which challenged stereotypes about people with learning disabilities as sexual beings. The campaign attracted a lot of praise alongside criticism and while we received an award
for this campaign, we also got some negative comments: One individual commented
'*You shouldn't be encouraging people like* these *to have sex!*'…….
I am proud of this campaign because we challenged stigma."

Julie Bentley

"I am proudest of work I did in the policy unit in 1999. I had six months at Number 10 and the then Labour government had a manifesto commitment to provide a better balance between work and family life.

I felt strongly that in this debate there was too much focus on women and a better balance would require changes for men at home. So, one of the things I suggested was that we introduce statutory paternity leave, and the government did indeed do that, bringing in 2 weeks in addition to their annual leave.

Now, we have longer parental leave as well which fathers can share with mothers. I am pretty pleased about the introduction of statutory paternity leave because I know many people have benefitted.

In terms of equality in the civil service, I think I am proud of getting the issue on the map. The Cabinet Secretary has Diversity & Inclusion as one of his corporate objectives."

Sue Owen

"In my old life as a civil servant, I was very pleased to have worked with other senior women
to put a spotlight – using data and analysis – on some of the progress made alongside highlighting areas where glass
ceilings still existed. As a result of that, we were able
to change some of the recruitment practices to bring in new people and mentor
younger women. I don't count this as an achievement because I see it as more of
a journey – being able to form a group with other like-minded women
to put the spotlight on this issue and start to make some progress.

However, I see work around equality, diversity and inclusion as very fragile. This is because while it might appear that
progress has been made; upon looking back, one might realise that
the progress was only made because certain people were in some key positions. When these
people move on, it's like a house of cards and progress stalls. Any progress made is fragile
because thechallenge comes from embedding new ways of thinking – and doing things.

Some organisations have been pretty successful in gender diversity but they struggle when it comes to socio-
economic diversity because their new recruits are still likely to be privately educated or Oxbridge graduates. So,
while the new recruits might be a different
gender or ethnicity, the dominant intellectual culture remains unchanged."

Sharon White

"In answering your question, I would like to talk about my favourite day so far in relation
to promoting equality and inclusion: As an assessor for the Healthy Schools programme,
I was in Nottingham to assess their programme for an event. At this event, I was supposed
to sit with some senior stakeholders but I chose to sit with a group of young people with
Downs syndrome who had come from one of the schools. I felt that this was the right
thing to do because it was an unfamiliar environment for them
– and they were likely to feel excluded.

My interaction with them definitely put them at ease and they felt more included because I was able to explain
most things about the day's proceedings to them. The reason this was my favourite day – in relation to promoting
equality and inclusion – is that it was one of those moment when I realised that one must always do what is
appropriate in any situation to make sure people get the best experience and feel included.

In terms of my greatest achievement in working to promote equality, that would have to be equalising the age of
consent and getting rid of Section 28 because we really did not think
we could do it. By the time we got to marriage equality we knew it was only a matter of time but with regards to
equalising the age of consent, it was a huge achievement when the whole
children sector shifted from saying children would be at risk if we equalised the age of
consent to a feeling that children would be empowered
– and they would be at risk of harm if we kept it as it is.

The other bit of work we did at the Sex Ed Forum was to take people from the major world religions away for
five days to talk about abortion, gender equality, sex before marriage, HIV and homosexuality. I was terrified
about this and I actually made myself sick the night before because I so unsure about how things would go.
However, we came away with an agreement that while we may not agree on the moral basis of the actions, we
would agree on the bigger moral basis around love, equality and keeping children free from harm.

We also agreed that we needed to teach children about the law."

Simon Blake

"The first would be the work I did at Shell regarding people with disabilities. Shell is a huge organisation with 98,000 employees in 70 countries.

Each country has different languages and employment legislations so it was quite an achievement to develop a global strategy about people with disabilities when nothing had previously existed.

Countries as diverse as Nigeria, South Africa, Singapore and Malaysia all bought into this disability strategy and Shell has received some awards for it. The approach has become embedded in the organisation.

The approach was to look at a disability strategy as an issue that went beyond being just 'nice to have' for the organisation, to seeing it as a critical business decision. This is because in the war for talent, one has to go further and identify talent from areas that might have been overlooked in the past. There are talented people who have disabilities (visible or not) who might have a lot to offer an organisation and not to bring them in does not make good business sense.

Another proud achievement has been developing the 2016-20 Diversity and Inclusion strategy at the BBC. This took longer than I thought it would because of the variety of stakeholders.
Understandably, we were especially keen that we got it right.

The issue of inclusion is now so important that everyone needs to get onboard."

Tunde Ogungbesan

Key Lesson Learnt: The examples used by all the interviewees further illustrated their commitment to promoting equality and championing inclusion. These were not easy accomplishments and were undoubtedly accompanied by resistance and challenge. What resonated about these achievements was their commitment to inclusive workplaces that not only valued difference – but also contributed to social integration, cohesion and social mobility.

The fourth question posed to the interviewees was: *What are the main leadership challenges you have faced in working to promote diversity and inclusion?* The aim of this question was to highlight lessons learnt so other managers and leaders could benefit from this knowledge:

"**That would probably be fear and ignorance of other people.** I get a lot of concern regarding whether certain actions to promote diversity and inclusion might alienate some groups,
attract bad publicity or give an organisation a 'bad name'.

These concerns have all been based on fear and ignorance or anxiety from making a change. For me, my responsibility has been to clarify why the change is important and to hold it at some level so people are clear about why we are doing something, thereby ensuring they feel confident that things will be okay.

In leading change, I see my role as all about holding people – managing anxiety, making the destination clear and being resilient to the battering that comes."

Julie Bentley

"**I think that the main leadership challenge is living what one believes in, and ensuring that the rest of the organisation does too.**

It is also about getting people from diverse backgrounds into the room in the first place. I have never worked in an organisation where we have enough people from diverse backgrounds at all levels in the organisation, but particularly at senior levels. Finding a way to do this is
one of the biggest and most important challenges that we face.

Why do I think this challenge still exists? ……Perception, recruitment, testing regimes and lack of effort in making organisations appear like one that people from diverse backgrounds would want to work in.
Assumptions, conscious and unconscious biases also come in.
Again, the whole malaise of being human combined with how systems have developed
over time make it more difficult. The structural inequalities in organisations means that
particular groups of people don't develop; don't get the chances they deserve;
don't get spotted easily or don't put themselves forward.

Organisations are microcosms of society so as a leader; the challenge is how to promote diversity and inclusion – despite that fact that some people might feel that this should solely be the responsibility of individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Any leader who truly wants to promote diversity and inclusion should be ready to encourage difficult discourse that explores how the organisation can recruit,
develop and retain diverse talent better."

Simon Blake

"Although we have been talking about why equality, diversity and inclusion matter for a long time, there is still a hurdle to climb to get the message across to some leaders.

Some might feel that to promote diversity and inclusion, the business case for diversity has to be clearly stated. However, I would go a step further and say that from a meritocracy, morality and equality viewpoint, there is an intrinsic argument as to why we should work harder to get the best people into the right jobs – regardless of their backgrounds.
We can do better.

Leaders and managers who want to promote diversity and inclusion have to (a) believe that this issue really matters and (b) work really hard in a sustained way, increasingly embedding its importance in various teams at all the different layers within the organisation. This is crucial because I have seen instances where a leader has moved on and, like I mentioned before,
it's like a house of cards where everything collapses.

Managers have to truly believe that recruitment decision after recruitment decision should seek out the best talent and give opportunities to individuals who might not fit their previous expectations of what an ideal candidate should look like.

We live in a globalising, multicultural society with a variety of views. Our workplaces should reflect this because it the right thing to do,
not only because it is commercially beneficial."

Sharon White

"Diversity and inclusion is not really a science and some people might not understand why it is important. At the BBC, I have been supported by all the members of the executive team because they are keen to ensure the organisation is even more inclusive.

While the process of developing the strategy involved a lot of stakeholders, the challenge lay in managing various stakeholders' expectations – especially with regards to what
specific areas we should focus on.

Some interested parties, within and outside the BBC, have raised concerns regarding how committed we are to achieving various targets in this strategy.
However, I am confident we will succeed.

My commitment to the success of this strategy, and meeting the targets set, is personal and professional."

Tunde Ogungbesan

"I think we are at a point where the top leadership in the Civil Service get it that there is a business case for Diversity & Inclusion. However, we have to keep on at this because people move on and it's easy to slip back.

I feel the next challenge will be with the middle manager layer in the Civil Service. While we have most policy work in Whitehall, the bulk of the Civil Service is doing a wide range of delivery work which tends to be process based, with managers who are driven by performance targets. For these managers, finding the time to think about whether people feel included at work might not be a priority – even though they might understand the importance of creating an inclusive workplace.

For the past 6 or 7 years, every government department has conducted a employees engagement survey and I am happy to say that DCMS has improved massively with regards to employees engagement. However, the bigger departments have not all fared as well. Women in the Civil Service report slightly higher levels of engagement than men, as do BAME employees relative to white. However, LGBT colleagues have reported that while they felt similarly engaged, they also felt more bullied and harassed. For disabled colleagues, the situation is parlous as they feel harassed, bullied and disengaged. So we know where we have leadership issues that relate to engagement and inclusion. The survey has introduced an element of competition among the departments and I think that is good.

It is difficult to change cultures and attitudes quite quickly but by being persistent, change will happen. With regards to women in the Civil Service in particular, we have made a lot of progress because over the past twenty years, the proportion of women in senior management has more than doubled from 16% to 40%. To get this to 50%, we must make sure every woman in the civil service is ambitious and able to get to a level above where she expected to be.

The civil service aims to represent the general population but BAME people are still underrepresented in senior management with only approximately 4% BAME in these grades. Some of the issues with women are the same for BAME applicants – feelings of ambivalence, and confidence issues which stop people from applying for leadership roles. I suffered a lot from feeling ambivalent as one can always justify staying where you are, for example, feeling like one is a bad mother or daughter when going for a senior role. However, remember that the children and parents are likely to be very proud of you if you do get promoted.

Inevitably, it is generally a problem of self confidence that stops certain people from applying for leadership roles so I do a lot of talking to people to encourage people to aim that bit higher."

Sue Owen

Key Lesson Learnt: The responses given by the interviewees illustrated clearly the challenges leaders are likely to face in championing inclusion. Change can be challenging. Not only because it presents uncertainties to all affected but because it also requires the change-maker to be resilient in the face of oncoming challenge.

The importance of ensuring inclusion was embedded in the organisation's culture, policies and processes was also reiterated.

The final question posed to the interviewees was – *"What 3 tips would you give to any leader who seeks to make their organisation/work more inclusive?"*

"The first one would be about **looking and seeing and noticing what is wrong and what is missing in the organisation.**

The second would be about **thinking about what we could do about whatever is wrong.**

The third would be about **standing up and being brave in the face of challenge, disagreement and backlash.**

A leader who seeks to make their organisation more inclusive has to be a champion for diversity and inclusion – everyday and in every way."

Julie Bentley

"**Communication: Keep on talking but doing this in the context of listening.** Conversations I have had with people in the past have given me an insight into the diversity of people, even when they don't immediately tick all sorts of diversity criteria.

People have different aspects of their identity which might make them feel included or not, and conversations go a long way in unearthing this. We must realise that just because a person is 'X', it does not mean that they must think or behave a certain way.

Training: **Constant training has to be in place for workers,** alongside a level of accountability for their actions. We cannot allow people manifest behaviours in the workplace which might exclude others.

Sometimes in some organisations, because we are dealing with behaviours, there might be a temptation to overlook things. However, people have to know that the organisation is ready to tackle inappropriate behaviours.

Culture: **People have to see that as a leader, one is not willing to allow a culture that might make certain people feel excluded to develop.** Strategy might be one thing but the culture of the organisation is the one thing that will make sure a leader who truly wants to make their organisation inclusive is successful.

As a leader, there are times when one has to say some things are not okay, and some other things are acceptable.

One must be a role model for what you expect from others.

Simon Blake

"**Perseverance:** Appreciable progress might take a long time and in some organisations, progress has taken up to 20 years to go from 15% senior positions women to 45%.
**A leader who seeks to make their organisation more inclusive must not relent,
and just keep at it.**

Succession Planning and Sustainability: It is a long road and one must think ahead when starting the process of making their organisation more inclusive. There is also a need to ensure s/he has a team in place that supports this work.

Succession planning is also critical to ensure that any progress made is not lost when s/he moves on.
Those are my two tips."

Sharon White

"**The first would be that the leader should remain authentic.** Being authentic – and remaining true to oneself, makes one more credible. A leader must act as a role model so that
others can learn from him or her.

The second would be to ensure internal communications are regular. employees should feel they are valued.
Regular, open communications will go a long way in ensuring employees feel this way.
I carry out regular face-to-face communications with employees and I would recommend this.

My final tip would be to ensure such a leader collects data regularly to track progress, or lack of progress, in relation to making their workplace more inclusive. This data should be shared widely to evidence accountability and motivate people."

Sue Owen

"**The first one would be to listen consistently**. Not just hearing what people say but listening objectively. The bottom line is that everyone wants to be happy and this extends to their work. People want to progress their careers and they generally value a happy workplace so they will talk from their hearts and make suggestions as to how one can achieve this.
Listen objectively

The second would have to be to devote time to managing stakeholders effectively. Championing diversity and inclusion is all about relationships – touching the hearts of people, winning hearts and minds.
This takes time.

My third tip for any leader who seeks to make their organisation more inclusive is that s/he must be open to learning as this will contribute to their repertoire of how best
to champion diversity and inclusion.
Every conversation is a learning experience.

Tunde Ogungbesan

The interviewees suggested a wide range of tips for leaders and managers seeking to make their organisations and workplaces more inclusive. These have all been condensed in the summary in the following section.

What was abundantly clear from the interviews was that all the five leaders were personally committed to championing inclusion. This impacted greatly on their ability to drive positive change. Leaders who seek to create inclusive environments are likely to face challenge – especially as they have the difficult responsibility for changing cultures and attitudes. All the leaders interviewed for this study faced numerous challenges. However, their personal commitment to championing inclusion appeared to fuel their resilience.

Drawing from all the feedback the interviewees provided, this study makes **EIGHT recommendations** to leaders and managers seeking to nurture inclusive environments:

1. Be the role model: A leader who seeks to build an inclusive workplace has to be a visible, credible and authentic inclusion role model – persevering in the face of challenge. Championing inclusion is akin to championing any change. It requires sustained commitment and openness to learning. The challenge of nurturing an inclusive workplace should not be the sole responsibility of the leader or those who are disadvantaged or feel excluded in the workplace. All employees need to be engaged in this agenda.

2. Nurture the Culture: Proper inclusion can only occur if the organisational intentionally values difference and encourages diverse opinions. Policies and processes which facilitate workplace inclusion should be embedded in the organisation's ways of working. The right culture is critical. Leaders should actively and visibly work to build a culture where employees are accountable for their actions and people feel able to thrive in the workplace.

3. Introspection: The journey towards becoming an inclusive workplace should begin with some honest introspection to assess how diversity is already being promoted in the workplace. The process of introspection should also seek to identify where various groups are excluded and disadvantaged.
As many stakeholders as possible should be engaged. During and following the period of introspection, leaders should take steps to demonstrate that employees voices are heard and valued.

4. Listen Consistently: Leaders and managers who want to build inclusive workplaces must be prepared to objectively listen to, and digest feedback from a wide range of employees. Discussions have to explore difficult issues in a safe, non-judgmental environment that is open to learning. To truly understand workplace exclusion and discrimination, discussions must explore difficult issues that are inclusion barriers, in a safe, non-judgmental environment. If recriminations do arise, these should be managed in a professional manner that is solution focused.

5. Communication: Regular and open communications with internal and external stakeholders should help mitigate against situations where certain individuals or groups do not feel valued, heard or engaged. While communications might be tailored to engage different audiences, the core message of why inclusion matters to the organisation should be consistent and aligned to overarching business priorities. Assumptions should not be made that everyone naturally appreciates the value of an inclusive workplace, as some employees are likely to feel threatened by the changes that are being planned.

6. Training and Education: Workplaces are microcosms of society so it is expected that our workplaces will undoubtedly harbour people with biases, phobias and assumptions – positive and negative, just like in wider society. However, leaders should actively take steps to avoid creating organisations that accommodate or tolerate discriminatory behaviours. Regular education and training efforts should aim to provide opportunities for all employees, especially the leaders, to reflect and learn about how to intentionally build inclusive workplaces. To encourage honest reflection and manage difficult discussions it is recommended that training and education efforts should initially be delivered by external experts.

7. Auditing: Data and feedback should be routinely collected to identify and address where diversity and inclusion gaps exist. The data and feedback should also be used monitor progress, or lack of progress, in relation to any diversity and inclusion goals and targets. Regular reporting should not be a soulless tick-box exercise as it could be used as an opportunity to celebrate how various leaders and employees have contributed towards making their workplaces more inclusive. Progress reporting should be shared widely and transparently, to demonstrate accountability and motivate all involved in driving positive change.

8. Succession Planning and Sustainability: As leaders are likely to move on to other roles or opportunities, steps should be taken to develop successors who will continue to drive the work needed to maintain an inclusive workplace and organisational culture. This is especially critical considering the fact that nurturing an inclusive workplace requires time and effort to change long entrenched attitudes and cultures. It is essential that any progress made is not lost when a leader moves on.

In conclusion , this study acknowledges that leaders who want to build inclusive workplaces will face challenges. The leaders interviewed for this study have shared their experiences of managing challenge, driving change and remaining resilient. Other leaders and managers could learn from their insights.

In today's world, workplace inclusion goes beyond just being a 'nice to have' business consideration. As we navigate uncertain socio-economic waters, especially post-Brexit, leaders have to recognise that workplace inclusion not only makes business sense, it has a critical role to play in facilitating social integration, cohesion and social mobility.

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