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Jobs *transform* lives

Increasing opportunity, supporting growth:

The role of good recruitment in gender diversity



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FOREWORDS

A new focus has been brought to the debate about gender and the workplace by the vivid examples of poor practice we have seen this year – from the President’s Club dinner in January to the experiences shared through the ‘Me Too’ and ‘Time’s Up’ movements.

But there is much more to achieving workplaces that work for everyone than just tackling the worst excesses of behaviour. Men continue to dominate the highest paid roles, and tend to work in higher-paid sectors. Long-standing models of career progression can often contribute to this. Changing this is not only the right thing to do – it makes business sense. Firms can add billions of pounds to the UK economy by improving their processes and engagement of women. The REC and its members can help employers challenge established practices and access new pools of candidates to help them do this. This report provides timely analysis of where we are as recruiters when it comes to doing our bit to combat gender inequality. It then looks at what practical steps we can take to make progress. What has been clear throughout our research is that in-house HR professionals and recruiters are keen to make progress quickly.

Such commitment is essential to progress – good recruitment is the foundation upon which a fair and gender-balanced organisation is built, so we are in a unique position to drive change. One of the ways the REC is doing its part is through our ‘Good Recruitment Campaign’, which defines best recruitment practice around nine key principles, the first of which is to promote diversity and inclusion.

And we can do more ourselves – our recent report *Attract and Retain Top Talent* found that male managers in the recruitment industry earn more on average from their total earnings than women, with a mean gender pay gap of 10 per cent.

We need to use the power we have as an industry to make a difference. This is an opportunity for our sector to make long-lasting change for the UK which will drive growth and see us compete effectively on the global stage. Research suggests that increasing women’s labour market contributions to match men would be worth 35 per cent of GDP, raising living standards for us all.

Thankfully as an industry we have many positives to build on. There are more HR and recruitment roles than ever before focused explicitly on improving diversity and inclusion. By adopting and promoting the practices outlined in this report, we will be well positioned to have a strong and positive influence on businesses across the UK correcting gender inequalities.

Neil Carberry
Chief Executive, REC

At Indeed, we have a unique position of being the world's number one job site helping people get jobs, while also being an employer ourselves of more than 7,000 people globally. Our connection with people of all backgrounds inspires conversations about an issue that sits at the heart of hiring: attracting and retaining a diverse talent pool. The opportunity to discuss this important topic is why we are proud to partner with the REC on this report on gender diversity and inclusion.

In 2018, we kicked off a series of Inclusion Forums in some of our European offices. In order to attract and maintain a diverse workforce, employers must ensure that they are providing employees with an inclusive culture – this isn't a tick-box measure. Research shows that having employees from varied backgrounds fosters variety of thought and promotes innovation; when employees feel empowered, you see better problem-solving, efficient employee recruitment and improved retention rates.

But for diversity and inclusion to flourish, there needs to be strong leadership from the top; and we know that when this happens, it positively impacts the bottom line, too. As the report recommends, employers must be willing to change and this includes holding their recruitment processes to closer scrutiny. Another key point it raises is that change has to be clearly communicated in order to reap the rewards.

One way employers can create equal opportunities is by removing bias from their hiring process and being open-minded about the type of people they hire. This approach is especially pertinent at a time when unemployment in the UK is at its lowest since the 1970s – and competition for talent is fierce. And yet, the unemployment rate for people with disabilities and from minority groups is higher than the national average.

Unfortunately, hiring can be an imperfect process, and bias and stereotypes can make great candidates feel invisible. Last year, we ran a global brand campaign called 'Search for Greatness', which tackled unconscious bias head on and highlighted that greatness doesn't fit a defined mould, nor can it be achieved by following a defined path.

The good news is that employers appear to be taking action: the share of UK job postings on Indeed containing either 'diversity' or 'inclusion' has increased over the last three years. A higher share of jobseekers is also searching for 'diversity' or 'inclusion' roles than they were in 2015.

Programmes such as the REC'S Good Recruitment Campaign, which Indeed has been proud to partner on, are important for industry collaboration on this issue. When it comes to diversity and inclusion, there is no competition: we all need to learn from each other.

We are headed in the right direction, but as this report makes clear, there is work still to be done.

Bill Richards
UK Managing Director, Indeed

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We need a labour market where inclusion is the norm, where the diversity agenda becomes a mainstream activity – for both employers and employees

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





£150 billion

could be generated in additional GDP by 2025 by closing the gender gap

The country is simply failing to make use of all its productive talents. Men continue to dominate the highest paid roles while women work fewer hours and tend to work in lower-paid sectors. This challenge becomes more pressing as labour and skills shortages are mounting. Recruitment professionals have a leading role to play in driving change across organisations and promoting gender diversity and equality in the workplace. This, in turn, will help drive growth and raise living standards for all.

For a business to thrive and continue to compete successfully both within the UK and internationally, it must maximise all the resources available. And the most important asset of any organisation is its people. Talent acquisition has increasingly become more challenging for organisations as labour and skills shortages intensify. Central to attracting and recruiting the right person for the role is the awareness that greater diversity and inclusion is the right and financially wise thing to do, with diverse teams producing better results across the private and public sectors.

Importantly, utilising the talents of women and rewarding their contribution across sectors and occupations in the workforce will benefit the UK economy as a whole. In fact, it has been estimated that if the country's gender gap were to be closed, this could potentially generate an additional £150 billion to gross domestic product (GDP) by 2025.¹

Promoting gender diversity and inclusion in recruitment is essential good recruitment practice. We need a labour market where inclusion is the norm, where the diversity agenda becomes a mainstream activity – for both employers and employees. But for this to happen, all stakeholders involved must move from good intentions to tangible action. The introduction of gender pay gap reporting for large organisations has exposed the substantial gender inequality in the workplace. Transparency and acknowledgement of the realities are the first steps in making real change happen.

Diversity does not emerge in a vacuum. Organisational cultures and biased recruitment practices that prevent talented women from applying for both entry-level roles and more senior roles must be constantly reviewed and evolve to allow the creation of a diverse and inclusive workforce. In this way, organisations will significantly increase their ability to compete effectively in the market and the principles of diversity and inclusion to be built into the fabric of organisations, reflected throughout and extended to all levels of the organisation – in all internal and external communication, campaigns and the organisation's brand.

The recruitment industry – representing the professional part of recruitment – can make a real difference. While considerable work has been done to stamp out misguided practices, recruitment professionals are still seeing a number of ways in which organisations could improve their hiring procedures and rule out gender-related bias. Professional recruiters and HR specialists have a leading role to play in making change happen by working together with employers to dismantle latent barriers and develop practices that enable talented and capable women to apply and be fairly assessed.

¹ McKinsey Global Institute (2016). The power of parity: advancing women's equality in the United Kingdom. Available at: www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/gender-equality/the-power-of-parity-advancing-womens-equality-in-the-united-kingdom

At a glance: Introducing best practice in recruitment

Do	Don't
Ensure that job adverts are written in neutral language.	Use loaded or gender-coded language in job adverts.
Advertise jobs using a wide variety of platforms to reach out to a larger and more diverse pool of talent.	Hire exclusively through recommendations from current staff or personal networks.
Proactively offer flexible working arrangements to all applicants for as many roles as possible.	Offer limited or no access to flexible work.
Clearly define a salary range for a role and include this in the job advert.	Focus on candidates' pay history or use complex pay systems.
Use name-blind and context-blind recruitment processes.	Shortlist candidates purely based on personal information or quotas.
Determine impartial, skills-based selection criteria to be used for all candidates.	Conduct one-on-one, unstructured interviews with candidates.
Train hiring managers and other screening and interviewing staff in dealing with unconscious bias.	Hire like for like or hire solely based on working experience and personal assumptions.
Regularly assess the success of the recruitment process, and form an action plan to improve future actions.	Fail to request feedback from both successful and unsuccessful candidates.
Set diversity and gender equality targets and measure your progress against these.	Fail to regularly monitor the composition of your workforce and identify areas that must be improved.

Recommendations

Reframing the debate is central to promoting gender diversity, equality and inclusion during the recruitment process. Recruiting diversely is essentially good recruitment. The organisations who fail to embrace best practice risk falling behind competitor organisations who do.

Actions for employers and HR professionals

- Have strong leadership in place from the top that promotes diversity and its positive impact.
- Make principles of diversity and inclusion the norm by constantly reviewing organisational culture and recruitment practices for both early careers and senior roles.



- Be explicit about your gender diversity goals and implement a comprehensive action plan to achieve these. Make diversity and gender equality goals part of your annual business targets and measure progress regularly.
- Seek external advice about how you can improve practices and increase opportunities for all employees.
- Make flexible working available at the point of hire.
- Make clear that addressing the gender pay gap is a priority for the organisation and be transparent on your progress.
- Apply the same standards and principles to external and internal hiring as well as job progression.
- Highlight case studies of successful women in your workforce and improve your outreach work with schools and universities, and through other networking activities.
- Work closely with recruitment agencies to evaluate processes in a transparent manner, dismantle latent barriers and eliminate discriminatory practices.

Actions for recruitment agencies

- Be a champion of diversity, gender equality and inclusion, and communicate this in all internal and external communication.
- Educate clients, especially hiring managers and leadership teams, on the benefits of diverse working environments.
- Call out bad practice when you see it and challenge your clients. Raise awareness on discriminatory practices and gender-related biases, especially unconscious bias.
- Drive change by asking employers the right questions. Identify the knowledge gaps and work with clients to address these.
- Demonstrate to existing and prospective clients your ability and readiness to attract and recruit candidates from diverse backgrounds and promote gender equality.
- Introduce new approaches to access different pools of potential talent.
- Provide tailored support to candidates, especially following career breaks, and advise them on career transitions and job progression prospects.
- Actively seek and reflect on feedback from candidates and clients/employers in order to continuously re-evaluate your actions and improve customer experience.
- Partner with social enterprises, charities and other organisations to encourage a diverse range of candidates to apply for different roles – both entry-level and senior roles.
- Review hiring processes and produce a best practice guide for your staff and clients on how to successfully recruit diversely.
- Practise what you preach. Set equality targets within your organisation and measure progress against these. Monitor regularly the current makeup and remuneration of your workforce and use data to shape business planning and training activities for staff.





Actions for government and policymakers

- Set the tone of the public discourse on gender equality by highlighting the benefits of gender diversity to organisations and using its influence to drive progress.
- Play a leadership role by continuing to implement good hiring practices such as anonymised applications and demonstrating progress in senior roles across the public sector.
- Drive the inclusive hiring agenda by hosting 'good recruitment' events on a constituency level, involving local employers. MPs played a key convening role on the disability agenda through reverse job fairs; a similar approach could promote change on gender equality.
- Continue the efforts to highlight the gender pay gap reporting findings. As part of this, showcase examples of positive change.
- Set clear gender equality and diversity targets for the public and private sectors in the medium and long term. The targets for the private sector should be set together with the business community.
- Work with employers and recruiters to evaluate the possible effects on gender pay gap when a salary range is not clearly defined in the job advert.
- Work closely with the business community and the recruitment industry to develop a comprehensive directory of available initiatives and processes to further promote gender diversity and equality during recruitment and in the workplace.
- Harness the contribution of sectoral representative bodies to drive and measure change in gender equality across specific sectors.
- Develop a new support network to facilitate career transitions. This will become increasingly important in a fast-changing world of work where whole sectors will face disruption. This will also help more women to transition into high-growth sectors and boost progression opportunities.
- Commission more research on intersectionality; for example, specific barriers and challenges for women with disabilities or from different ethnic and social backgrounds.

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The research aims at supporting recruiters and HR professionals to develop diverse and inclusive recruitment practices

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INTRODUCTION





Increasing women's labour market contributions to match men would be worth

35 per cent of GDP

In recent years there has been an increasing focus on diversity and inclusion, both within businesses and society in general. In particular, gender equality has been the focus of efforts, with stakeholders urged to adapt practices that promote equal opportunities for women in the workplace, including closing the gender pay gap. The recruitment industry can make a real difference in combating gender inequality. By helping employers challenge established practices and secure the contribution of women in the workforce, their potential and talents can be used to the full.

In order to safeguard these principles at the workplace, it is vital to pay attention to the recruitment process and the role of professional recruitment stakeholders in this. Recruiters and HR professionals who abide by the highest recruitment standards can play a key role with both their own practices and by supporting their clients and employers, respectively, to develop their own internal policies and behaviours. They can guide and advise employers on what specific actions to take in order to ensure an unbiased, diverse and inclusive recruitment process. At each stage of the process recruiters and HR specialists, who represent the industry and form the professional part of recruitment, are best placed to develop and implement policies that can drive change.

The main question that this report addresses is: how can recruiters and in-house HR professionals advise and guide employers to promote gender diversity and inclusion during the recruitment process?

Specifically, this research investigates the misguided hiring practices that result in gender inequalities at the workplace and develops an action plan to safeguard gender diversity and inclusion during the various recruitment stages. Accordingly, the report demonstrates the added value of recruitment professionals in promoting and securing these principles. While it is important for diversity and inclusion to be considered in recruitment, employee onboarding and career development, this research focuses on gender diversity during the recruitment process, but in doing so it also touches upon issues of the older workforce, working parents, disability and flexibility.

Report structure and methodology

The research aims at supporting recruiters and HR professionals to develop diverse and inclusive recruitment practices, and to give them tools to engage with other stakeholders around these issues. To maximise usefulness, the report is presented in the form of a practical handbook with key issues to address and corresponding recommended actions for recruiters and their clients.

- **Section 3** reviews gender-related biases and the widespread pay gap between male and female employees as manifested in the government's gender pay gap reporting in August 2018.
- **Section 4** investigates more closely the importance of promoting diversity and inclusion during the recruitment process and informs of the vital role recruiters and HR professionals play in raising awareness, tackling biases and safeguarding gender equality in the workplace.

- **Sections 5 and 6** comprise an action plan and a step-by-step guide to enable all those involved in recruitment to refine their resourcing strategies and ensure an inclusive process. It includes recommendations of how recruiters can raise awareness within client organisations and guidelines for HR professionals and recruiters to promote best practice.

The action points and checklist form the basis for both recruitment stakeholders and employers to assess their practices, measure their progress and prepare a comprehensive action plan to further promote diversity and inclusion during the recruitment process.

The report draws largely on qualitative insights from senior professionals from the business and recruitment industries. It includes testimonies that illustrate the challenges of recruiting diversely as well as advice from those HR professionals and recruiters who have been successful in promoting diversity and inclusion within their organisation and with their clients, respectively.

The following research activities underpin this report:

- A focus group with HR professionals, whose employers are signatories to the Good Recruitment Campaign
- A focus group with senior recruitment professionals, whose recruitment agencies are REC members
- Structured interviews with senior HR professionals and recruitment professionals
- Quantitative responses from two surveys of employers/HR decision-makers, conducted by ComRes
- A review of the relevant literature.

Quotes from the qualitative research are provided throughout the report and are attributed accordingly. Some responses have been anonymised at the request of research participants.

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Essentially, an inclusive workforce reflects the diverse range of those it serves and the wider community

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CORRECTING GENDER INEQUALITIES





All employers with over **250 employees** were required to report their gender pay gap.

Greater diversity and gender equality are not only the right thing to do, but they also make business sense as they can drive economic growth. Yet, gender inequalities in the workplace persist. These are reflected in the current makeup of the workforce, long-standing models of early careers and career progression, and the differences in the average remuneration of male and female workers. Embracing best practice and closing the gender pay gap are considerable challenges, but they are essential to making progress.

The general benefits of a diverse and inclusive workforce have been well established. Embracing diversity and inclusion not only helps attract and secure new talent and additional skills, but is also linked to increased productivity, improved employee engagement and a better alignment with clients. Essentially, an inclusive workforce reflects the diverse range of those it serves and the wider community.

Notwithstanding progress in recent years, systemic, structural and latent barriers exist throughout the labour market and across sectors and teams. These challenges can range from conscious and unconscious biases, poor flexible working options to difficulties accessing information and direct and indirect discriminatory practices. One such challenge is the gender pay gap, which has become more evident following the mandatory gender pay gap reporting for large UK employers that came into force in April 2017.

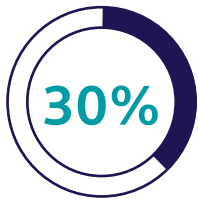
Reducing and eliminating gender inequalities at the workplace is a challenge for business leaders and governance. Addressing this challenge, however, not only serves the interests of individual organisations but also helps to improve economic performance as a whole. By promoting and using the productive talents of people from a diverse range of backgrounds, including women, the disabled, ethnic minorities and older workers, the economy can thrive.

In the spotlight: Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap is an overall measure that reflects differences in the average hourly earnings and labour market participation of all men and women across a workforce. If women do more of the less-well-paid jobs within an organisation than men, the gender pay gap is usually bigger.

The gender pay gap is not the same as unequal pay, which is paying men and women differently for performing the same (or similar) work. Unequal pay has been unlawful since 1970.

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017, which came into force on 6 April 2017, all employers with over 250 employees were required to report their gender pay gap data before 1 August 2018. Indeed, all 10,000 UK employers that the government has identified as having more than 250 workers have published their data.



1,377 out of 10,000 large employers have a gender pay gap of more than 30 per cent.



92 per cent
of UK engineers in the workforce are men.

Gender pay inequalities are widespread

There is now evidence that the gender pay gap is not only widespread amongst the UK's large employers, but often substantial.

1. Gender pay gap in numbers

The new figures reveal the immense challenges facing the country:

- More than three in four in-scope UK companies pay their male staff more on average than their female staff.
- More than half give higher bonuses to men, on average, than women.
- The median pay gap across the economy is 18 per cent in favour of men.
- 1,377 out of 10,000 large employers have a gender pay gap of more than 30 per cent.
- Over 80 per cent of large employers have more women in their lowest paid positions than in their highest paid positions.²

“ We are actually operating in a fairly tough market. We are after fairly specialist people, whether it be in HR or safety, and truthfully we are just looking for good candidates. But there are certain industries that historically have been dominated by men. For instance, 90 per cent of the applications we receive for health and safety roles are from men. At the same time, while no right-thinking person would say that a man and a woman should earn different money for doing the same job, the gender pay gap challenge is reflective of a wider issue in society. ”

ANDREW WILLIS, CRONER

2. Men dominate highest paid roles

Gender pay gaps are largest in traditionally male-dominated sectors, such as construction and finance/insurance. It is worth noting that 92 per cent of UK engineers in the workforce and 74 per cent of those working as actuaries, economists and statisticians are men. In insurance, only one in five of the most senior roles are occupied by women. In contrast, the average gender pay gap is smallest in predominantly low-paid sectors, such as retail, where the majority of employees are women but the senior positions are dominated by men.

Notably, the vast majority (84 per cent) of people working as care workers are women.³ Essentially, the figures reveal how men dominate not only the highest paid sectors of the economy but also the highest paid occupations within each sector. Furthermore, partnerships including legal and accounting firms are not required by the legislation to report on partners' pay. However, not only are these the highest earning roles, but they are also predominantly male.

3. Part-time workers are being penalised

Flexible working is at the very core of the new world of work. Nonetheless, as the latest figures highlight, working part-time has an adverse impact on the employee's career progression and financial remuneration.

² Available at: www.gov.uk/government/news/100-of-uk-employers-publish-gender-pay-gap-data

³ House of Commons (2018). Gender pay gap reporting. The report is the first output of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee's inquiry into Corporate governance: Delivering on fair pay, which was launched in March 2018. Available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmsselect/cmbeis/928/92802.htm>



84 per cent

of people working as care workers are women.



Organisations with more than 1,000 employees were more likely to make reducing their gender pay gap a priority

The gap between the average earnings of full-time male and female workers is relatively small until women reach their 30s and 40s, when many return to work part-time or otherwise prioritise caring responsibilities. The gap broadens from the age of 40 onwards, reaching its peak between ages 50 and 59.⁴

Closing the gender pay gap will drive economic growth

At a time when demand for skills is mounting, it is imperative to secure and appropriately reward the contribution of women across sectors and occupations so that their talents and potential can be fully used. This, in turn, will benefit the economy as a whole. In fact, it has been estimated that if the country's gender gap were to be closed and if every UK region matches the pace of the fastest-improving region over the past decade, this could generate an additional £150 billion to the gross domestic product (GDP) by 2025.

In order to capture the additional £150 billion, the country will need:

- 840,000 additional female employees
- women able to do paid work for about 30 minutes more per day
- more women employed in most productive sectors and occupations.

In this scenario, every one of the UK's regions has the potential to gain between 5 and 8 per cent in GDP, with the largest opportunities in London, the north-west and the south-east of England.⁵

Shifting employer attitudes towards closing the gender pay gap

Encouragingly, there is evidence of a shift in employer attitudes towards reducing their gender pay gap since the baseline survey of spring 2017, when only 24 per cent felt this was a high priority. According to the results of the Interim Gender Pay Gap Employer Insights Survey, over a third (35 per cent) of in-scope private sector employers considered reducing their gender pay gap to be a high priority, with most of the remainder (39 per cent) seeing this as a medium priority. Organisations with more than 1,000 employees were comparatively more likely to allocate a high priority to reducing their gender pay gap (46 per cent). Although one in five employers (19 per cent) described this as either a low priority or judged it not to be a priority at all, this compares with 36 per cent in the baseline survey.⁶

Predicting the detrimental impact of gender pay gap on company perceptions

More private sector employers now predict the detrimental impact of the gender pay gap on perceptions of their organisation among potential recruits, current employees and other external stakeholders including clients, suppliers and investors. According to the Interim Gender Pay Gap Employer Insights Survey, half (53 per cent) of private sector employers believed that if they had a large gender pay gap this would have a very or fairly negative impact on perceptions of their company among current or prospective staff.

4 ONS (2018). Understanding the gender pay gap in the UK. Available at: www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/articles/understandingthegenderpaygapintheuk/2018-01-17

5 McKinsey Global Institute (2016). The power of parity: advancing women's equality in the United Kingdom. Available at: www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/gender-equality/the-power-of-parity-advancing-womens-equality-in-the-united-kingdom

6 Government Equalities Office (2018). Interim gender pay gap employer insights survey. The survey, which was published in October 2018, follows on from a baseline survey of large employers that was carried out in spring 2017. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/751141/GPG-Interim-Survey-Research-Report.pdf



More than **three in four** in-scope UK companies pay their male staff more on average than their female staff.



18 per cent is the median pay gap across the economy in favour of men

A slightly lower proportion (47 per cent) anticipated a negative impact on how external stakeholders viewed their company. In contrast, one in ten employers believed a large gender pay gap would have no impact at all on perceptions of their organisation.

As might be expected, those employers that did not view reducing their gender pay gap as a priority were typically less likely to anticipate an adverse impact on company perceptions.

Developing an action plan

Accordingly, a third (32 per cent) of private sector employers revealed that they had developed a formalised action plan for reducing their gender pay gap, though only one in ten employers had already implemented any of the specified actions. It is encouraging that the proportion of employers that had actually developed an action plan increased from 20 per cent in the baseline survey to 32 per cent in the interim survey. Most of the remainder (41 per cent of all employers interviewed in the interim survey) intended to take action but had not yet developed any concrete plans. Large organisations with more than 1,000 employees were most likely to have already implemented an action plan (16 per cent) and also least likely to have no plans to take any action to reduce their gender pay gap (7 per cent).

Unconscious bias deepens gender inequalities

Unconscious bias is an ongoing issue in the workplace and it continues to drive gender inequality in the workplace. An interviewer at a close-knit firm may be looking for someone who will fit in with their colleagues and might unconsciously discount a female candidate. In the Women in Banking report, a senior manager noted that 'a male manager would just go for the man because that's where they feel [more of a] rapport than with a woman'.⁷ Hiring in one's own image – like for like – is a real phenomenon. For instance, if hirers are predominantly male and if the culture in an organisation is already male dominated, it is likely they will hire predominantly male candidates. This presents a problem not just for the candidate but also the employer, who may have missed out on someone with the potential to be a great asset to the organisation.

In addition to entry-level roles, unconscious bias also plays a part in limiting career progression for women. According to a global report by the International Labour Organization, five of the barriers to women's leadership were related to discrimination and unconscious gender bias.⁸

The Equality and Human Rights Commission maintains an Employment Statutory Code of Practice, which suggests useful practical options that employers can use to address these issues. It particularly recommends that employers establish relevant objective criteria for the role, reflected in the job specification, assessments and conduct of interviews, and focus all selection decisions on whether each candidate met or exceeded those criteria. It also recommends that, where possible, the shortlisting process uses application forms with personal details removed – 'name-blind' recruitment – to avoid preconceptions. Similarly, technology such as the Behavioural Insights Team's Applied can be used to reduce bias throughout the recruitment process. Recruitment professionals need to challenge unconscious bias – their own and their clients – but should do so on the basis of evidence.

⁷ Institute of Leadership and Management (2012). Women in banking.

⁸ International Labour Organization (2015). Women in business and management gaining momentum. Available at: www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_334882.pdf

“ One of the main challenges we have observed in the industry is managers recruiting in their own image. When managers are presented with candidates from a similar background as themselves, there can be a tendency to recruit like-for-like, which will obviously have an impact on diversity. This is why it is essential to ensure that all hiring managers in your organisation receive suitable training on how to assess candidates' skills and competencies rather than just deciding whether they like them. ”

RECRUITMENT PROFESSIONAL

Women in the workplace: from early careers to senior roles

Gender inequalities are being perpetuated by organisational cultures and biased practices that prevent talented women from either entering the workplace, both at entry level and more senior roles, or progressing within the organisation.

Entering the workforce and career progression

Currently, there is a gender imbalance in terms of those entering specific occupations and specific sectors. Addressing this pipeline issue must start with addressing latent misperceptions and increased business involvement in schools and universities. Promoting graduate schemes, apprenticeships and intern programmes can help introduce female candidates to traditionally male-dominated professions and sectors such as construction and engineering. Women face similar challenges when applying for more senior roles, especially in those sectors that are considered to be male dominated. Securing a senior role becomes even more difficult for those female candidates who have had career breaks.

Generally, career progression would correspond to experience and level of success within an organisation. An agreed employee development plan that sets future goals and targets for progression can ensure a fair process. However, long-standing models of career progression often contribute to perpetuating male domination in higher-paid sectors and highest paid roles. In reality, opportunities to develop and progress within the organisation are not provided equally between male and female workers, and this is reflected in the substantial gender pay gap.

Increasing opportunity for female candidates requires tackling biases and discriminatory practices at all levels – from early careers to senior roles – and within the career ladder. Notably, developing a genuine growth mindset amongst the future generation of workers is a key factor in boosting aspirations and the ability to navigate a fast-changing world of work. This is especially important as a means of dismantling barriers to gender equality in specific roles and sectors.

“ As part of our efforts to attract candidates from diverse and under-represented groups, we also focus on bringing in talent at the entry level; we are currently working on promoting graduate schemes, apprenticeships and intern programmes. ”

CLAIRE REES, OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS



Companies listed on the FTSE 100 should have at least a third of their executive roles filled by women by 2020.



0.9 per cent is the marginal increase in the number of women on company boards.

“As part of our strategy to create a more inclusive experience for candidates with a view of driving diversity within our organisation, we have introduced a centralised resourcing function. Focusing on both experienced hires and early careers in the specialist roles we require, our primary goal is to make that experience – right from the point of knowing about us, the adverts and the interview assessment through to the onboarding process – the most inclusive so that people from all backgrounds feel they can be a part of our organisation.”

ANDY LIVINGSTON, HISTORIC ENGLAND

Female representation in senior roles

According to a government-backed independent review in November 2016, companies listed on the FTSE 100 should have at least a third of their executive roles filled by women by 2020. The 33 per cent target is voluntary and has since been extended to FTSE 250 companies.⁹

In July 2018, a report by Cranfield School of Management about gender diversity in senior roles amongst the FTSE 100 companies revealed that, while female executive positions have flat-lined for a fourth consecutive year at 9.7 per cent, there has been considerable progress in female representation on non-executive board positions. The percentage of women holding directors' seats in the boardrooms of FTSE 100 companies had increased to 29 per cent in June 2018 from 27.7 per cent in October 2017 and 11 per cent in 2007. This was largely a result of women being hired from outside to part-time non-executive roles.¹⁰

Meanwhile, comprehensive data provided by the FTSE 250 companies highlighted the lack of progress in improving gender diversity at the highest executive levels. The number of female executive directorships dropped from 38 per cent to 30 per cent between October 2017 and June 2018. Moreover, there has only been a marginal increase in the number of women on boards, from 22.8 per cent in October 2017 to 23.7 per cent in June 2018.¹¹

“We need to think big and act decisively in order to move the needle. FTSE 350 companies need to treat gender diversity as seriously as they treat sales, risk management and innovation, otherwise nothing will change.”

PROFESSOR SUE VINNICOMBE CBE¹²

Progress in improving gender diversity in executive and non-executive board positions amongst the UK's biggest companies should be celebrated. However, there is much more to be done to bring about a fundamental shift in the way these companies function and recruit as well as ensure that other organisations will follow their example.

9 The independent review in November 2016, which recommended Britain's top companies should ensure that more women make it on to executive committees as well as into boardrooms, was led by Sir Philip Hampton and Dame Helen Alexander. It followed the work of Lord Davies, who recommended in 2011 that FTSE 100 companies should double the proportion of women in boardrooms including non-executive roles to 25 per cent by 2015.

10 Cranfield University (2018). The female FTSE board report 2018: Busy going nowhere with the female executive pipeline. Available at: www.cranfield.ac.uk/som/press/cranfield-ftse-report-highlights-female-under-representation-in-executive-ranks

11 Available at: www.cranfield.ac.uk/som/press/cranfield-ftse-report-highlights-female-under-representation-in-executive-ranks

12 Professor Sue Vinnicombe CBE is Professor of Women and Leadership at Cranfield School of Management and is the co-author of The female FTSE board report 2018: Busy going nowhere with the female executive pipeline. Ibid.

Flexible working supports diversity and growth

Employee needs and expectations are evolving. The ongoing feedback from REC members is that there is growing demand for flexibility amongst candidates. While pay and progression opportunities remain key factors, there has been a marked increase in the number of individuals asking about the working patterns and organisational culture.

Ways to provide flexibility in the workplace

Flexi-time is the most sought-after way of working; it gives the individual the absolute flexibility on the hours and place of work. Part-time working, job-share, shifts, staggered hours and compressed hours are some of the other ways in which employers can provide flexibility to their staff.

In instances where flexible roles are not available, some candidates now take matters into their own hands; they submit joint applications, packaging themselves as a pair, when applying for full-time non-flexible roles.

There is a strong, positive correlation between flexible work and diversity in the workplace. Offering flexibility from the outset can be key in allowing employers to reach groups of candidates they previously found difficult to engage and ensuring applications are from more diverse backgrounds. In fact, flexible working has long been regarded as a way to bring more family-friendly working practices into the labour market. This has helped those returning to work after a break in employment, providing the flexibility needed to help carers balance work and home lives as well as those with disabilities who are unable to work full-time. By extension, if it is easier for women to enter the labour market, this can have a positive effect on helping businesses reduce the gender pay gap.

At senior levels, the Lord Davies Review on women on boards¹³ found that one of the key barriers to improving board diversity in gender terms was a lack of flexibility around work-life balance, particularly with regard to maternity leave and young families. Our previous research revealed that for women already working flexibly, the next move in their career can be fraught with assumptions on both the candidate side and the hirer side.¹⁴ In fact, making flexibility the norm can boost women into the workforce and especially into more senior-level roles. An increased number of men working flexibly can also help to level the playing field between men and women when it comes to employment and the unconscious bias of employers.

“ Ultimately we want to recruit the best candidate. To do so, we must make our roles attractive to a wider and more diverse pool of talent. But the challenge is to change the mindsets around inflexible working arrangements and unconscious biases. ”

CLAIRE REES, OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

¹³ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2011). Women on boards. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/31480/11-745-women-on-boards.pdf

¹⁴ REC (2014). Room at the top: Women leaders and the role of executive search. Available at: www.rec.uk.com



9 in 10

see achieving a diverse and inclusive workforce as vital to their future success.

Ensuring a diverse workforce is a key advantage in business and providing flexible roles can help this. In the CBI's 2017 employment trends survey, more than nine in ten respondents (93 per cent) see achieving a diverse and inclusive workforce as important or vital to their future success, with seven in ten firms (70 per cent) introducing or extending flexible working opportunities.¹⁵ However, nearly half of respondents report that developing the appropriate infrastructure to facilitate flexible working can be a barrier. Although new systems and technologies can make flexible working more viable, this is not equally the case across all sectors and occupations.

Crucially, flexible working is not only a positive option for workers but it also offers macro benefits to businesses' competitiveness and the overall economy, which ultimately secures competitive advantage for the UK. This success flows back to individual workers through more job opportunities in better-performing organisations.

¹⁵ CBI (2017). Working together: CBI/Pertemps employment survey. Available at: www.cbi.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/working-together/



CASE STUDY

Hilti Group

The Hilti Group provides leading-edge technology to the global construction industry. Currently employing 27,000 employees in more than 120 countries around the world, the company was named Most Inspiring Supplier at the Inspire Awards in June 2018 and is included in the Sunday Times 100 Best Companies to Work For.

The company's Global Diversity and Inclusion initiative has three primary focuses: gender, generations and global. This means building a high-performing team that has appropriate female representation in middle and senior levels, is culturally diverse and remains an attractive employer for every generation.

Hilti believes that a diverse workforce with equal opportunities is essential for their business. This is reflected in the company's policies and actions:

- All managers undergo unconscious bias training as part of both their leadership development training and the two-day 'selecting the right people' interview training course.
- All team leaders undergo mandatory 'Leading Inclusively' training.
- Initial screening process focuses on candidates' skills, strengths and values rather than focusing on career history.

- Training and mentoring schemes are provided to new recruits.
- Attending career events at schools with female engineers sharing their career stories.
- Extending the apprenticeship offering to ensure the early careers work is not only focused on graduates.
- Flexible working options available at all levels of the business and are clearly stated in job adverts.

Hilti's Head of Talent and Resourcing for Northern Europe, Lara Farrell, explains:

'The sector is definitely male dominated. But here at Hilti we are hugely committed to increasing gender diversity and have made progress. Female representation across the business now stands at 28 per cent, while our gender pay gap of 5.1 per cent is significantly lower than the national average. We remain committed to keeping diversity as a business priority and our values are transparent across the organisation.'

04

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A diverse team means a wider range of backgrounds and experiences, which leads to more creative and innovative solutions to problems

”

GOOD RECRUITMENT DRIVES EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE





While unemployment has decreased in 2018 the number of job vacancies was the highest since records began in 2001

Recruitment plays a vital role in the process of creating a more diverse and inclusive workforce, as this is the first step in the relationship between employer and employee. Essentially, recruitment is the foundation upon which a fair and gender-balanced organisation is built. Only when an open, accessible and inclusive recruitment process is in place, diversity at the workplace can be accomplished.

From reconsidering their workplace culture and promotion strategies to reviewing the pay and benefits they offer employees and continuously evaluating the recruitment process they have in place, it is essential that employers take every action to ensure that their workplace is inclusive to everyone. There is not only an ethical imperative to do this, but also a business one.

Research has found that organisations with diverse leadership teams, in terms of gender, age and ethnicity, tend to perform better than competitors with homogenous teams, for a number of reasons. A diverse team means a wider range of backgrounds and experiences, which leads to more creative and innovative solutions to problems, better quality decision-making, and more far-reaching insight into a wider range of customers. One other reason for the increased success of diverse organisations is their ability to attract, develop and retain a talented workforce because of the broader talent pools they use to recruit people.¹⁶

“ Employers need to recognise that an inaccessible recruitment process may be blocking them from finding talented people from a diverse range of backgrounds. ”

SARAH NEWTON, MINISTER OF STATE FOR DISABLED PEOPLE, HEALTH AND WORK ¹⁷

Growing shortage of workers pushes for inclusion

The UK's economic strength is built on companies being able to do great business. But the country is faced with persistent labour and skills shortages. While the unemployment rate has progressively decreased since the beginning of 2018, reaching a record low for the period May to July, the number of job vacancies for the period June to August was the highest since comparable records began in 2001.¹⁸

Meanwhile, Report on Jobs – the REC's monthly source of UK labour market data – highlights that overall staff availability has been falling since November 2012.¹⁹ Employers are struggling to find the staff they need; widening their search to more diverse pools of talent should help to ameliorate this situation and at the same time potentially increase profitability. Indeed, businesses cannot afford to exclude the participation of any groups in the labour force.

¹⁶ McKinsey & Company (2018). Delivering through diversity. Available at: www.mckinsey.com/~/media/mckinsey/business%20functions/organization/our%20insights/delivering%20through%20diversity/delivering-through-diversity_full-report.ashx

¹⁷ Commenting ahead of the launch of the Department for Work and Pensions and REC's Disability Confident recruitment month, June 2018. Available at: www.rec.uk.com/news-and-policy/corporate-blog/rec-and-dwp-launch-the-disability-confident-recruitment-month

¹⁸ ONS (2018). UK labour market: September 2018. Available at: www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/september2018#main-points-for-may-to-july-2018

¹⁹ The monthly publication Report on Jobs is produced by the REC and IHS Markit. UK labour market data and analysis is available at: www.rec.uk.com/research/report-on-jobs

“ Clients are used to expecting four or five candidates for a position, but now there are only an average of two to three candidates available. In male-dominated businesses, many are asking if they can recruit women for senior-level positions; however, there are not enough female role models in the business environment. There needs to be more support, mentoring and coaching opportunities for women to support them in their careers, particularly at pivotal points; plus we need to promote flexible working within business culture. ”

SARAH HOPKINS, HOPKINS LONGWORTH

Recruitment is central to efforts promoting diversity

In recent years, stakeholders both within the public sector and the private sector have become increasingly aware of the important role that recruitment plays in creating a more diverse and inclusive workforce. In fact, an accessible and inclusive recruitment process is essential to improving a company's gender balance.

Equality Act 2010

Recognising the importance of best business practice and employers' commitment to diversity being reflected throughout the recruitment process, the Equality Act 2010 introduced positive action provisions. Positive action is when an employer takes steps to help or encourage certain groups of people, such as women who are disadvantaged in some way and under-represented in their organisation's workforce, to access employment.

It is noteworthy that, according to the 'tie-breaker' provision, if a male candidate and a female candidate are equally qualified for a position against transparent criteria, it is lawful for employers to recruit the female candidate if women are under-represented in the organisation.

UK Social Mobility Pledge

The UK Social Mobility Pledge – an equal opportunities employment framework launched in 2018 – makes specific reference to the need for business and employers to review current hiring procedures as a way of boosting social mobility.

In particular, one of the three areas of the Pledge is to embed open employee recruitment practices that promote a level playing field for candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds or circumstances, including name-blind recruitment and contextual recruitment. Employers are urged to demonstrate their commitment to accessing and progressing talent from all backgrounds.

“ We have talent spread evenly across this great country, but opportunity isn't. Businesses, with the prosperity and careers they create for people, are key to improving social mobility. ”

JUSTINE GREENING MP

Government Equalities Office

The Government Equalities Office also identifies recruitment as a key process during which gender diversity and equality can be effectively promoted. In response to the gender pay gap figures, the Government Equalities Office published guidance for organisations to help them improve the recruitment and progression of women, and close their gender pay gap.²⁰ They recommended a series of actions to employers that focus on recruitment and which they found to have been tested in real-world situations, using reliable methodologies, and had a positive impact:

- Include multiple women in shortlists for recruitment.
- Use skill-based assessment tasks in recruitment.
- Use structured interviews for recruitment.
- Encourage salary negotiation by showing salary ranges.
- Appoint diversity managers and/or diversity task forces.

The Government Equalities Office also suggested that other actions, including improving flexibility for men and women, shared parental leave, mentoring and sponsorship, setting targets, and offering networking opportunities, were promising in their potential for improving a company's gender balance.

Hiring professionals are agents of change

Recruitment professionals, both in agencies and in-house, are ideally placed to provide advice in promoting diversity and help drive change in organisations. As the experts in hiring strategies, recruiters and in-house HR professionals have invaluable insight to share with the wider business community. With more HR and recruitment roles than ever before focused explicitly on improving diversity and inclusion, both in their own organisations and for their clients, recruitment professionals and the recruitment industry at large are in a unique position to have a strong, positive influence on businesses across the UK.

Recurring misguided recruitment practices

Recruitment industry professionals are also in a good position to call out bad practice when they see it. Women are subject to gender-related biases and reduced earning capacity in the workplace, but these discriminatory practices can start even before entering into a job.

Recruiters and in-house HR professionals are reporting a wide range of ways in which they had seen employers show bias and use discriminatory and other ill-advised practices in their recruitment pipeline.

²⁰ Available at: <https://gender-pay-gap.service.gov.uk/actions-to-close-the-gap>

Challenges recruiters face: Bad business practices to avoid

Recruitment stage: Defining the role and attracting applicants

- Using loaded or gender-coded language in job description
- Misleading job profile
- Offering limited or no access to flexible work
- Hiring only through word of mouth and internal referrals
- Using a restricted range of platforms to advertise jobs
- Allocating limited budget to attract applicants, especially diverse and under-represented groups
- Advertising jobs using only personal networks

Recruitment stage: Screening of applicants

- Failing to determine impartial selection criteria applicable to all candidates
- Concentrating on personal information including name and gaps in working life
- Asking for a female candidate to be included on a shortlist, with no intention to ever hire that person
- Focusing on experience instead of potential
- Dismissing the use of skill-based tests

Recruitment stage: Interviewing of shortlisted candidates

- Interviewers and hiring managers ignoring training and advice on unconscious bias and discriminatory practices, and lacking the skills to conduct competency-based interviews
- Conducting one-on-one interviews with candidates
- Conducting completely unstructured interviews
- Asking inappropriate interview questions, such as whether the candidate was intending on having children soon
- No consideration of flexible working arrangements

Recruitment stage: Assessing the recruitment process

- Providing inadequate or no feedback to unsuccessful applicants
- Failing to request feedback about the process from unsuccessful applicants and their experience
- Lack of process enabling interviewing panel to reconvene to assess the hiring process



In the construction industry 90 per cent of leadership roles are held by men, with the average age being 55.

While considerable work has been done to stamp out misguided practices and progress is reported in promoting gender diversity and inclusion in the workplace, recruitment professionals are still seeing a number of ways in which businesses could improve their hiring procedures and rule out gender-related bias. Even though it is important that work is done across the board to improve recruitment of women, there is evidence that gender imbalances are far more widespread in some industries than others.

“ In the construction industry, 90 per cent of leadership roles are held by men, with the average age being 55. The gender imbalance on sites is more evident, with only 3 per cent of workers being female. ”

SWATI PATEL, VGC GROUP

Making change happen

What has been clear throughout this research is that in-house HR professionals and recruiters are well aware of the issues that exist within organisations as well as within the wider industries they work in. More importantly, they are keen to promote the diversity and inclusion agenda and enact policies that will improve the gender balance and performance of their businesses and their clients. This should be welcome news to the ears of policymakers who have been asking businesses to demonstrate their commitment to diversity.

“ Peer-to-peer business pressure has a crucial role to play in changing the expectations and norms around best business practice. We recommend that businesses and organisations in the public and voluntary sectors should make it standard practice to include a tangible commitment to diversity in any tendering exercise or other provision of services. ”

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY COMMITTEE, HOUSE OF COMMONS²¹

Research findings reveal that not only are recruitment companies aware of the synergy needed to promote best business practice, but that they are already committed to the cause and are using their influence to advise on and persuade their clients of the importance of inclusive hiring practices.

Likewise, HR professionals are best placed to raise awareness on gender-related biases and prompt positive action within their organisations. Positive action is when an employer takes steps to help or encourage certain groups of people, such as women, who are disadvantaged in some way and under-represented in their organisation's workforce, to access employment.

²¹ House of Commons (2018). Gender pay gap reporting. Available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmbeis/928/92802.htm>

Driving change by asking employers the right questions

- Are your business values reflected in the company's culture, brand and communication?
- Are you attracting female candidates to apply for the role?
- Is your business a champion of flexible working?
- Is your business a champion of enhanced maternity and paternity leave?
- Are you confident that the selection criteria used to screen candidates are transparent, impartial and fair?
- Do you focus more on experience or on skills and potential of your workforce?
- Are hiring managers properly trained and the interviewing panel diverse in composition?
- Do you regularly monitor under-representation in your organisation?

The way forward is clear. As the business experts in hiring strategies, recruitment and HR professionals are the people best placed to both see the knowledge gaps and problems companies are facing, and work to solve them. The recruitment industry must work together with employers and their in-house teams to put specific, ambitious and achievable actions in place to safeguard gender diversity and inclusion during the hiring process, and improve the recruitment of women in all sectors across the UK.

“ If you can get more than one person in the recruitment exercise, then do that. The more people that you can have, the less subjective the hiring decision becomes and focuses on who the right person for the job is without bias. The challenge for smaller organisations to get this right is greater, especially if HR resource isn't available. Recruitment agencies can support businesses by directing them towards better and varied ways that recruitment can be done in order to get to the end goal of a diverse, inclusive workforce. ”

NICOLA MULLINEUX, CRONER

Recruiters practising what they preach

As the business experts in hiring strategies, recruitment professionals are not only best placed to raise awareness on gender-related biases in organisations, but also to ensure gender equality and diversity practices are integral to their everyday work. This would demonstrate to existing and prospective clients the ability and readiness of recruitment agencies to recruit candidates from diverse backgrounds and promote gender equality.

Recruitment businesses such as GatenbySanderson use data to shape business planning discussions, introduce training activities and set equality targets in those areas where improvements must be made. Regularly monitoring and interrogation of the current makeup and remuneration of the agency's workforce and its leadership team are critical to these efforts.²²

²² For more information on the gender pay gap within the recruitment industry, read the REC's latest report: Attract and retain top talent: Pay and benefits in the recruitment sector. Available at: www.rec.uk.com/research/latest-research



CASE STUDY

Recruitment and Employment Confederation members' focus group

Representatives from eight recruitment agencies, all hiring in different sectors, shared some of the challenges and successes they have experienced in recruiting diversely and promoting that agenda to their clients.

Changing businesses' hiring behaviours

Many of the participants agreed that whether they were trying to get a client to hire a more diverse range of candidates, provide support networks for new staff, close the gender pay gap, or just change their attitudes more generally towards diversity and inclusion, it was the prospect of financial gain, or mitigating financial loss, that was the main factor in changing businesses' hiring behaviours. However, this worked both ways – in some cases, a company's good intentions could also be outweighed by financial considerations.

'Most organisations have good intentions and have shared their gender-related goals and actions internally and externally; however, when it comes to financial investment to make positive changes, sadly there just isn't the budget. Several businesses just aren't quite ready to start spending money on inclusion initiatives, and training an entire workforce on unconscious bias isn't free.'

CLAIRE FARROW, OUTSOURCE

Participants also spoke about the process of changing attitudes within their clients' organisations. From what they had seen, board members and executives were often eager to push the diversity and inclusion agenda within their companies – it was further down in the organisation where most work needed to be done. Many of the recruiters agreed that changing the attitudes of middle-tier managers towards diverse and inclusive recruitment was a slow process.

'For recruiters, it's about creating the space to have those conversations with clients and their staff; it's around creating the opportunity to have an honest and transparent dialogue. That creates an avenue to then do the educational piece as to why promoting diversity and inclusion in recruitment is important.'

PETER M. HALL, THE OCEAN PARTNERSHIP

Actively promoting diversity with clients

One method that seemed to have worked for many of the representatives present was simply pointing to people from diverse backgrounds that had already proved themselves in the workplace, and using them as champions for the diversity and inclusion agenda. There was some agreement that the first step was often the hardest, but that once that had been overcome, it was much easier to convince hiring managers to change their practices and be more inclusive.

'We've brought a lot of apprentices into the business and that's increased our diversity. Most apprentices are in the back office as part of our operations team, and seeing their work ethic, their professionalism and the diversity of the group has opened our colleagues' eyes up to a more diverse group of candidates.'

EMMA BRADMAN, PROSPECTUS



CASE STUDY CONTINUED...

Recruitment and Employment Confederation members' focus group

Touching on the issue of diverse interview shortlists, participants described how they are sometimes asked by clients to include a higher number of diverse candidates on shortlists. The feedback from the group, however, was mixed, with some saying that they often challenge the clients about their reasons for wanting a diverse shortlist.

'I am aware that some organisations are putting in place steps towards being more inclusive with their hiring, such as an additional female CV, but our belief is that the best candidates for a role should be sent regardless of gender ... the point is that you need to reach out to more candidates with your attraction techniques so that naturally the applicant pool is more likely to be diverse.'

CLAIRE FARROW, OUTSOURCE

Recruiters can also provide additional coaching and support for both employers and candidates in order to help employers to recruit more diversely and help diverse candidates to succeed in their new job. The consensus amongst participating recruiters was that having support in place for new starters, for example former military personnel, workers with criminal convictions or mothers and carers who wish to enter the labour market, was essential in order for them to succeed. In fact, some advocated working in partnership with social enterprises or other organisations to do this.

'As a recruiter, you must have in place a package of support, it's not just a one-off "here is a vacancy". It involves prepping the individual beforehand and also supporting the

employer. Action West London has always provided "in-work support" for the employer and the candidate for about three months. At the same time we can signpost candidates and employers to further training support from our well-established contacts of FE, HE and other training providers in West London.'

JOHN BLACKMORE, ACTION WEST LONDON

As the hiring experts, recruiters are best placed to advise employers on how to improve their recruitment strategies. From changing the language in job adverts to make them more inclusive and using a wider range of platforms to reach out to candidates, to advising employers on professional conduct and encouraging them to move towards more structured interviews to ensure an even playing field for all candidates, recruiters are central to the efforts to safeguard the principles of diversity and inclusion in recruitment and, in turn, in the workplace.

'We have to chip away at this little by little by working with organisations and changing those mindsets. It is not an easy process and it is not going to happen overnight. Not everyone wants to take on the diversity issue – this is what we as recruiters have to do.'

SWATI PATEL, VGC GROUP

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Men and women may see the world differently when it comes to gender diversity and equality in the workplace. While men tend to think the playing field is level already, women are less likely to see a workplace that is fair.

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EMBRACING BEST PRACTICE IN RECRUITMENT: AN ACTION PLAN



The most important asset of any organisation is its people. As such, a transparent and inclusive recruitment process is the basis upon which a diverse, competitive and successful organisation is built. But do employers take informed steps to promote the diversity and inclusion agenda in their organisation? Are stakeholders involved in the recruitment process asking the right questions and helping to create a comprehensive action plan that safeguards these principles?

Promoting a culture of change

Men and women may see the world differently when it comes to gender diversity and equality in the workplace. While men tend to think the playing field is level already, women are less likely to see a workplace that is fair.

Too often the business community and societies overlook the scope and scale of the issue. Notably, a study by McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.Org found that half of the men who completed a survey of HR practices think that women are well represented within the leadership of an organisation, when only one in ten senior leaders in their company is a woman. Moreover, half of men think their managers already consider a diverse line-up of candidates to fill vacancies – this is something women disagree with.²³

Diversity does not emerge in a vacuum nor is it reliant on one single person. For the principles of diversity, inclusion and equality to become the norm, change must be built into the very fabric of the organisation. From leadership to organisational structures and the workforce, a business must actively embrace change and have an approach of self-reflection and continuous improvement.

While key leaders have a substantial impact on promoting the diversity agenda and forming an inclusive workforce, creating a culture of change throughout the organisation is vital for a transformative change to happen. Good intentions must be translated into tangible action and reflected in the organisation's strategies. But to do so, the appropriate organisational structures and recruitment processes must be in place.

If improving gender diversity is important to your organisation, you need to actively champion this:

- Be explicit about your gender diversity targets and aspirations.
- Highlight case studies of successful women in your workforce.
- Apply same standards to external and internal hiring.
- Offer enhanced benefits for workers with caring responsibilities and those returning to work.
- Improve your outreach work with schools and universities, and through other networking activities, to promote your diversity agenda.
- Track and measure your progress in promoting gender diversity and equality.

²³ McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.Org (2017). Women in the workplace 2017. The comprehensive study focused on the state of women in corporate America. Available at: [womenintheworkplace.com](https://www.womenintheworkplace.com)

ACTION

Re-evaluate your actions and seek to continuously improve by reviewing your hiring procedures; identifying and overcoming gender biases and other discriminatory practices at each and every recruitment stage are central to making change happen.

What puts female candidates off applying for the role?

Recruitment involves candidates assessing hiring organisations as much as employers and recruiters assess them. If an employer is not committed to driving change and does not actively promote the diversity and inclusion agenda, female candidates are likely to be deterred from applying for the advertised role.

“ We use an online augmented writing platform to ensure the language in our job adverts appeals to all audiences. All our application forms are blind shortlisted – all personal details including the name of educational institutes are removed. In the latter stages of recruitment, we want to ensure managers have a more constructive approach to assessment and know how to effectively use the scoring structures. But there are still questions that must be asked: do applicants get put off before they even apply? Can we do more in terms of diversity and inclusion to retain new recruits? ”

ANDY LIVINGSTON, HISTORIC ENGLAND

1 Female representation

Prospective female candidates assess the culture, reputation as well as current makeup of the management and senior leadership in an organisation. If they find few or no female representatives, they can be put off applying for the role. In turn, this creates a vicious circle whereby a reduced interest by female applicants perpetuates the low female representation within an organisation.

2 Flexible working

The decision not to apply for the advertised role can be an active, personal choice; women are more likely to be primary caregivers, and requesting flexible work arrangements during recruitment can be daunting. If vacancies do not explicitly state that the hirer is open to flexible working or imply that the culture of work is one where employees are expected to work long hours or a long commute and a lot of travel is involved, this may dissuade qualified and ambitious female candidates from applying for the roles. Moreover, the penalties of working part-time, both financial and in terms of career progression, can also be conducive to the decision not to apply for the job.

“ We know many parents and carers have to juggle work with family commitments and that it can be difficult to begin a conversation around flexible working with a new employer – with the knock-on effect that employers and employees can both miss out on the right opportunities. The 'happy to talk flexible working' strapline can change all that, making it easier for employers to attract the right breadth of talent, and for employees to find the right balance between their working and home lives right from the outset. ”

AILEEN CAMPBELL, MSP²⁴

²⁴ For more information about the 'happy to talk flexible working' strapline for employers, visit: www.workingfamilies.org.uk/campaigns/happy-to-talk-flexible-working/



Nearly **two-thirds** of women would take an organisation's gender pay gap into consideration when applying for jobs.

3 Gender pay gap

An organisation's gender pay gap can also be a determining factor in deciding whether to apply for a role. According to a new survey from the Equality and Human Rights Commission, nearly two-thirds of women (61 per cent) would take an organisation's gender pay gap into consideration when applying for jobs. The findings suggest that businesses with larger pay gaps than their competitors are at risk of losing out on the best talent and suffering reputational damage if they do not take action to reduce it.²⁵

“ The message to all employers from your existing and prospective female staff is very clear. They want action and if they don't see change there is a very real risk that they won't join you ... It's crucial that all employers think seriously about this issue and demonstrate to their workforce that they are committed to closing the gender pay gap. A working environment which allows everyone to achieve their full potential is vital. If you don't deliver on this, you will fail to access a huge talent pool and will put your business at real competitive disadvantage. ”

DAVID ISAAC, CHAIR OF THE EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

4 Job specification

There is evidence that job descriptions in male-dominated sectors include more masculine gendered terms for the attributes required. The use of gendered vocabulary in job advertisements and in all communication relating to the advertised role can determine whether the job would appeal equally to men and women. Terms such as 'dominant', 'strong' and 'superior' are viewed as more masculine-themed words, whereas terms such as 'supportive', 'loyal' and 'committed' are regarded as more gender-neutral and more appealing to women candidates.²⁶

In addition, some employers value experience more than talent, meaning those women with lost working experience due to childcare or other caring responsibilities are discouraged from applying for the role.

5 The salary question

Asking current salary details in applications and during interviews can be a dreaded question for candidates. Prospective employers often use current pay as a figure on which to base the new salary. However, such practice puts women who have taken career breaks to care for children or other family members, those who have temporarily taken up a part-time job and those already suffering a gender pay gap in an unfavourable situation.

“ For too long, employers have been able to get away with underpaying women by asking for their salary history. This is a systemic problem that perpetuates the issue of the gender pay gap. ”

CHRIS STEPHENS MP

²⁵ Equality and Human Rights Commission (2018). Gender pay gap determines women's choice of employer. Survey findings published on 10 October 2018. Available at: www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-work/news/gender-pay-gap-determines-women%E2%80%99s-choice-employer

²⁶ For an analysis on gendered wording and inequality, see Evidence that gendered wording in job advertisements exists and sustains gender inequality. Available at: www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=gendered-wording-in-job-adverts.pdf&site=7

Questions about candidates' pay history not only help to perpetuate gender pay inequalities, but crucially prevent female candidates from applying for the role. Recently, Scottish National Party delegates in Glasgow called on the Scottish Government to explore the option of prohibiting public bodies from asking for salary history in the recruitment of employees to ensure that women are consistently paid a fair market value for their skills.²⁷

“ We have a starting salary for all roles and we are transparent about what this salary is right from the beginning of the process. We value the job at that salary level and this is what we will pay you, regardless of your current package. If you happen to have been previously underpaid, whether because you are a female or just because you didn't have as good a deal in your previous role, it will not make a difference to what we offer. As a result, we have a much smaller gender pay gap than the national average. ”

LARA FARRELL, HEAD OF TALENT AND RESOURCING FOR NORTHERN EUROPE, HILTI

“ We would advise clients not to ask candidates for their current salary as they may currently be in a position where they are already underpaid. Hiring managers should benchmark against the market rather than what applicants currently earn, and clearly state what they are prepared to pay for the skills required. Otherwise they risk ending up with a new recruit who knows their worth and will eventually move on to a competitor organisation that offers the market rate. ”

SIMON BURTON, CB RESOURCING

ACTION

From organisational structures to pay and gender representation, assess what the organisation offers female candidates and scrutinise job adverts and applications to ensure these appeal equally to male and female candidates.

Using the right recruitment channels

There are multiple channels for employers and recruiters to use to advertise and attract candidates. From the use of recruitment agencies and advertising on the organisation's website to social media and word of mouth, using the right channels to advertise for each role is crucial to reaching out to a wider pool of talent.

According to the REC survey conducted by ComRes in July–September 2018, when asked in which ways the organisation recruits permanent and temporary staff, HR decision-makers revealed that the most widely used method of recruiting is in fact through former employees or word of mouth.

²⁷ Available at: www.thehighlandtimes.com/news/2018/10/09/snp-conference-vote-for-action-to-tackle-gender-pay-gap/

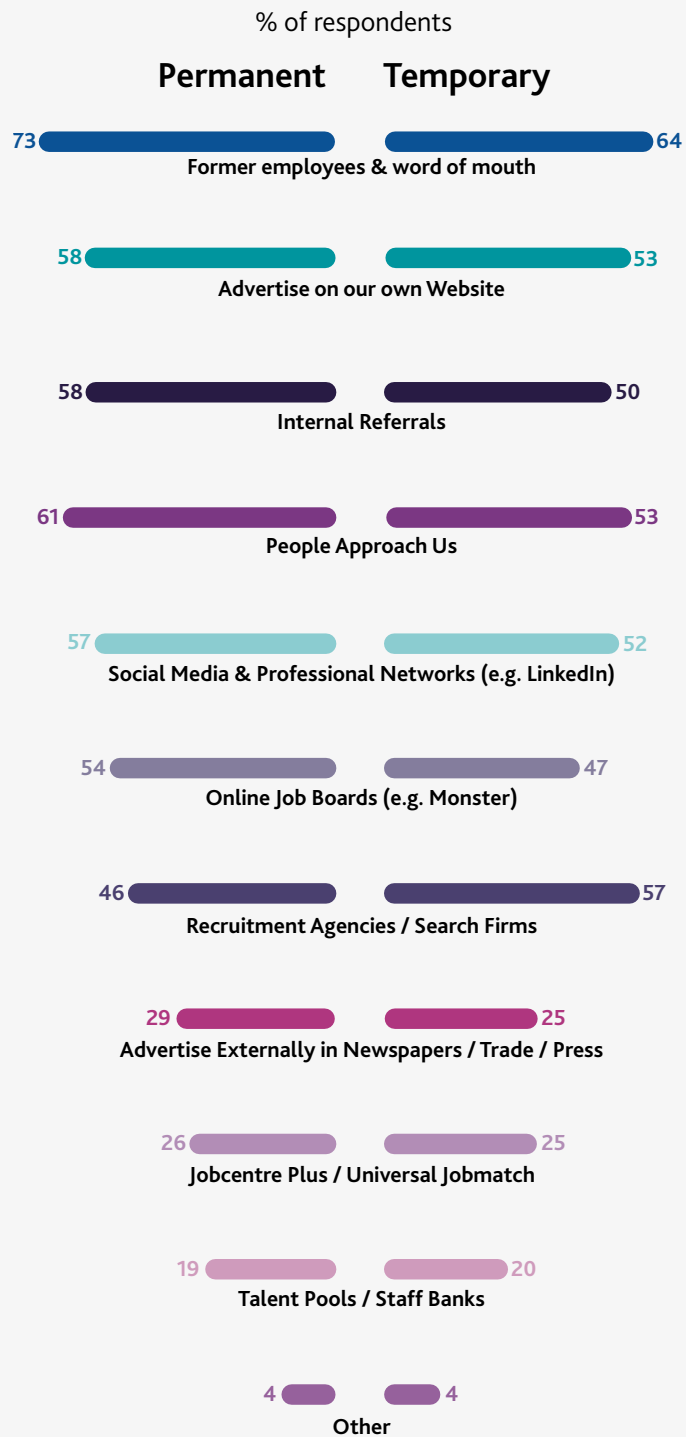
Figure 1:

In which of the following ways, if any, does your organisation recruit permanent members of staff and temporary or contract workers?



13 per cent

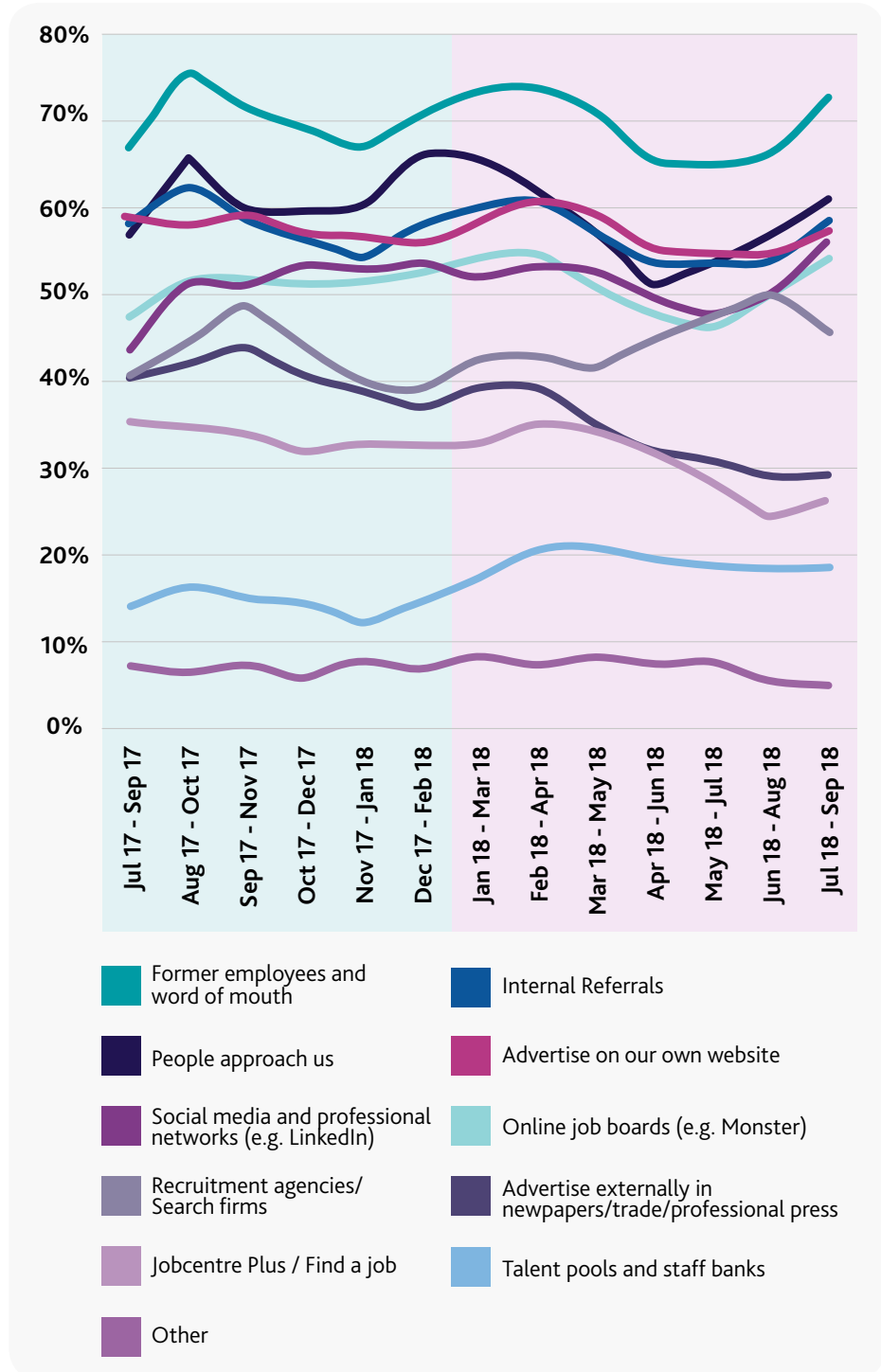
increased use of social media and professional networking sites to attract permanent staff



All who have recruited permanent staff (n=513), recruited temporary or contract workers (n=299)

Looking at the trends over the last year, when recruiting for permanent staff, recruiting through former employees and word of mouth remained the most frequently used method (Figure 2, based on REC surveys conducted in October–December 2017 to July–September 2018). Also, the proportion of employers highlighting the use of social media and professional networking sites to attract permanent staff increased significantly, from 44 per cent to 57 per cent.

Figure 2:
In which of the following ways, if any, does your organisation recruit permanent members of staff?



It is important to assess the various platforms and recruitment channels being used to reach and attract candidates, including digital platforms. Working together with recruitment agencies and advertising jobs in different recruitment sources will help to garner interest from diverse and under-represented groups.

It is important to assess the various platforms and recruitment channels being used to reach and attract candidates, including digital platforms. Working together with recruitment agencies and advertising jobs in different recruitment sources will help to garner interest from diverse and under-represented groups.

ACTION

Be diversity conscious – use a varied range of platforms to advertise jobs and to reach out to a larger and more diverse pool of talent.

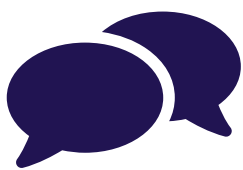
Implementing good hiring practices

According to the REC survey of 400 HR decision-makers in public and private sector organisations, which was conducted by ComRes in August–September 2018, the majority of respondents admitted to using a range of inclusive practices as standard when recruiting for a vacancy in their organisation. In fact, only one in ten respondents (9 per cent) said they do not use any of the practices identified.

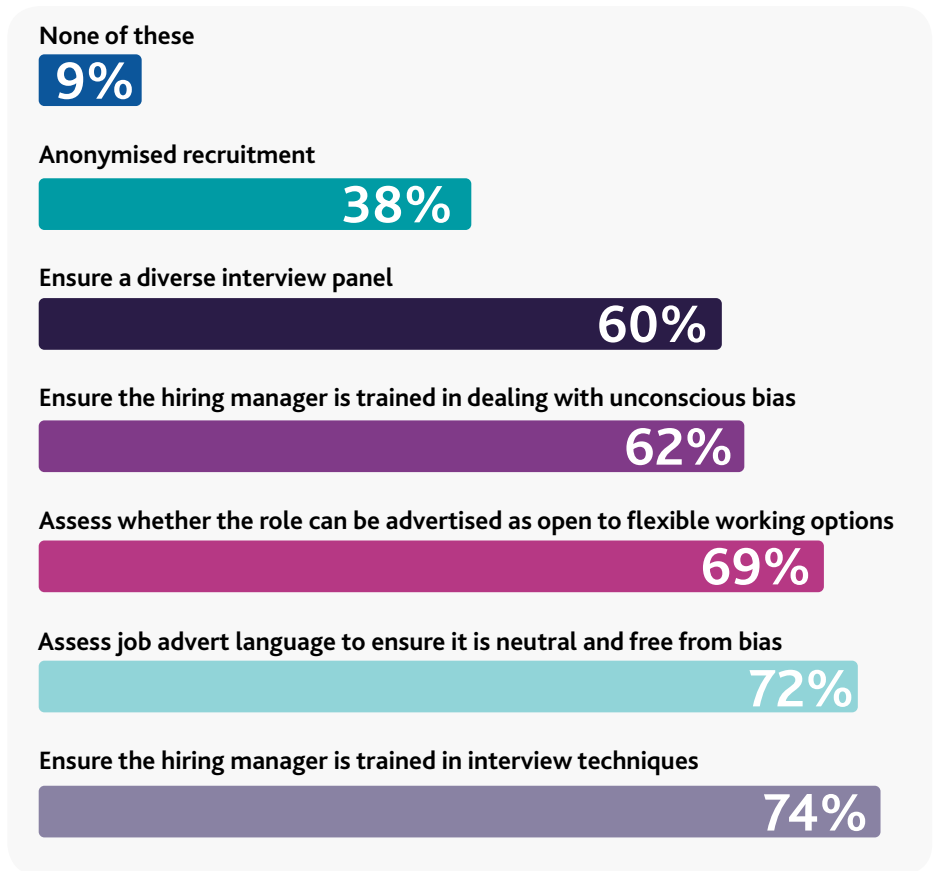
Figure 3:
If a vacancy arises, which of the following, if any, does your organisation do as standard?



9 per cent
of organisations said they don't use any inclusive practices when recruiting for a vacancy



74 per cent
ensure that their hiring manager has interview training, while 7 in 10 respondents routinely assess the language used in their job adverts.



Base: HR decision-makers (n=400)

As **Figure 3** illustrates, three-quarters (74 per cent) of those surveyed ensure that their hiring manager has interview training, while seven in ten respondents (72 per cent) routinely assess the language used in their job adverts to ensure this is neutral and unbiased. Moreover, two in five HR decision-makers (38 per cent) stated they use some form of anonymous recruitment method as standard practice.

Nonetheless, there are significant variations in responses depending on the size of the organisation. Overall, the data showed that the larger the organisation, the more likely they are to have recruitment practices promoting diversity in place. For instance, nine in ten (91 per cent) large employers (250+ employees) train their hiring managers in interview techniques, compared with 78 per cent of medium-sized organisations (50–250 employees) and 66 per cent of small organisations (up to 50 employees).



Only 4 per cent of the largest employers do not use any of the inclusive recruitment practices



4 in 5 large organisations provide unconscious bias training

Similarly, four in five (79 per cent) large organisations provide unconscious bias training compared with 63 per cent of medium-sized employers and just over half (55 per cent) of small businesses. Notably, only 4 per cent of the largest employers do not use any of the inclusive recruitment practices identified as standard; this figure increases to 12 per cent for small businesses.

The survey also highlighted some interesting regional differences. For example, anonymous recruitment processes such as removing a candidate's name, gender or age from their CV, are much more common in London, with over half (51 per cent) of respondents claiming to use these practices as standard. That contrasts with respondents in the Midlands and the rest of southern England, where only 31 per cent and 32 per cent, respectively, use similar procedures. Organisations in London and the south of England also displayed more openness to assessing roles for flexible working – 77 per cent of respondents from the south of England and London did this as standard for new vacancies compared with 63 per cent in the Midlands and 65 per cent in the north of England. However, where organisations in the capital lag behind is in assessing job adverts for biased and loaded language – 61 per cent of London-based organisations said they commonly used this practice compared with 74 per cent in the north, and a staggering 88 per cent in the south (excluding London).

Undoubtedly, encouraging work has been done towards eliminating discriminatory practices during the recruitment process within a number of organisations. However, there is still a lot of work to be done to improve hiring procedures across sectors, regions and company sizes.

ACTION

Follow the lead of diverse and inclusive organisations and apply best practice during all stages of the recruitment process to successfully tackle gender-related biases when hiring.



CASE STUDY

Good Recruitment Campaign (GRC) members' focus group

The REC conducted a focus group of British employers to find out what challenges their organisations are facing with regard to diversity and inclusion, what activities they have implemented to overcome biases and how they work with recruiters to apply best practice when hiring. Representatives from seven different companies, all signatories to the REC's Good Recruitment Campaign, shared their invaluable insight and experiences.

Recruiting diversely central to an organisation's wider strategy

Participants agreed that it was often very difficult to separate inclusive recruitment practices from wider strategies about improving the workplace culture, experience and benefits. With applicants increasingly aware of a company's brand and reputation, long-term strategies for improving conditions – for example, for people going on or returning from parental leave – have become very important in determining how successful a business is in attracting and recruiting candidates from diverse backgrounds. Encouragingly, some participants consider these long-term goals as more important than short-term financial concerns.

'I think something has to give. When you look at these sorts of initiatives, there is always going to be a trade-off ... there are some projects where it may take a little longer to recruit but over time we will be able to better reflect our clients and optimise the advantages of a better gender balance in the organisation.'

JOE SHAHMORADIAN, CAPGEMINI

Some of the companies had imposed target quotas for male and female representation, and recruitment agencies were asked to provide diverse shortlists to reflect these targets. Some participants acknowledged the negative aspects to this approach, pointing out that in some sectors such as construction and IT a diverse range of candidates is hard to come by.

'We have recruitment agencies sign up to an active inclusion charter, which clarifies not just our inclusion strategy but also that we expect their teams to have received training on unconscious bias. We have regular conversations with them about the challenges but also highlight success rates in other organisations in the same market to motivate them. Accordingly, we reward agencies at the top of the chain.'

JOE SHAHMORADIAN, CAPGEMINI

Reaching out to candidates

Many of the participating organisations revealed they had already taken measures to improve the language in their job adverts and role specifications in an effort to appeal to a more diverse range of candidates, with many using software to remove gender-coded language. The representatives also acknowledged the importance of the channels used to advertise jobs. For instance, some had success by specifically targeting a diverse audience through certain websites or personal networks, some by using recruitment agencies who focus on diverse and inclusive hiring, whereas others used different adverts in different platforms to target that particular audience. The introduction of female-focused events has helped one participating organisation to improve the gender balance in the company.



CASE STUDY CONTINUED...

Good Recruitment Campaign (GRC) members' focus group

'This is our first year where we've hired more females than males into our graduate pool. We succeeded by introducing changes based on feedback received from female graduates from the year before. They revealed how difficult it was for them to get noticed at events when they were surrounded by strong male graduates. Hosting female-focused events has made the playing field a little bit fairer.'

MICHAELA POUST, COSTAIN

Ensuring a robust interview process

Introducing diverse interview panels, ensuring a structured process and providing appropriate training to hiring managers are regarded as important steps towards reducing bias during interviews. Some participating organisations also use a variety of tasks and activities to determine candidates' suitability.

'One of our recent workshops focused on evaluating how effective our interview process is. There was a sense amongst colleagues that we were asking too much of interviewers in terms of attributes assessment. And so we pared it right down ... the more you target your attribute assessment, the less room for manoeuvre there is for unconscious bias.'

TIM SMITH, KOBALT MUSIC

Closing the gender pay gap

With a particular focus on salaries, most participants admitted to seeing women tending to pitch for lower salaries than men. The gender pay gap is an issue participating organisations have taken steps to resolve. Some have imposed a pay range for a role as that meant a standardised rate of pay for any employee at that level, regardless of gender, age or ethnicity. Most have found this to be an effective strategy in reducing their gender pay gaps. Where this was not the case, often a conversation with the applicant was effective.

'When we talk to individuals and we ask them what they're looking for, particularly a woman, she tells me what she is currently on, then what she's looking for, which often it is hardly worth her moving jobs. I would challenge her on whether she wanted to reconsider that figure because when you join a company, this is your opportunity to get the increase you deserve.'

GRC MEMBER

06

“

Gender diversity targets and aspirations should be set as priorities.

”

RECRUITING DIVERSELY: A PRACTICAL GUIDE



The country is simply wasting productive talents, with the challenge becoming more pressing as labour and skills shortages are mounting. In view of that, gender diversity targets and aspirations should be set as priorities. The senior team must lead the drive to make progress and highlight just how critical promoting gender equality and diversity during the recruitment process is for talent acquisition.

A comprehensive step-by-step recruitment process must be implemented that will enable all stakeholders to overcome conscious and unconscious biases and other gender-related discriminatory practices. Building on the aforementioned challenges facing stakeholders and based on respondents' views about bad business practice, below are key questions employers, HR professionals and recruiters should ask themselves at each and every stage of the recruitment process and action points for them to consider.

Recruitment stage I: Defining the role and attracting candidates



Key questions

1. Are you using language in the job specification that is likely to appeal more to male candidates than female ones?
2. Do you tend to recruit internally and through employees' personal networks?
3. Are all roles assessed for suitability for flexible working? Do you offer an enhanced parental leave?
4. Do you ask candidates to submit pay history?
5. Are you having the discussion with your recruiter/hiring manager or with your client?
6. Where are you advertising?
7. What does your organisation look like? Do all the organisation's outputs and campaigns reflect your commitment to promote the diversity and inclusion agenda?

Reaching out to a wider pool of talent

Hirers need to be really honest with themselves about whether the skills and attributes they really need for a role are accurately reflected in the job specification.

Language:

The language in the job advertisement itself can be problematic and biases can creep into the person specification. If you strive to appeal to a wider talent pool, you must be mindful of the language used in job descriptions and advertisements, and actively use words that will hold greater appeal to female applicants.

What language to use in job advertisements

Masculine words	Gender-neutral words
Dominant	Supportive
Proud	Loyal
Determined	Committed
Dynamic	Proficient
Strong	Creative
Competitive	Interpersonal
Self-reliant	Reliable
Control	Co-ordinate
Outspoken	Considerate
Superior	Ideal
Leader	Role model

The table above illustrates gendered wording used in job advertisements, listing in the left column words seen as more masculine and in the right column words that mean similar things but that appeal more to women. You should aim to appeal equally to male and female candidates by using language from both of these columns instead of using exclusively masculine or feminine wording.

Transferable skills:

Most appointments come from within the same sector. This, however, can pose a challenge to gender diversity if the sector in question is already male dominated. You must think about what skills might be transferable that women working in other sectors could bring to the role and create a job advertisement that makes that clear.

Pay history and experience:

You should be mindful that asking candidates to submit pay history and valuing experience more than talent, skills and potential can have a significant adverse impact on the organisation's gender diversity and equality. You must actively refrain from penalising women who have taken career breaks to care for children or other family members resulting in lost working experience and reduced pay. Instead, you can introduce returner programmes and offer returner placements that will help women get back to work, particularly in senior roles.

Flexibility:

Flexible working is central to the changing world of work. Therefore, you should make a standard practice to explicitly state in the job advertisements and applications whether or not a role can be offered flexibly.

Parental leave:

You should consider how enhanced maternity and paternity leave, or shared parental leave, can be made to work more effectively and clearly state in the job description if this available.

Choosing the right targeting channels and promoting a uniform campaign

Once you have a well-prepared job description, it is time to decide where you will advertise this. For instance, do you tend to recruit internally or through employees' personal networks? If you are using the same platforms but you are still struggling to garner enough interest from female candidates as well as from other under-represented groups, it is now time to think what you can do differently.

Using a varied range of platforms to advertise jobs would allow you to access a larger and more diverse pool of talent. For instance, do you:

- advertise on job sites that are frequently visited by mothers who wish to re-enter the labour market?
- use digital platforms which specifically promote flexible working?
- advertise senior and board roles widely rather than relying on personal networks?
- work closely together with recruitment agencies that have greater access to a diverse pool of candidates?
- take into consideration the fact that older candidates may not be online and use more appropriate platforms to reach them?

Expanding your reach and engaging with broader talent pools may take longer and cost more than previous recruitment practices, so be aware of this and plan ahead to allocate more resources, and to defend that.

Do you have role models and case studies of successful women you can promote in campaigns and make them visible to potential applicants? Candidates spend time researching the organisation before applying – from the company's own website and careers page to job sites, social media, news media and review sites, candidates use a variety of sources to find information about the culture, reputation, goals and aspirations. Therefore, it is crucial to consider what information candidates might find about your organisation and ensure that your commitment to promoting gender diversity and equality is reflected in all your campaigns and communication outputs.

Key action points

ACTION

- Avoid using gendered vocabulary in job adverts and instead use transparent competencies for roles and language that appeals equally to male and female candidates.
- Do not wait to be asked about flexible working arrangements – proactively state you will consider it when advertising a role and make these available for as many roles as possible.
- Interrogate your brief and be mindful of the role requirements, especially with regards to experience, skills and abilities.
- Clearly define a salary range for a role and display this in the job advert. Avoid using complex pay systems, including elements of discretionary pay.
- Use a wide range of recruitment channels to reach out to women and other under-represented groups.
- Sell the benefits of your organisation in job adverts and all your campaigns.

Recruitment stage II: Screening of applicants



Key questions

1. What criteria do you use to screen applicants and how are these determined?
2. Are the selection criteria used to assess applicants fair and impartially applicable?
3. Are applicants' personal details (name, age, education history, etc.) removed from applications during the screening process?
4. Are your candidate shortlists gender-balanced?
5. Do you ever shortlist candidates purely based on quotas?

Screening all submitted applications can become challenging for your organisation, particularly if a set of transparent selection criteria is not available. Good business practice also dictates that selection criteria and the details of the screening process are determined by a diverse and impartial panel of professionals, and that these criteria apply equally to all candidates and applications, both external and internal.

Judging on merit

It is often claimed that employers are more likely to hire men for their potential, whereas women are required to have a proven track record. If indeed true, this is an ill-advised practice. Ensure a process is in place where the aim is to judge applications on merit, without knowing personal details that might affect the decision.

Name-blinding:

This is a useful way to introduce objectivity into the hiring process and help to address gender-related barriers. It is encouraging that increasingly more organisations use name-blind recruitment as a way to ensure that shortlists are made based on merit rather than gender. However, name-blind recruitment is only effective on the very initial stage of screening. Furthermore, it may not be possible to apply name-/gender-blind recruitment principles for internal applications, unless your organisation is very large.

Context-blind recruitment:

Personal details such as age, dates and school/university information might affect decisions during initial screening. By removing this information on applications, you ensure that the people who scrutinise and select who to take forward to the next stage, do so in an impartial manner. These personal details only become available after the initial screening occurs. Hiding such details can help eradicate bias for or against candidates on the basis of gender, but also age, ethnicity, religion or social class. Indeed, evidence suggests that anonymous and context-blind screening of job applications increases the probability that people from under-represented groups are invited for interview.

Addressing issues of fact

While name-blind and context-blind practices are a significant addition to the recruitment process, these cannot alone tackle biases. For instance, gender-blind screening does not address issues of fact, such as gaps in work experience of female candidates due to maternity leave or caring responsibilities. Instead of being fixated on the number of years of experience and career breaks taken, focus on the skills, abilities and potential of applicants.

Ideally, the screening process should be tailored to test the attributes required for the role. Introducing new screening methods such as anonymous technical assessments and skills-based tests can prove very useful towards addressing issues of fact and putting forward a more diverse shortlist of talented candidates.

ACTION

Key action points

- Determine impartial selection criteria and apply these when screening all applicants.
- Appoint a panel of at least two professionals to screen applications and ensure they are trained in dealing with unconscious bias.
- Remove candidates' personal details from applications and judge these on merit.
- Look beyond an applicant's working experience and consider their skills, abilities and potential.
- Introduce new assessment methods to test the attributes required.
- Include as many qualified candidates from diverse backgrounds as possible on a shortlist.

Recruitment stage III: Interviews**Key questions**

1. Do you provide training in interview techniques and dealing with unconscious bias to all interviewers/hiring managers?
2. Do you ensure the interview panel is consisted of more than one professional?
3. Are all interviews structured with a focus on skills?
4. Do you explicitly state the salary, types of flexible working options and other enhanced benefits available for the role?

Interview panels:

Determining the right people to conduct the interview is crucial at this stage. Recruiting in your own image, like for like, is a real phenomenon. If hirers are predominantly male, it is likely they will hire predominantly male candidates. This is why it is important to ensure there is diversity in interview panels. Also, if a culture is already male dominated, beware of hiring managers who place too much emphasis on cultural fit when assessing shortlist applicants. Look closely at your panels and ensure these consist of diverse, skilled and experienced interviewers.

Training:

In order to successfully promote gender diversity and equality in recruitment and, subsequently, in the workforce, it is imperative that hiring managers are properly trained in dealing with unconscious bias and interview techniques. You should provide training on a regular basis and to all involved stakeholders.

Interview structure:

Relying solely on one-on-one interviews when the role requires attributes in candidates which are hard to demonstrate in that setting is counter-productive. For instance, skills in collaboration, motivating teams and team-working can be more easily assessed in centres that require applicants to facilitate a brainstorming session among the panel.

Flexibility:

Explicitly state the types of flexible working options available for the role and offer flexibility at the point of hire. Moreover, encourage both female and male candidates to share childcare responsibilities and clearly state whether enhanced maternity and paternity leave is available.

Salary:

Provide detailed information on salary and benefits offered, including salary range. Show that you value skills and talent by refraining from discussing the candidate's pay history or focusing on career breaks. Instead, make clear your intention to ensure that all successful applicants, male and female, are consistently paid a fair market value for the skills.

ACTION**Key action points**

- Ensure that all interviewers are trained in interview techniques and dealing with unconscious bias.
- Appoint a diverse interview panel of at least two professionals.
- Devise skills-based assessment criteria to identify candidates who have the required attributes for the role.
- Explicitly state salary and benefits offered as well as flexible working options available at the point of hire.

Recruitment stage VI: Assessing the recruitment process**Key questions**

1. What review procedures do you have in place to assess your hiring practices?
2. How successful has your organisation's hiring process been in terms of embracing diversity practices in the recent past?
3. Do you contact unsuccessful applicants to provide them with feedback and to also request their feedback? Do you ask successful applicants to discuss their recruitment experience?
4. How regularly do you review the composition of your workforce, including your management and leadership teams, and set diversity and equality targets?

Good intentions must be translated into tangible action. If improving diversity, inclusion and gender equality is important to your organisation, you must actively champion this by reviewing recruitment practices and tracking and measuring your progress against diversity targets. Self-reflection and continuous improvement are key to positive change in any organisation.

It is important to set review procedures and determine the structure and frequency of these. Review procedures must be communicated to all stakeholders involved, with regular meetings to discuss findings and improvements to be made.

Providing and requesting feedback is central to the efforts to measure progress and improve candidates' experience. Providing feedback to unsuccessful candidates should become a standard practice of organisations. But, importantly, you must actively seek feedback from candidates with findings fed into business planning discussions. Both successful and unsuccessful candidates are best placed to provide feedback on their experience during the recruitment process and to highlight practices that would require further improvement.

An organisation must have clear goals and aspirations on how to improve its diversity record. Measuring success and tracking progress against set targets are vital for an organisation's continuous improvement. You can track your progress by regularly reviewing the composition of your workforce and the gender pay gap. Share progress findings with all staff as well as prospective candidates, and communicate revised diversity targets with your workforce.

ACTION**Key action points**

- Set clear diversity targets and ensure these are communicated to all in the workforce, particularly those involved in hiring strategies and processes.
- Request feedback from applicants in order to improve candidate experience, identify problems and improve recruitment practices. Also, make providing feedback to unsuccessful candidates a standard practice.
- Review your hiring practices and composition of your workforce, including your management and leadership teams, on a regular basis.
- Track and measure your progress in recruiting diversely and share findings with all staff and prospective candidates.
- Re-evaluate your actions based on feedback, staff composition and targets set.



CASE STUDY

Applied – recruitment platform

Applied (beapplied.com) is an online recruitment platform designed to circumvent the biases that can often occur in traditional CV and interview-based hiring. A spinout from the government's Behavioural Insights Team (BIT), it uses data science and behavioural research on how the human brain makes decisions to avoid the usual pitfalls that lead to hiring managers recruiting in their own image and missing out on diverse talent. The platform is set up to provide one tool that can be used to reduce bias at three key stages of the recruitment process: advertising a job, sifting applications and interviewing candidates.

Job advert content

Before advertising a job, Applied's software enables an employer to conduct an assessment of how the content of their job advert may inadvertently put off women or men from applying for roles. Applied CEO Kate Glazebrook explains:

'There's a dictionary of words that randomised control trials have shown can predict the number of people who apply from different genders. As you type those words in, it pops up on the site to inform you and provide suggestions on how you can replace those words with ungendered synonyms.'

The platform also gives adverts an overall inclusion score and a conversion score – drawing on eight different ways in which job descriptions can help to attract the widest group of candidates and be more successful in encouraging candidates to apply. Once the job advert is posted, it enables employers to track where applicants have come from and identify the best sources of diverse and talented applicants.

Sifting applications

Applied's screening process is an online system where the initial sift of candidates is decided purely on candidates' anonymised answers to specific work-related tasks. While anonymisation and competency-based applications are increasingly common practice, behavioural insights research has revealed how human behaviours can still bias the assessment of such applications when each candidate's entire application is assessed in turn.

'If you think about the default in most hiring practices, you look at each application top-to-bottom in turn. This runs the risks of "halo" and "horns" effects. If an application starts off really well, it is very likely that cognitively an assessor will get more and more positive towards an application as they go through and not objectively assess later aspects of the application.'

To prevent this, Applied's software is designed so that each assessor reviews the answers to a single question from every candidate before moving on to review the answers given to the next question (instead of reviewing each applicant's entire application from top to bottom in turn). The order in which the assessor sees candidates' answers to each competency question is also randomised, so there is no way of an assessor mentally connecting the answer to one competency question with a previous or following answer and attributing it to a single applicant.



CASE STUDY CONTINUED...

Applied – recruitment platform

Assessors score answers to each competency question and their fellow assessors' scores are only revealed once all assessors have given their scores, further removing potential for bias.

Interviewing candidates

Even when interviews are well structured and conducted in good faith, biases can still creep into the process.

'There's a range of behavioural biases on how we interpret information over time, particularly the primacy and recency effect. What happens at the beginning and at the end of an interview, or any peak or trough in an interview, corrupts every other piece of information from that interview.'

To avoid assessors overly focusing their judgements on these extremities, Applied's software is set up so each assessor in an interview scores answers to each work-related question as the interview progresses. The interview panel only conducts their wash-up once everyone on the panel has submitted their scores. These measures reduce the likelihood of assessors overly focusing on a handful of questions from the interview or being influenced by other assessors' opinions.

Applying the scoring system

A live study conducted by the Behavioural Insights Team using an early version of Applied's software demonstrated just how significant its impact on removing bias can be. The software was used to select applicants to attend an assessment centre for the Behavioural Insight Team's graduate scheme, alongside traditional CV applications. Applicants who passed either the CV sift or the Applied software sift were invited to the assessment centre, with many passing the Applied sift but not the CV sift, and vice versa. When assessment centre scoring performance was checked against initial sift performance, there was no correlation with CV performance, whereas there was a strong correlation with the scores given to answers to the Applied software questions.

Notably, when job offers were made on the basis of assessment centre performance, over half of the candidates hired would not have made it through the CV sift alone. Moreover, the new recruits were more diverse than those who would have been hired if selected via CV sift alone.

07

CHECKLISTS



ACTION POINTS FOR EMPLOYERS AND HR PROFESSIONALS

1. Defining the role and attracting applicants

- Clearly define the required skills and attributes as well as the day-to-day duties involved in the job.
- Remove gender-coded, loaded and biased language from job adverts; ensure all communication reflects and promotes the company brand, values and diversity targets.
- Determine whether the role is suitable for flexible working; explicitly state if this is available in job adverts as a way of boosting diversity and attracting talent. Use digital platforms which specifically promote flexible working. Introduce returner programmes and adaptive working practices, wherever possible.
- State a set salary range for the role, for all applicants; advertise other benefits including enhanced parental leave.
- Be aware of how candidates conduct their job search; assess platforms being used to reach and attract candidates including digital platforms. Advertise on a range of platforms aimed at a wide variety of social, economic and cultural backgrounds. Consider targeting to specific audiences with job adverts, events and exhibitions.

2. Screening applicants

- Determine impartial selection criteria to be applied to all applicants.
- Appoint a panel of at least two professionals to screen applications and ensure they are trained in dealing with unconscious bias.
- Remove candidates' personal details from applications and judge these on merit.
- Focus on skills, abilities and potential of an applicant rather than their working experience; introduce new assessment methods to test the attributes required for the role.

3. Interviewing candidates

- Train interviewers and hiring managers on unconscious bias and interview techniques; regularly assess their performance.
- Appoint a diverse interview panel of at least two professionals.
- Use structured interviews and identical techniques for all candidates; develop skills-based assessment criteria to assess candidates' suitability for the role.
- Make sure facilities and venues are accessible.
- Proactively and explicitly state salary and benefits offered as well as flexible working options available at the point of hire.

4. Assessing the recruitment process

- Deliver a high standard of candidate experience with two-way feedback for all those interviewed.
- Use data to track diversity levels at each stage of the hiring process and measure your progress against set targets.
- Review your hiring practices and workforce composition, including management and leadership teams, on a regular basis.
- Communicate revised diversity targets with your workforce; share progress findings with all staff as well as prospective candidates.

ACTION POINTS FOR EMPLOYERS, WORKING TOGETHER WITH RECRUITMENT AGENCIES

1. Select partner

- Determine the criteria used to select agencies focusing on agency expertise in recruiting diversely.
- Work with recruitment agencies who specialise in diverse hires or who have a track record of good performance in this area, and agencies that have greater access to a diverse pool of candidates.
- Help recruiters understand your company values, diversity targets and aspirations in order to optimise the shared process.

2. Defining the role and attracting applicants

- Ensure the job briefs you provide recruiters are detailed and work together to determine what kind of person would best fit the role.
- Work closely to create a job advert that appeals equally to male and female candidates.
- Use different recruitment platforms to widen the talent pool and attract a more diverse range of applicants.

3. Screening applicants

- Work together to determine impartial selection criteria to be applied to all applicants.
- Agree to focus on skills and potential of applicants by introducing new assessment methods to test the attributes required for the role.
- Require agencies to supply diverse candidate shortlists.

4. Assessing the recruitment process

- Conduct retrospective review sessions to identify challenges and successes during the hiring process and improve strategies.
- Improve candidate experience and future recruitment practices by ensuring two-way feedback for all those interviewed.

ACTION POINTS FOR RECRUITMENT AGENCIES

1. Defining the role

- Educate clients, especially hiring managers and the leadership team, on the benefits of diverse working environments.
- Be ready to challenge employers to ensure all recruitment communication reflects and promotes gender diversity and equality.

2. Attracting applicants

- Encourage clients to embrace flexible working for all workers in suitable roles and to offer additional benefits, such as enhanced parental leave.
- Explain to clients the adverse impact of including the salary question in applications; advise clients on the appropriate way to disclose salary being offered.
- Use social data to predict and identify people who may be open to new opportunities, including mothers wishing to re-enter the labour market and women who have taken career breaks.
- Use a diverse range of platforms to advertise jobs, for example promote in job sites that are frequently visited by mothers who wish to re-enter the labour market or advertise in digital platforms that specifically promote flexible working.
- Partner with social enterprises/charities/non-profits to encourage a diverse range of candidates to apply for different roles.
- Look beyond the candidates' experience and focus skills and traits that are required for the role.

3. Screening applicants

- Work together to determine impartial selection criteria to be applied to all applicants.
- Train clients on ruling out unconscious bias in the screening process.
- Agree to focus on skills and potential of applicants by introducing new assessment methods to test the attributes required for the role.
- Supply shortlists with qualified candidates of diverse backgrounds.

4. Interviewing candidates

- Educate clients on professional interview techniques and advise them on how to improve their interviewing skills and to conduct structured interviews.
- Identify and support employers/hiring managers in tackling unconscious bias and stereotyping during interviews (for example, hiring like for like).
- Provide tailored support to candidates; for example, those returning to work after a career break or older workers may need guidance on interview preparation.

5. Assessing the recruitment process

- Have an honest conversation with your clients about the challenges encountered during the recruitment process.
- Review the hiring process and produce a plan to improve future practices; create a best practice guide on how to successfully recruit diversely and measure your progress regularly.
- Customer experience improvement is an essential and continuous process; seek feedback from candidates and employers.

APPENDIX: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank and acknowledge the following people for their time and valuable contribution to this research.

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