

DIVERSITY UNIT, NOVEMBER 2017

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY

VISION STATEMENT

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)¹ are at the heart of our cultural relations ambitions. They represent the mutual trust, respect and understanding we strive for on behalf of the UK. They are integral to our brand, reputation, success, business sustainability and cultural relations impact. They enable alignment between what we say and what we do.

Our vision is to have an inclusive organisational culture. We want it to be fair, build on our skills in working in different cultures and countries and in identifying and leveraging strengths and resolving tensions and conflicts.

We want everyone who comes into contact with us, both offline and online, to feel valued and respected and our programmes, services and general ways of working to demonstrate our stated commitment to EDI. We also want to use our increasing knowledge and experience to make a leading contribution to international aspects of EDI.

We will work energetically toward this vision through a mainstreaming approach, embedding EDI into our behaviours and all that we do. We will highlight the benefits of EDI for all individuals and societies and promote its positive contribution.

We will continue to develop EDI themed or informed programmes and activities, based on common interests and ambitions to deliver impact for the UK. We will draw on the rich diversity of the UK and harness the diverse contributions and considerable talents of our global staff and partners to achieve our vision in line with our organisational values and EDI principles.

INTRODUCTION

We launched our first Diversity Strategy in 2002 and have refreshed it on a three-yearly basis since then. This revision builds on what we have learnt over the last three years and takes account of internal and external changes and constraints and outlines our EDI priorities leading to the year 2020. Much remains familiar although with discernable changes in emphasis and articulation.

The refresh has been informed by internal consultation in the form of a survey seeking the views of informed colleagues. All survey findings have been considered and addressed. The outcome includes six rather than seven key areas of focus, with work life balance no longer included - an area that the Employee Relations team is addressing led by the Head of Well-Being, independent of the Diversity Unit and therefore in receipt of due attention.

Cultural relations take place within the context of increased interconnection, inter-cultural interaction and cultural proximity and all the related benefits and challenges. It aims to bring people together to learn, create, fulfil ambitions and work to build long term relationships of trust for the UK. It supports global stability and security.

¹ We define Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in our Equality Policy and on our web and intranet sites. We use the 'shorthand' diversity to also include equality and inclusion.

Our strategic and embedded EDI approach acts as an important intentional structure for enriching and giving credibility to our cultural relations work. It nurtures coherence and a joined up but sufficiently flexible approach to account for our geographical and cultural diversity. The objectives provide focus and the tools inform delivery, evaluation, review and revision.

OUR APPROACH

Mainstreaming EDI is our overarching goal. We identify three specific objectives to help us achieve this and recognise there is a business, moral and legal case for EDI. We focus on six main (but not exclusive) areas: age, disability, ethnicity/race, gender, religion or belief and sexual identity/orientation. This focus helps us give due regard to key aspects of EDI and use our resources effectively. We appreciate these areas do not stand alone but can and do intersect. We are conscious of the role socio-economic inequality plays in systemic discrimination and in holding people back due to circumstances beyond their control. Efforts to acknowledge and address social disadvantage are strongly encouraged as we strive for greater inclusion across our staff groups and to widen opportunities for access and engagement across our programmes and services.

Business case

Mainstreaming EDI principles and practices is good for our business and determines our business case. It supports us to:

- Deliver effective cultural relations; without EDI cultural relations is not fit for purpose
- Demonstrate our respect for, knowledge of and skills in working within the diverse cultures and countries in which we operate
- Achieve a fair, inclusive organisational culture, recognised as such by staff and contacts, with values we consistently apply
- Maintain our strong brand and positively benchmark ourselves alongside other organisations in the areas of employment, mutually beneficial partnerships, services and varied opportunities
- Maximise and retain valued knowledge, experience and expertise
- Have committed and motivated staff who feel fairly treated and respected, leading to better employment relations and fewer grievances
- Attract new talent and fresh perspectives, given research confirms increasing numbers of prospective applicants specifically seek out employment in organisations with strong values and a good EDI track record and many examples of stronger performance by heterogeneous teams
- Continue to nurture creativity, innovation and flexibility and spot new opportunities to work with others, as well new approaches and sources of support

Remain relevant and dynamic and achieve greater reach and impact through engaging with a diversity of perspectives, needs, abilities and circumstances and securing new opportunities for

income generation.

Moral case

We believe it is important to value everyone and to be fair and respectful. This holds whether they are an employee, participant in, or contributor to our work and irrespective of background and fixed characteristics. Whilst this can be challenging there are many benefits including a reduction in conflict, stress, tension, discrimination, unfairness and anger experienced by individuals, organisations and societies, sometimes impacting globally.

Our moral case encourages ways of working based on dignity, compassion, empathy and mutual benefit, as well as a focus on what we have in common and what joins us as global citizens, rather than how we differ and what separates us. It establishes the conditions for empowerment and recognises our shared humanity.

Investing in and being committed to EDI is the right thing to do from many perspectives, but particularly because of our cultural relations work with its aim to develop and sustain friendly knowledge and understanding between the UK and other countries.

Legal case

The law continues to play an important role in supporting social justice, eradicating unjustified and unlawful discrimination and achieving positive change and inclusion. The GB Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation, codes of practice and guidance are important reference points and steer for us. In many countries in which we operate, aspects of EDI are enshrined in law and we strive to meet our legal obligations.

Whilst we operate in different jurisdictions and respect the legal frameworks in place, we recognise gaps in these and in their enforcement that can lead to increased vulnerability for some groups. Within our locus of control and based on appropriate negotiation and cultural sensitivity we will, in instances, take action that responds to and addresses this.

We reconcile cultural dilemmas, drawing on, amongst other things, overarching international instruments including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) and the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity.

Policies to support strong customer service, speaking up about concerns, environmental awareness and sustainability, child protection, adults at risk, modern day slavery, anti-fraud and corruption and general legal compliance, supported by a Code of Conduct, govern how we behave.

OUR OBJECTIVES

Three main objectives with action points set out below provide the focus for the next phase of our work.

1) *An inclusive organisational culture*

To achieve this we intend to make concerted efforts to reduce key barriers, informed by data led interventions: improve the representation of UK minority ethnic and disabled people and sustain the improvements in the representation of women at senior levels as outlined in our targets for UK-contracted staff; and in instances improve the representation of men and disabled people in our workforce/work areas and activities.

We will work to reduce any unfair, unjustified and unnecessary hierarchical divisions based on contract type, most notably between UK and locally contracted staff and teachers. We will nurture an organisational culture where people working and engaging with us feel respected and comfortable being themselves, free from unjustified discrimination, offensive behaviour or bullying.

The result will be an organisational culture that is experienced as more, if not wholly, inclusive, fair, allows for speaking up, manages disagreement and conflict constructively and is empowered, optimistic and aligned to our values. Our participant profile will be representative of the broader societies in which we work. In addition, there will be expanded opportunities for under-represented groups internally and externally to participate and contribute to informing and shaping the organisational culture. There will be alignment with how we engage with EDI internally and how EDI is reflected and addressed in the delivery and content of our programmes and services as part of our cultural relations offer.

Tools:

- Equality targets for UK staff, and elsewhere, where relevant, to provide focus and encourage actions that improve the internal representation and involvement of minority ethnic and disabled people and seek to maintain appropriate gender balance.
- Actions that improve the involvement and participation of under-represented groups in our activities within different business areas and countries and as representatives of the organisation. This includes through increasing awareness and targeting our reach and appeal; staff shadowing schemes; accessible offices; provision of equipment where required and feasible to enable access; planning inclusive programmes and events; offering inclusive internships, work experience and other relevant opportunities.
- Forums and initiatives for staff contributions and engagement that nurture the organisational culture and inclusion we aspire to regardless of role, hierarchy, contractual status or geographical location.
- Development of our Living Library.
- Guidance that helps support informal conflict resolution and a constructive feedback culture at all levels, informed by EDI.
- Planning tools that encourage inclusion when policies, programmes or activities are developed, including Equality Screening and Impact Assessment and the use of access audits and checklists.

2) *Developing capability and leaders*

Leaders exist in different roles and particularly, but not exclusively, in senior positions. They are crucial in driving progress, achieving fairness and enhancing our working culture, reputation and impact. Therefore our emphasis will continue to be on nurturing and developing engagement, role models and leadership capability in EDI, as well as diversity amongst senior leaders.

The result will be more confident, capable and committed leaders, particularly at senior levels, and people with specific expertise in facilitating EDI who are able to promote diversity as an integral part of cultural relations and demonstrate the benefits of doing so. These include reducing unconscious bias, enhancing our people management and working culture and using the experience of our own journey and competence to position us as making a notable contribution to international aspects of EDI, as well as being a partner of choice.

Tools:

- EDI activities for leaders
- EDI Champions
- Accredited Diversity Facilitators within regions
- EDI Leads for regions, countries and business areas
- EDI performance deliverables against which to measure progress and attainment
- Web, intranet and other sources of information including core skills for leaders and managers and specific guides
- Promoting and sharing our work and learning about international aspects of EDI with others, including through storytelling

Undertaking research and writing for publication with a focus on EDI.

3) *Performance, impact and legal compliance*

Measuring our performance and identifying our success in achieving a more inclusive organisational culture and making a leading contribution to international aspects of EDI is crucial in evaluating our effectiveness and impact. We will therefore identify mechanisms for measuring the return on our investment (ROI) in EDI and the extent and quality of the contribution and distinct impact we aim to make through EDI. In addition, we will ensure we comply with our legal obligations and where possible and appropriate, go beyond the legal minimum.

The results will be improved performance against our own EDI standards derived from national and international benchmarks. This includes external recognition. There will be strong compliance with legal obligations and where possible and appropriate these will be exceeded for vulnerable groups. Equality, diversity and inclusion related risks will be anticipated and well managed.

Tools:

- Diversity Assessment Framework targets, UK contracted staff equality targets and relevant staff survey results, absence and attrition data
- Diversity Awards

- Statutory Equality Schemes (Northern Ireland and Welsh Language), Equal Pay reviews and action plans, and the implementation of statutory codes to ensure legal compliance and manage risk
- Compliance with UK and international accessibility laws for our digital offer and Data Protection

Distinct EDI impact and ROI measures to be developed and relevant and sufficient resources to support the impact and ROI we want.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The progress we have made towards mainstreaming EDI combines the direction provided by our Diversity Unit² and the strong support of staff globally. We will continue to share responsibility and require accountability, particularly from those with influence and authority, including the Chair and Chief Executive of the British Council, the Executive Board and Management Board and senior managers. Their support for this Strategy and commitment to it through their behaviours, attitudes and effective use of resources will make a critical difference. Managers of regional teams, country offices, business functions and Teaching and Exam Centres, as leaders of large numbers of staff and critical areas of work, also have an important role to play. All staff however are responsible for striving towards our overarching goal to mainstream EDI within all aspects of our work and helping to bring about the inclusive organisational culture we aspire to.

Diversity Unit, November 2017
Review date November 2020

² **The Diversity Unit** sets and drives the strategic direction of the British Council's EDI work and is supported by a pool of Global EDI Leads and Accredited Diversity Facilitators, alongside other internal and external groups. They welcome feedback that helps to identify barriers to progress and good practice. If you would like to get in touch please email liliana.corrieri@britishcouncil.org or telephone +44 (0)207 389 4484.