

**THAMES VALLEY CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE (TVCC)**

**DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION
CHARTER (2021/22)**

1. Diversity and Inclusion Charter (Background and Context)

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) were once seen as *nice to have* initiatives, or purely reserved for larger corporations with excess budgets that needed to be spent to undertake. However, significant research from a number of leading organisations over the past 5-10 years (including studies from McKinsey¹, PwC², Boston Consulting Group³ and many more) has clearly demonstrated the critical impact that diversity has in the workplace and why it is good for business.

First, it is important for us to understand the distinction between these two terms which are so commonly related. **Diversity** can cover many elements of an individual. Ordinarily, we talk about diversity as an individual or set of demographics that an individual belongs to. In the UK, age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation, are 'protected characteristics' (or what we will refer to as *demographic diversity*), covered by discrimination law to safeguard people against discrimination on one or more of the above mentioned protected characteristics.

However, true diversity is something that goes beyond 'protected characteristics. True diversity also encompasses socio-economic backgrounds, accent, hair colour, body modification such as tattoos and body size. For diversity to truly be encompassed we also refer to the different sectors people work in, the experiences they have had, the subjects they have studied, the personal values they hold. These are what are referred to as components of *cognitive diversity*. Through a combination of the two different facets of diversity, an organisation can start to position itself for growth.

The second element that we look at is **Inclusion**, which is *"where people's differences are valued and used to enable everyone to thrive at work. An inclusive working environment is one in which everyone feels that they belong without having to conform, that their contribution matters and they are able to perform to their full potential, no matter their background, identity or circumstances. An inclusive workplace has fair policies and practices in place and enables a diverse range of people to work together effectively."*⁴

One of the biggest failures of businesses today is a result of homogenous employee pools that lack true cognitive diversity in their thinking, which in turn manifests itself through blind spots in organisations' decision-making mechanisms. The other key failing is the existence of bias in the workplace (whether that be conscious or unconscious) that prohibits employees feeling like they can contribute meaningfully, or worse, are not afforded the same opportunities or privileges because of their diversity. The importance – too – of belonging is an integral, interwoven, component of Diversity and Inclusion.

"Diversity is part and parcel of humanity. It is time to take it seriously."

Eran Segal

To help our membership create stronger and more effective workplaces for their employees, TVCC has included a new focus on diversity, inclusion and belonging within the five main priorities of its Business Manifesto (2020) and then again recommitting in our [Business Manifesto \(2021\)](#), following two successive Windsor Debates in 2019 and ongoing work around mental health and well-being. This Charter will enable member organisations to not only demonstrate their commitment to promoting **more diverse and inclusive workplaces** where all employees can truly belong, but realise an increase in their performance whilst delivering economic growth for the company and the region.

¹ <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/gender-equality/focusing-on-what-works-for-workplace-diversity>

² <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/services/people-organisation/global-diversity-and-inclusion-survey.html#data>

³ <https://www.bcg.com/en-us/publications/2018/how-diverse-leadership-teams-boost-innovation.aspx>

⁴ <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/relations/diversity/factsheet>

2. Charter Commitments

We, the signatories to this TVCC D&I Charter, make the following public commitments to promote the values of Diversity and Inclusion – and belonging - throughout our Group:

WE COMMIT TO PROMOTING AND ENCOURAGING DIVERSITY IN OUR GROUP by listening, valuing, and championing the wide range of perspectives, ideas, and experiences that both demographic and cognitive diversity provides.

WE KNOW DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION CAN CREATE A BROADER, RICHER ENVIRONMENT that enhances creative thinking, innovation and problem solving. Inclusive organisations attract and retain top talent as well as commercially outperform their less diverse competitors.

WE UNDERTAKE TO PRACTICE AND ADVANCE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION by:

- Promoting diversity within the Chamber and being visible and active in our support for Diversity and Inclusion – and belonging - by implementing one or more of the Diversity and Inclusion Advocacy Initiatives. This will mean, for example, that we will ensure no individual panel discussion will be comprised of a sole demographic.
- Addressing diversity in our hiring and, where appropriate, purchasing practices by implementing strategies to attract and retain diverse talent.
- Encouraging our membership to follow our example by:
 - using firms that champion Diversity and Inclusion.
 - seeking out qualified diverse talent when assigning work.
 - applying Diversity and Inclusion as a key criterion in using and retaining firms; and
 - measuring the effectiveness of our efforts.

WE AS ADVOCATES FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION will champion the benefits of Diversity and Inclusion and belonging within our membership by role modelling and leading a dialogue (inc. events/social media) within our membership and the broader business community within the Thames Valley on Diversity and Inclusion best practices.

“I encourage the Chamber to continue its excellent work and take another step forward. Every person, regardless of their ethnicity, background, or orientation, should be able to fulfil their potential at work. That is the business case as well as the moral case. Diverse organisations that attract and develop individuals from the widest pool of talent consistently perform better. This is a point of fact and the reward is huge.

Thames Valley - it's time to unlock talent, starting with publishing your Diversity and Inclusion Charter and bringing awareness to the journey towards targeting fully inclusive workplaces. Having been successful and 'broken the glass ceiling', I feel I have a real duty to pave the way for others and to make sure that the workplace recognises talent and skills above all else and no one is held back”.

Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith, BCC President

3. Examples of Diversity & Inclusion Advocacy Initiatives

- Hire from a diverse pool and require your recruiters to provide diverse lists or pool *slates* of candidates. Consulting with Diversity and Inclusion practitioners on how to best position recruitment activity and if using a third party such as a recruitment agency/recruiter, requiring them to provide a long list of candidates and the data of demographic diversity of those candidates at each stage of the process.
- Implement strategies that promote Diversity and Inclusion and belonging by putting in place non-discrimination and anti-harassment policies and procedures in your businesses and ensuring that if there are occasions where behaviours conflict with these policies, they are dealt with fairly and in line with the policies.
- Develop an open culture with good communication channels based on open dialogue and active listening.
- Proactively seek people's ideas, help those who have less power in having their voice heard, and act on feedback.
- Benchmark progress against other organisations and explore what others are doing to collaborate to share best practice whilst adopting and adapting ideas where appropriate.
- Network with others from inside and outside the organisation to stay at the forefront of D&I initiatives and to share learning.
- Conduct regular self-assessments to reaffirm the organisation's commitment to Diversity and Inclusion by including those from underrepresented groups to be a part of the assessments.
- Support your organisation's leaders in ensuring that they understand, champion and effectively communicate the business case for Diversity and Inclusion and creating a working environment where everyone has a sense of belonging.
- Raise awareness through programmes about various aspects of diversity to help people celebrate and champion difference.
- Take opportunities to educate and coach your team on inclusiveness and avoiding bias.
- Establish a Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee to guide your organisation and find ways to measure the success of the progress in diversity, inclusivity and belonging.
- Create collaborative Employee Network Groups who work together to help support an inclusive work environment across all levels within the organisation.
- Ask senior leaders to be open and authentically share their personal stories of difference and diversity and to be role models for others to look up to.
- Join with best practice organisations to support diversity initiatives.
- Value the lived experience both in and out of the workplace for those underrepresented people and learn from it, in order to create better working environments.

"Diversity isn't some optional add-on. It isn't the icing on the cake. Rather it is the basic ingredient of collective intelligence."

Matthew Syed in "Rebel Ideas"

4. Best Practice Examples



At Microsoft, Diversity and Inclusion are not just one department's job or one task to check off a list. They are an ongoing endeavour that involves every person at the company. In practice, we're learning to have candid conversations, call in and correct non inclusive behaviour, and raise awareness of privilege.

Microsoft are bringing in new hires, partners, people at their family of companies, and experts who can inform, challenge, and stretch their thinking. The organisation commits to honest dialogue across teams and leaders, and to thoughtful allyship through informed action. It cultivates safe spaces for connection and growth across communities and through organic support like Employee Resource Groups. Behaviour modelling and coaching at the team management level is resulting in consciously inclusive interactions every day, at every level.

This past year Microsoft put their "core priority" of inclusion into action for all their employees. This means that as part of their performance and development approach, employees and managers engage in ongoing dialogues to discuss how each person is contributing to an inclusive work environment, making inclusion a daily, and personal, part of their jobs.

Microsoft are very encouraged that their actions are resulting in a shared sense of urgency and heightened commitment to diversity and inclusion across the entire organization around the globe.

[Read more](#) about their journey in their Annual D&I Report.

Thanks to Hugh Milward – Senior Director, Corporate, External and Legal Affairs



One of Oxford Bus Company's core values is "Embracing Diversity" and they are working to ensure this is part of everything they do. Of course they have the relevant policies in place; however it is more important to them that their values run through everything they do.

Oxford Bus Company are striving to encourage more females to consider the bus industry as their next career move. They have been involved with the Women in Bus network since its conception in July 2019 and held the first regional event when colleagues from across Go Ahead Group joined them in Oxford to discuss ways to encourage more females into the industry and to support ways for those already with the company to develop and grow. At a local level, they are holding meetings with colleagues, with the aim of understanding how they can encourage more women to join the industry and working to break down the barriers that prospective colleagues might believe exist.

They are also keen to ensure that their workforce is representative of the communities they serve. They have therefore begun some work to analyse the make-up of the workforce and compare it to the census details for these communities. They are conscious that the data available is nearly 10 years out of date, so until the updated information is available, they are working to ensure that they talk to colleagues about why they are asking for information on their ethnic origin and how important it is for the company to have this information. Once they have compared their data with the new census information, they will be able to recognise any areas of focus that are needed.

The company are proud supporters of Oxford Pride and their Pride Bus led the Oxford Pride Parade in June 2019.



The Chamber wishes to thank Chico Chakravorty of Doing Diversity Differently for the inspiration, the insightful guidance and excellent input in developing this Charter. (or alternatively: The Chamber wishes to thank Chico Chakravorty of Doing Diversity Differently for the inspirational, insightful guidance and excellent input in developing this Charter).

Doing Diversity Differently works with your leadership team to enable your employees to truly flourish. Regardless of whether you are looking at your empowering your existing workforce, or bringing in new hires, we help you create environments where everyone belongs. The benefit? Your current staff can truly thrive and succeed, and we teach the impact you can have on your organisational culture by hiring people based on attitude instead of primarily looking at their past performance. Because you can put the greatest achiever into a new role but if your environment isn't right for them, that individual isn't going to succeed. Our unique approach enables your business to:

- create a culture positivity and increase staff engagement in your workforce.
- uplift your employee productivity rates; and
- improve your bottom line.

Learn more about Doing Diversity Differently [here](#).

[Hear more](#) from Chico about his story and why Belonging is so much more important than Diversity and Inclusion alone, and how you too can implement this for your workforce.

Thanks to Chico Chakravorty – Management Consultant – Doing Diversity Differently

OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY

Oxford Brookes University (OBU) established itself as a pioneer in promoting equality in the early 1990s, when the Equal Opportunity Action Group was set up. Since then, Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) have been at the core of all its policies and practices, and much progress has been achieved. At present women represent 60% of the whole of the University's workforce: 50% of all senior managers and 46.5% of Professors. The most recent equal pay review shows that the current gender pay gap is 8.5% which is well below the Higher Education sector average of 15%. BAME staff represent 13% of the whole workforce, 7.5% of all senior managers and 4.2% of professors. The University is working within the framework of the Race Equality Charter to improve representation and progression of BAME staff and students.

OBU strives to be an innovative employer and, as normality is being gradually restored, the University is piloting new ways of working through its Agile Working scheme. This aims to provide greater flexibility in the times and places that people can work, while still meeting the University's needs.

The university has recently established an Inclusion, Diversity and Gender Network to drive change through research and knowledge exchange to achieve a more inclusive society.

For more information about the network <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/research/inclusion-diversity-and-gender/> and about EDI <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/staff/human-resources/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/>.

5. Resources for Employers

This section includes a variety of resources which are available to assist employers and support the development of organisational strategies.

ACAS - Equality and discrimination	http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1363
CIPD – Diversity and inclusion	https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/relations/diversity
Equality and Human Rights Commission	http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/
Equality and Diversity Forum	http://www.edf.org.uk/
GOV.UK - Employers: preventing discrimination	https://www.gov.uk/employer-preventing-discrimination
Ambition Institute⁵	See link below. Also: https://www.ambition.org.uk/
Government Equalities Office	https://www.gov.uk/employer-preventing-discrimination
More can be added by members and through our work with partners	



⁵ https://www.ambition.org.uk/documents/1374/Ambition_Institute_equality_diversity_and_inclusion_charter_v.2.pdf