

Promoting inclusion

Completing this online learning will help you personally contribute to creating an inclusive environment among your colleagues. It shows what an organisation like the ICO expects of its workplace culture and policies, what you as an individual can do to bring that to life and also what you might expect from your manager.

If you are a people manager you may want to consider completing Promoting inclusion for people managers instead.

This learning module is split into six sections and will take approximately 50 minutes to complete.

Introduction

Think of a time when you've been in a great team

Where everyone in your team understands and trusts each other.

When you each feel able to contribute fully – knowing that you're appreciated for who you are and the skills you bring.

When you get a sense that the whole organisation is a vibrant and welcoming place that brings lots of different people together.

You'll know that working environments like this are more productive, more creative and more enjoyable. But they don't just happen by accident.

An inclusive workplace is in everyone's interest and it's also everyone's responsibility.

While leaders and managers have a particularly important role in shaping an inclusive workplace, in practice it is everyone's responsibility and we can all make a difference in both big and small ways through our personal behaviours.

Completing the online learning will...

Completing this online learning will help provide a framework for you to contribute to a positive and inclusive environment at work. It shows what an organisation like the ICO expects of its workplace culture, through its

policies and procedures, and what you as an individual can do to help bring that to life.

Unlike some learning however, there are not always simple right and wrong answers for every situation. Contributing positively as a team member to an inclusive workplace requires:

- positive attitude,
- an open mind,
- awareness of others, and
- good judgement.

It requires you to be an active participant in your team and working environment. It can mean adapting your own behaviours, offering quiet support to colleagues or even calling out behaviours that don't live up to the ICO's values. This training introduces some of the principles of an inclusive workplace and helps you develop your own skills and understanding in each of these areas.

What this training includes

This learning module is split into six sections and will take around 30 mins to complete.

1. Introduction.
2. ICO expectations and what the law says - What 'Inclusion' relates to, why we are doing it and what the benefits are.
3. Diversity in the workplace - Understanding how your behaviour impacts on inclusion and acting accordingly.
4. Fostering an inclusive culture - How attitudes, belief systems and behaviours impact on workplace culture and inclusion.
5. Making good judgements - Making the best choices in potentially sensitive situations.
6. Practical tests for promoting inclusion - case studies and summary - Some case studies exploring behaviours that promote inclusion.

ICO expectations and what the law says

What Inclusion relates to, why we are doing it and what the benefits are.

The organisational perspective

The ICO is committed to promoting equality and diversity in all we do. We want to eliminate barriers that prevent people accessing our services or enjoying employment opportunities within the ICO.

We are committed to developing our staff and to fair and inclusive employment practices. We work proactively to make sure that there are no restrictions to building and developing a diverse workforce.

As an employer we commit to our workplaces and practices being accessible, flexible, fair and inclusive. We value the diversity, skills, backgrounds and experience of our people, and want to enable them to perform to their best in a welcoming and supportive environment.

Equality, diversity and inclusion foundations

Promoting inclusion for staff is part of a wider set of training resources around issues of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). There's a brief reminder of the EDI basics here but more detail is available in other training and resources such as:

- Dignity, diversity and inclusion
- Disability awareness e-learning
- Menopause awareness for line managers
- Promoting inclusion for people managers (the manager version of this course)
- Reasonable adjustment awareness for staff and people managers
- Leadership development
- Personal development plans
- ICO Equality, diversity and inclusion policy

You can find out more about these other courses on Workday or by contacting People Services Help. You can find the EDI policy in the Corporate policies library on Iris.

A basic reminder on equality, diversity and inclusion

Various legislation exists around equalities. This ensures that people are treated equally and fairly as employees, as service users and in their interactions with others.

The Equality Act 2010 is the main piece of legislation in this area. The Act brought together different pieces of historical equality legislation to create one simple and consistent approach that applies to nine specified protected characteristics.

It is most relevant to ICO in respect of outlawing unfair treatment in the workplace, when providing goods, facilities and services and when exercising public functions.

The Act describes unlawful behaviours such as:

- Discrimination (Direct and indirect) - someone with a protected characteristic being treated worse than someone else. This includes particular elements on disability discrimination
- Harassment – Unwanted conduct that has a negative impact which includes updated legislation specifically relating to sexual harassment
- Victimisation – Unfavourable treatment resulting from taking action under the Equality Act

Organisations such as the ICO and those working for it must comply with the Act or will be breaking the law.

As well as bringing together existing anti-discrimination legislation, the Equality Act introduced for the first time a proactive requirement on public bodies. The General Public Sector Equality Duty means that organisations and those working for them must take active steps to make things better and not just ensure that they don't break the law.

Public authorities subject to it must, in the course of their normal business, have "due regard" to the need to:

- 1) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- 2) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

In effect, the three aims of this Duty require public bodies to consider all individuals when carrying out all aspects of their day-to-day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

The Duty aims to support good decision making that takes account of equalities issues from the outset. By understanding the effect of their activities and decisions on different people, public bodies can be more efficient, inclusive and effective.

This means that it is not enough to simply avoid obviously unlawful actions such as discrimination or harassment. You are also expected to proactively promote equality of opportunity and to help build an inclusive environment that fosters 'good relations' between different groups.

While our culture at the ICO means that we would want to do this anyway, the Equality Act makes it clear that this is also a legal obligation. This is why this module on Promoting Inclusion for is not just an 'added extra' it is a core part of how we operate.

How equality, diversity and inclusion fit together

Equality

Ensuring people are treated fairly and no less favourably according to their individual or group needs or identity.

Diversity

Recognising, reflecting and respecting the widest variety of people and their distinct experiences.

Inclusion

Proactively enabling people to be part of something as the norm rather than as add-ons.

The Equality Act 2010 - nine protected characteristics

Which three of these are not protected by the Equality Act?

- A. Race
- B. Disability
- C. Sex
- D. Appearance
- E. Pregnancy and maternity
- F. Marriage and civil partnership

- G. Sexual orientation
- H. Social class
- I. Religion and belief
- J. Gender reassignment
- K. Age (younger and older)
- L. Socio-economic status (wealthy or poor)

The correct answer is D, H and L.

While someone's appearance, their social class or how much money they have may be factors that shape their lives, they are not characteristics that are protected under the Equality Act. Remember every single employee will be covered by at least four protected characteristics so this is not simply about perceptions of minority groups.

Equality, diversity and inclusion foundations at Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland each of the characteristics are protected under different pieces of legislation rather than one all encompassing piece of legislation. You can find out more about this in the Disability awareness e-learning.

Extending diversity and inclusion

While the protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act are core to all EDI considerations, the wider concepts of diversity and inclusion also extend beyond these.

These can relate to a wide variety of other factors or characteristics that may cause people to feel isolated or separate in the workplace. It may be about the way people look, dress or speak. It may relate to their views on a certain issue or them having interests which differ from work colleagues. It might be about where they live or the type of education they had. It could be as simple as whether they bring in home-cooked vegan food for lunch or go out to a local fast food restaurant with colleagues.

We each have things that make us different to other people we work with and things that might mean we are more similar. Often this has no impact at all and is just part of life. However sometimes it might result in someone becoming part of the 'in-crowd' and 'getting their voice heard' while someone else might feel isolated, overlooked or even, at worse, targeted.

Diversity in the workplace

Understanding how your behaviour impacts on inclusion and acting accordingly.

What does workplace diversity look like?

Diversity encompasses the nine protected characteristics as well as where these overlap - referred to as intersectionality.

Diversity also covers a far broader range of personal characteristics or experiences, such as;

- social origin,
- economic or migration status,
- educational background,
- appearance,
- life experiences,
- working history, and
- any other relevant aspect of an individual.

Diversity can additionally encompass deep-level differences in thought, perception and values – these may or may not overlap with other factors such as protected characteristics.

Diversity is about individuals and groups. A diverse workplace values everyone.

An inclusive and diverse workplace brings many benefits to organisations

Here are some of the benefits you might expect having an inclusive and diverse workplace:

- Harnessing different talent
- Positive and harmonious working relationships
- More effective teams with more varied contributions
- More innovative

- A more attractive employer
- Progression and retention of staff
- Better targeted and more effective products and services
- More accessible to service-users, customers and stakeholders
- Minimising both conflict and compliance issues.

How do you think you personally could contribute to promoting a diverse and inclusive workplace?

- A. Get to know your colleagues
- B. Recognise where people are similar and different
- C. Learn more about how others experience the ICO
- D. Involve colleagues wherever possible
- E. Test your own understanding of equality issues
- F. Promote the ICO values

The correct answer is A, B, C, D, E and F.

All of these are areas where as an individual, you can have a major impact.

Making good judgements

At times, you might have to make judgements around particular workplace values in different contexts.

As we've already seen, some aspects of inclusion are covered by equality law but others are not. Some experiences may fall under a Dignity at Work, or Equality, diversity and inclusion policy but others may not.

If we only look at our workplace interactions through the lens of legal or policy compliance, then we are likely to have less productive relationships. Compliance of course is the minimum but:

- Imagine feeling good at work if you didn't feel valued by your employer or your colleagues?
- What about if you didn't feel like you could be yourself at work? Or if there was an atmosphere that people 'like you' don't fit?

- How would it be if you felt you have nothing in common with colleagues and no shared values?

Your manager should lead your team in a way that recognises and values their differences and enables everyone to contribute and feel part of the team. But they can't do this alone. Every individual member of the team has a part to play. When this works well it promotes higher employee support, wellbeing and engagement. This can then help you and your colleagues maximise your contribution and effectiveness. It also makes the workplace more enjoyable.

As an employee within our own teams or in the organisation as a whole, any of our actions both spoken and physical can potentially have consequences at some level on those around us. They may deliver a good outcome or one that is more negative. But, how can we know this?

We need to be aware of the likely impacts of our actions, behaviours or judgements on those around us and weigh up any possible negative or positive effects. Trying to be neutral or not get involved can in itself create an effect.

Achieving a diverse and inclusive workplace means that it is essential to try whenever possible to behave in a way that will have positive consequences.

Inclusive behaviours require us to take time to think things through and be thoughtful about the likely impacts of even simple actions.

It doesn't mean that you should always be 'walking on eggshells' or shouldn't address difficult issues. However, you should think carefully about what you expect to achieve through your actions and also be aware of any possible unintended impacts.

Actions and consequences

Almost any situation has the potential to have either a positive or a negative consequence on inclusion. Look at the following examples and think whether the most likely impact will be positive or negative.

I like to bring in cakes for colleagues for my birthday

Likely positive as this simple gesture can show your colleagues you care about and value them. You need to take care that it doesn't inadvertently exclude people or make them feel 'embarrassed' (eg special diets, Ramadan, obesity concerns).

I spoke to one of my team-mates to ask them not to leave their 'smelly' food in the communal fridge

Care of communal facilities is everyone's responsibility and politely asking someone to respect this may be appropriate. However, take care around personal judgements like 'smelly'. Who is to say which 'smells' are acceptable or not? For someone who is vegan, a simple chicken sandwich may smell offensive. Think carefully how to negotiate 'shared space' with people who legitimately hold different views.

I've joined an internal network to help support and represent the interests of ethnic minority employees. I spend more social time now with these colleagues as we have more in common.

Likely positive that such proactive initiatives help build confidence, skills and a supportive community in the workplace. However, though it is not the intention, any legitimate positive action to address issues by any group also has the potential to exaggerate differences rather than promote greater inclusion. Therefore, we all should contribute to improving everyone's sense of belonging, by embracing the diversity in our workforce.

I like to share jokes and memes from the internet and Twitter but when they're a bit close to the line, I'm always careful to make sure people who might be offended aren't anywhere nearby.

Humour can be very personal. If you already think it's not appropriate then you may already be having a negative impact on an inclusive workplace. You don't know who might be offended other than making stereotypical assumptions on factors such as visible characteristics. Misplaced 'humour' and so-called 'banter' are two main contributors to workplace exclusion and even harassment.

There were lots of EDI activities at work. I didn't get involved now some people say I'm small-minded.

Likely both negative and positive. Many organisations raise awareness and promote inclusion through topical events, celebrating diversity and promoting inclusion. However, if this becomes perceived as an obligation or people are judged on their participation it risks creating a backlash. No one is obliged to get involved in promotional activities beyond their work nor should they have to justify that.

I'm training for a sponsored event raising money for a mental health charity. Some colleagues wanted to support me so I've explained how the money raised will be used and why I'd got involved.

Likely positive. This could be a good opportunity to share a little bit about yourself outside of work and why mental health issues might be important to you. Raising other people's understanding can help create a more thoughtful working environment. Take care though not to impose your activity on others or have unreasonable expectations of their interest or involvement.

Let's bust some common myths

Consider what might be the pros and cons of some of these commonly heard statements in the workplace.

"I treat everybody the same"

Treating everybody the same is unlikely to be either effective or fair in a diverse workplace where people have differing needs, expectations and approaches.

"I make more effort with my colleagues who have protected characteristics and invest a bit more time in them"

All team members will have protected characteristics although they may not be in a minority. Singling certain people out for special treatment on the basis of certain protected characteristics could end up being patronising or even unfair. It is unlikely to be needed or effective and could easily create tensions.

"I only see people – I consider everyone as a human not as an identity"

On the surface this may appear an attractive statement. But in reality every dimension of who we are makes us people. It is not for someone else to define which parts of our humanity can be badged as an identity. Statements like this need probing into what is perceived as an identity and what isn't.

"We're a tight-knit team here, if someone who didn't fit into that, they'd probably feel awkward or uncomfortable"

It's great to have a tight-knit team but less healthy to have a clique or an 'in-group'. Having a close and productive team doesn't mean it shouldn't also be a diverse team that allows for everyone's individual contribution to be welcome and valued.

“We’ve never had any issues in this area, this is just the new management buzzword, political correctness gone mad and woke behaviour”

As the social attitudes and demographics of society all grow, change and develop, it is inevitable that there will be greater diversity. Harnessing that so that everyone can make their best contribution and organisations can be better employers while offering better services is everyone’s responsibility. It is easy to dismiss or undermine that which is different or which feels less familiar but a more inclusive workplace offers benefits to everyone in it.

Fostering an inclusive culture

How attitudes, belief systems and behaviours impact on workplace culture and inclusion.

What does an inclusive culture look like and what helps shape it?

When we use the word culture, it isn’t just one thing.

In organisations, we are guided by legislation and policies that create a structured framework of what we can and can’t do; what is acceptable and what is not. However no set of policies can cover every eventuality.

Beyond this framework, a range of other elements impact on our workplace culture as well as society more generally.

Interpretations

The different ways we might understand or perceive something.

Belief systems

A set of personal or shared perspectives that form the basis of our understanding.

Bias

A preconceived inclination towards or against something.

Social norms

The unwritten rules of what is acceptable – these can change by group.

Attitudes

Our feelings or positions in relation to another person or a thing.

In-groups and out-groups

Groups which we are part of or groups which we are outside.

People skills in a diverse world

Sometimes these different elements affect the way we see things and we are aware that this is the case. At other times, they are so much part of who we are as individuals that we are less aware that they are shaping the ways that we think and act.

Creating a truly inclusive workplace culture means we all need to become more aware of the different factors that make us think and act in the ways that we do. When we are on auto-pilot we are more likely to do things the way we always have. In a more diverse workplace, if we are to proactively promote greater inclusivity we need to make the time to reflect on our own behaviours and those of others so that we may gain new perspectives and see things in different lights.

As a member of a team, being open to self-challenge and aware of our own belief systems, attitudes and natural preferences is key to inclusive behaviour.

Tattoo case study

We are all shaped by a variety of attitudes and belief systems – it's a totally natural result of our parenting, our education, our preferred information sources, our personal tastes and the society in which we live.

We belong to certain in-groups – for example family, friends, sports clubs or religions and within these, there may be further sub-sets of those we are closest to. All of these groups will be shaped by their own social norms.

Because of all of these factors, we tend to interpret things that come before us in certain ways and are likely to have a range of pre-conceived inclinations and preferences.

This will shape the ways we react to things that are both highly important to us as well as those that are relatively trivial.

So, as a simple example – What's your personal attitude about tattoos? If you're forced to choose between two statements 'tattoos are generally a good thing' or 'tattoos are generally not a good thing' which is your natural inclination?

Reflect on what's driving your immediate reaction – is it generational, personal, based on previous experience? What sorts of mental images relating to tattoos come into your head?

Is it thuggish, delicate or a memorial?

Are you imagining stylish celebrities or prison inkings?

Do you largely think they're ok but draw the line at facial tattooing?

But what if it's culturally normal? For example, the Māori people and facial moko, facial tattoos denoting a person's links with their family and cultural identity.

It's OK to have different perspectives on things

This simple example shows that different people can have very distinct ways of reacting to the same thing. They are not necessarily right or wrong – just different. Within the framework of laws and policy, It's OK to have different perspectives on things – that is the very heart of diversity.

Problems can arise however when some perspectives go unchecked and our inevitable diversity escalates unchecked to something that could be seen as problematic.

Difference

Making or noting distinctions, eg some people have tattoos.

Stereotype

Attaching labels and grouping, eg these are the types of people that have tattoos.

Assumption

Expecting associations, eg the types of people that have tattoos are likely to...

Prejudice

Adding a value judgement (either negative or positive), eg I think people with tattoos are cool or I think people with tattoos are unprofessional.

Bias

Adding disproportionate weight for or against something, eg recruiting people with cool tattoos shows how creative we are or tattoos are not appropriate in a formal workplace.

If these patterns can so quickly establish around something as simple as tattoos – how much more problematic could it be if they were applied to a wider range of characteristics? How easy would it be for our colleagues to quickly feel more or less valued in the workplace as a result of the things that we say or do?

Making good judgements

Making the best choices in potentially sensitive situations.

What does it look like when you get it right?

Think back to the beginning of this online training and the image you had in your own mind of a good team working environment. You would expect it to be:

- cooperative,
- collaborative,
- open,
- fair,
- curious,
- accountable, and
- so much more.

What can you do personally as an employee and a member of a team to model these behaviours, support others to achieve them and help promote them more widely?

Good team working environment

Select each heading to get more information and ask yourself to what extent you experience these yourself and as importantly, how do you help enable them for others?

"I am accepted and valued for who I am"

I feel connected to a common cause but am also allowed to be unique.

"I have a voice"

I get input into decisions that impact my workplace.

"I participate in a collaborative environment"

My team is connected and I contribute fully.

"I have the information and evidence I need"

I feel properly informed and can weigh up different factors.

"We operate with inclusive practices"

I'm encouraged to bring diverse ideas and perspectives and to ask questions.

"I have access to resources"

I feel empowered and trusted to use them well.

"I have opportunities for learning and development"

I am supported to grow and succeed.

"I enjoy a sense of belonging"

I like working here and would recommend to others.

Why judgement matters

Of course in any workplace there will be a need for trade-offs and the potential for tension and conflict. People won't always agree. Sometimes there may be performance issues or poor behaviour. Different people may have very different perspectives on issues that can't easily be reconciled.

This is where we all need to understand that with increasing diversity, it is inevitable that there will be competing perspectives. We all come with different assumptions and biases. These may not be badly intended and we might not even be aware of them. In an inclusive team we will look for ways to enable these issues to surface and be addressed in a constructive manner. Our manager has a role in helping us to achieve this but we all have a responsibility through our own behaviours.

We need to accept that we see things in different ways. We may have a belief that our way is right but in many instances it may simply be different. Data, evidence and information will help us to shape our understanding but it will rarely give us the correct answer on its own. It's important to understand how to widen our own levels of understanding to take account of different perceptions and different information that may enable a wider solution.

This will help us achieve good judgements.

When things go wrong?

As highlighted at the beginning, there isn't one single set of simple rules to effectively create an inclusive team. You need a high level of awareness of the issues, some applied knowledge, positive attitude and good judgement. Above all you have to approach the issues proactively.

Things won't always go right and sometimes you'll have to weigh up the possible risks and outcomes of both action and inaction. The following buttons highlight a few of the most common causes of difficulty.

Uncertainty

Not knowing the right thing to do: complex, complicated, grey areas.

Awkwardness

Feeling embarrassed dealing with potentially sensitive matters.

Pressure

Not having time, driven by deadlines, wanting a quick fix, hoping it'll go away.

Prejudice or bias

May be conscious or unconscious.

In-groups and out-groups

Wanting to fit in – not challenging exclusion of others.

Self-interest

Personal gain, privilege, ambition: an individual serves themselves first.

Personal character

Ego, status, poor social judgement, thoughtless or inconsiderate.

Misguided loyalty

Knowingly or unknowingly reflecting one set of interests over another.

Ignorance

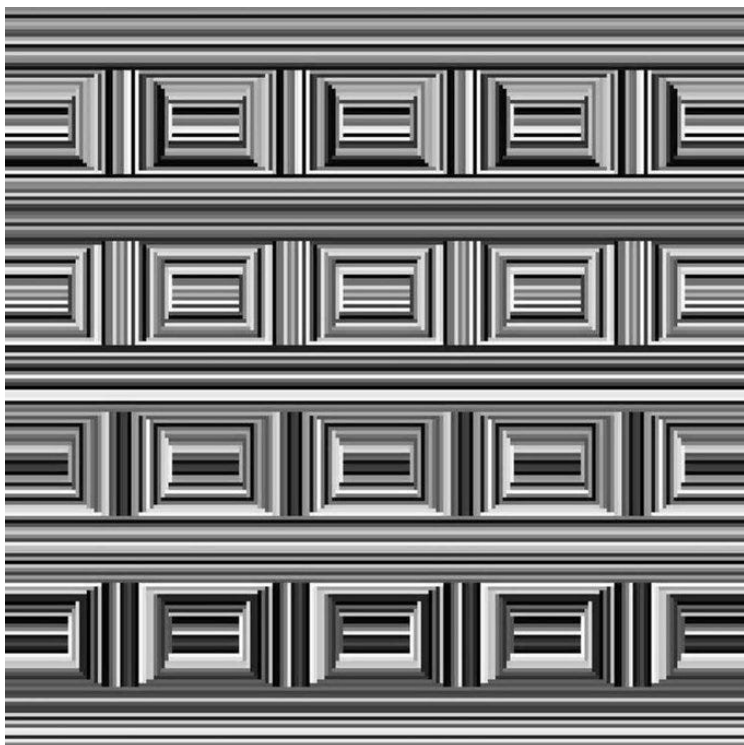
Not recognising the impact or why something is problematic to another party. Doesn't see the data that indicates a problem.

Apathy

Don't know or care about the issues. No censure for those that ignore it.

Balancing different perspectives - The Coffer illusion

Look carefully at the following image. How many circles can you see?



Some people find this easy, others can identify the circles after a while and some get frustrated as they simply can't get it. This doesn't make any one person better than another, it just means we can legitimately perceive the same things differently.

None of us are likely to make good judgements if we don't appreciate that we all see things differently – without anyone having to be right or wrong.

There are 16 circles (4 rows of 4).

Once you know this it becomes possible to see both the circles and the squares at the same time and to understand how they interact.

This exercise is a way of illustrating the challenges of balancing diverse viewpoints in an inclusive working environment.

What assists good judgement in promoting an inclusive working environment?

It's easy to state that we all need to make good judgements in order to play our part positively within an inclusive team and working environment – but perhaps less easy to know how to do that. This training has introduced a number of concepts over its sections so far. Please see the 12-point checklist to remind you.

1. Be aware of your own personal bias.
2. Consider diverse points of view.
3. Make time to reflect before leaping to conclusions.
4. Ensure your perception is accurate and complete.
5. Turn your knowledge into understanding by asking questions and listening.
6. Accept your mistakes and learn from them.
7. Understand the organisational policies, systems and values.
8. Take action and review its effect.
9. Use tools and information to inform your approach.
10. Ask good questions to genuinely understand and listen well to the answers you get.
11. Build shared ownership – do things with your colleagues.
12. Recognise that good diversity and inclusion practice is not all done through rules and legislation – good people skills are key.

Case studies and summary

A number of case studies designed to explore your reactions to diversity and inclusion.

Case studies

The following simple case studies offer you some examples of workplace situations where you might need to make judgements around inclusive behaviour and the potential impacts of any action (or inaction) you take.

Please go through each example and consider the multiple choice options that are offered.

You will see that for some of them, a variety of the suggested ways forward may be considered suitable according to the exact circumstances. This shows why it is so important to increase your awareness and give careful consideration to different situations in order to make the best judgements you can.

1. You discover that one of your colleagues has been allowed to continue working from home on a permanent basis. Your manager and your colleague are reluctant to share information as to why this is the case.

What do you do?

- A. Raise a grievance for unfair treatment as you have to go to the office so why shouldn't they.
- B. Ensure you make an extra effort to keep in touch with them remotely, so they don't feel out of the loop.
- C. Discuss it with other colleagues in your team and see if anyone's got any ideas why they're not coming back into the office.
- D. Check the ICO's policies on flexible working arrangements to ensure you understand them and raise any particular queries that concern you personally directly with your manager.

Most appropriate response would be;

First of all, this is not your direct business and there may be many legitimate reasons why this arrangement has been reached. Your colleague has a right to private matters remaining private and they don't owe you an explanation.

While it might (to some) seem attractive, working remotely full time can be hard and can have impacts on an individual's performance and morale. As a supportive team member, making a particular effort to maintain contact and keep them involved would be a positive example of inclusive behaviour.

Of course, any decision that has been taken should have been made in the light of any adjustments that may be legally required for that individual. It should also be in line with any over-arching ICO policies on home-working. If you genuinely had any specific concerns that this arrangement might amount to unfair treatment to your detriment, you should explore that in the first instance with your manager once you had ensured you understood the relevant policies in this area.

Discussing it in an uninformed way with colleagues risks gossip and stoking tensions or mis-information.

Option B is therefore the best approach with option D being a legitimate step to take if you have any genuine personal concerns around fairness.

2. You're in the toilets when you overhear one of a colleague telling someone else that they feel constantly targeted by another member of your team. They don't know you're there.

What do you do?

- A. Keep quiet unless someone raises it formally – after all you don't listen to gossip.
- B. Raise it directly with the person who has been accused of the poor behaviour.
- C. Report what you have heard directly to your line-manager.
- D. Let your colleague know you overheard their conversation and ask whether you can offer them any support.

Most appropriate response would be;

At this stage, you have only overheard the information and you do not know the nature of the concerns expressed by your colleague and whether they might amount to bullying or harassment.

Not taking any action would be ignoring what you now know, but a lack of evidence and clarity would make it inappropriate to directly approach the person accused of the poor behaviour as this in itself could escalate matters and make you part of the issue.

An open and transparent first step would be to talk directly to the person with the concerns (option D), although this would have to be handled sensitively given they did not intend you to have this information. Option C of talking to your line manager – while acknowledging the limitations of what you know - may also be appropriate to ensure that you do not become a 'silent witness' to potentially bullying behaviour.

3. A colleague comes to you, angry and frustrated about not getting an internal promotion that they believed they'd earned. In passing, they state that it's down to positive discrimination as the organisation is trying to 'push ethnic diversity'. They grumble that 'middle-aged, white men' are now being discriminated against.

What do you do?

- A. Empathise and agree with them that it seems very unfair.
- B. Challenge them immediately on their racist views.

- C. Explore what evidence they are basing their perceptions on and suggest that if they have concerns around discrimination they should raise them through the appropriate channels.
- D. Acknowledge their disappointment and frustration but make no comment on any other aspect of their concerns.

Most appropriate response would be;

Your reaction will of course shaped by the depth of relationship you have with the individual. You may well be able to understand the disappointment and frustration they feel if they believe they've worked hard for a promotion, and not been successful this time.

However, this does not mean that you have to accept or endorse their perceptions around why they were unsuccessful. Empathising can make you complicit in their world-view. Equally, immediately accusing them of 'racism' may not be accurate, may simply re-affirm their own narrative and is unlikely to move the situation forward.

The most neutral approach is Option D but this does not give you an opportunity to promote a more inclusive environment so there may be a consequence of 'in-action'.

Option C allows you to explore and test some of their perceptions and any evidence behind those. It may also provide the opportunity to gently question their conclusions and promote a more inclusive perspective that defuses your colleague's anger. Suggesting a way for them to take measured action if they still have concerns avoids myths and prejudices building up.

4. A work colleague who wasn't successful in an internal recruitment campaign has been bad-mouthing the successful candidate to you behind her back - saying that she only got the job as part of a 'diversity drive'. You notice he's also increasingly avoiding or talking over her and his body language is openly dismissive.

What do you do?

- A. You believe you are now witnessing bullying behaviour and you privately inform your line manager accordingly.
- B. You approach your female colleague and check in generally how she's finding her new role and whether she's experiencing any difficulties.

- C. You make clear to your colleague that you don't think it's right that he bad-mouths another team member to you and explore his levels of awareness around the behaviours you've observed.
- D. No-one else seems to have noticed or raised any concerns, so you assume it'll all blow over without you needing to say anything to anyone.

Most appropriate response would be;

Again this will depend on your existing relationships with the different colleagues involved. However, different to the previous example where the individual's expressed frustration seemed relatively contained and generic, this situation sees the individual expressing their views more publicly and personally targeting the successful candidate in words and actions.

Given the protected characteristics involved, this could constitute harassment and is certainly likely to create a hostile environment that is unlikely to help positive relationships and an inclusive workplace.

If you simply avoid the whole situation such as in option D you risk contributing to an organisational culture where poor behaviour is tolerated and not addressed.

As just another team member in this situation you don't have any line management authority and certainly don't want to provoke a different set of tensions. However in this instance some action is needed. Any combination of Options A, B and C could be appropriate depending on your relationship and influence with the individuals concerned.

5. You've been in your team for just over a year. Your personal work rate and output is good and you're getting good personal performance feedback from your manager. However, you prefer to keep yourself to yourself and you have little interaction with your team colleagues. surprised when your manager calls you to one side and expresses some concern that your apparent lack of engagement might be reducing team effectiveness and knowledge exchange.

What do you do?

- A. Ask questions to understand how and where your behaviour is currently impacting on team effectiveness and knowledge exchange and what you might do differently.

- B. Tell your manager that you only come here to work and that you are under no obligation to interact socially.
- C. Immediately suggest to colleagues that you should all go out for a coffee or drink after work.
- D. Reflect on the way you contribute to the team and maybe ask a few closer colleagues how they see you and whether there are things they find helpful or more challenging in working with you.

Most appropriate response would be;

We are all different and have different ways of interacting in the workplace, whether on specific work-related tasks or in the more social contacts during a working day. There may also be cultural differences and different expectations based around ones age or whether one is male or female. Some people include work colleagues in their out-of-work friendship circles and others don't. People shouldn't feel under an obligation to merge their work and social lives.

However within any team, there are certain levels of connection and interaction that facilitate the actual work and performance of the team. Individuals can be high performing in their own area but good team performance relies on the active contribution of everyone

Given the concern is about the impact on team effectiveness and knowledge exchange, then the most appropriate first step would be to explore what this looks like, how your behaviour is currently impacting on the team and what could be different (Option A). You may be unaware of this or it may not be an area that is comfortable for you – so understanding and testing options is an important stage that will also help your manager understand where you are coming from.

Option D also allows your own reflections to be informed by colleagues and to start building a more productive dialogue and understanding.

6. The person that sits at the next desk to you in the office is exuberant and sometimes verges on the inappropriate in your opinion. After one particularly lively outburst, you have a quiet word with them about this, politely explaining that their behaviour is disturbing your work. You think they have accepted the feedback. A week later they come back to you and suggest that you're picking on them because they are openly gay and you have 'disrespected their cultural identity'.

What do you do?

- A. Reflect on how you had approached them previously and whether you got it wrong.
- B. Tell them not to be daft and that this is about behaviour and not identity.
- C. Ask them to explain what they mean so you can understand better.
- D. Apologise and make a mental note to tread carefully around them from here on.

Most appropriate response would be;

Some of this situation may come down to the different perceptions that you and your desk neighbour have about appropriate workplace behaviour.

It may or may not in reality have anything at all to do with their sexual orientation and/or 'cultural identity' but the very fact that they have taken it that way means that it needs addressing. In these circumstances, a level of reflection (option A) is always valuable, but is unlikely to resolve the issue. Seeking to engage positively and proactively with your colleague (option C) is likely to provide the best foundations for resolution going forwards.

That resolution may be that you learn something new and react differently in future, or it may end up being a variant of option B – focusing on behavioural expectations not identity. However, choosing option B immediately (without reflection or further exploration) could simply escalate the situation unnecessarily. Option D of an apology might make the immediate issue go away, but is unlikely to be a long term resolution and will do nothing to promote an inclusive workplace that understands and harness diverse contributions.

7. A popular colleague (known around the office for their passing resemblance to Ed Sheeran) is soon to celebrate their 30th birthday. Most of the team plan to don red wigs, check shirts and glasses for a cake presentation in the office.

What do you do?

- A. Root in your fancy dress box at home for suitable props and practice singing 'Shape of you'.
- B. Question your team-mates as to whether this is appropriate for the office and whether there's a different way to celebrate their your colleague's 30th.

- C. Reflect on what's planned, think carefully through the pro's and con's of it and engage with others to get the best outcome.
- D. Decide it's none of your business and make sure you're well out of the way when the cake presentation is planned.

Most appropriate response would be;

Much of this comes down to judgement and careful assessment of the exact circumstances (option C).

This could turn out to be fun, celebratory and positive coming together of the team in a way that builds camaraderie and allows everyone to join in with some harmless, shared humour. Equally it could be a poor taste and embarrassing exercise that feels awkward for the birthday celebrant themselves, as well as other members of the team.

Balancing opportunities for positive informal engagement alongside what is appropriate in an office environment as well as the needs of different staff is the key. Conversely, no one wants a sterile and humourless atmosphere where everyone walks on eggshells and someone always acts as a killjoy. Knowing your colleagues, talking through options in a way that recognises different people's interests and understanding what the risks and opportunities are will help you reach the optimal decision.

Case study summary

As the examples have shown, being aware of the legislative and policy basics, understanding the situation and knowing your colleagues mean you are likely to make better judgements across a variety of circumstances.

But how do you get to understand the diversity of those with whom you work on a daily basis – whether that be in relation to protected characteristics or other wider circumstantial factors?

Some of the questions you may wish to reflect on:

- What I know and what I don't know about my colleagues
- How do I get to know things?
- Are the ways in which I engage with different colleagues
- Consistent?
- Tailored?

- Congruent?
- How do my colleagues engage with me?
- What do my colleagues know about me – who I am? What I stand for?

Consolidation of learning

This online learning has provided an overview of what you as an individual and as a constructive colleague can do in fostering an inclusive and high-performing diverse workplace.

You will have recognised that success in this area depends on being well-informed, reflective around the influences on yourself and others, sensitive to circumstances and able to make good judgements. Your skills and effectiveness in these areas will be best assessed through your ongoing practice over time rather than through any short term test or questionnaire at the end of this learning module.

To complete this online module please reflect on the following three questions.

1. What will you do more of as a colleague and team member as a result of this training?
2. What will you do less of or stop doing as a colleague and team member as a result of this training?
3. What do you believe personally is most important in creating an inclusive workplace culture at ICO?

Workday Completion

If you have completed only this Word document version please contact People Services Help so that your completion record can be updated manually on Workday.