

# EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

for the Greater Manchester

Good Employment Charter

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## Accessibility

If you need to access this report in a different format please contact the charter unit: [contact@gmgoodemploymentcharter.co.uk](mailto:contact@gmgoodemploymentcharter.co.uk)

## Funding

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# FOREWORD

“Greater Manchester is a place that has been built on its diversity and is driven to ensure that every person has access to opportunity and that no one is left behind. That is why the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter places such emphasis on not only ensuring workplaces are diverse, but that they are also culturally inclusive and are led in a way where everyone can bring their full potential to work.

This report, commissioned jointly with our partners at the Inclusive Growth Network will help the Charter and similar initiatives around the country better understand the best approaches to redress some of the most suborn inequities in employment. It will also equip us with the potential interventions that can make a positive and lasting difference.

My thanks go to the Project Steering Group and the Supporters and Members of the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter who gave their time, insights and expertise so freely. The Charter's community of practice is so highly valued and appreciated. My final word of gratitude is to the research team at the Centre for Decent Work and Productivity at Manchester Metropolitan University, superbly led by Dr Sarah Crozier. The academic rigour and perspectives they bring are critical in ensuring that the Charter moves forward in a robust and credible way to address the increasing complexity of today's employment landscape.”

**Ian MacArthur**, Director, Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter.

“Over the past four years, our Inclusive Growth Network has been committed to working with its 14 member places, including Greater Manchester, to translate inclusive growth from theory to practice. Our members were early adopters of an approach that puts equity and economic efficiency hand in hand as twin drivers of a thriving economy. The IGN was born out of a bold vision to take the emerging good practice coming out of the likes of the GM Good Employment Charter and build on it, sharing good practice across the country. This work from experts at Manchester Metropolitan University will be an important tool in enabling places to take the next step in inclusive growth innovation, through supporting employers to ensure that everyone is respected, valued, and included in the workplace. This isn't just a nice to have, but fundamental to building the type of economy and society that harnesses the talent at its disposal and leaves nobody behind.”

**Annabel Smith**, Director of Place and Practice, Centre for Progressive Policy.

# INTRODUCTION

**This report presents the findings of the research study conducted to address Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter.**

This report draws on the definition of EDI as set out by The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD); *“Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in the workplace focuses on creating an environment where every individual feels valued, experiences a sense of belonging, and is empowered to reach their full potential. This approach addresses fairness, promotes the diverse backgrounds and perspectives within a workforce, and fosters inclusivity to ensure everyone can thrive without discrimination. EDI is seen as essential to good people management and organizational success in modern workplaces”* (CIPD, 2023) [www.cipd.org/uk/topics/equality-diversity-inclusion/](https://www.cipd.org/uk/topics/equality-diversity-inclusion/)

At the time of writing, this report aims to use accepted terminology but the research and project team acknowledge that the language surrounding the EDI agenda is complex and can change often.

EDI is a priority for the Good Employment Charter and forms part of its current strategic focus. There is more to learn about this vast, broad and complex agenda and how those engaged with the charter navigate it within

their organisations. Currently EDI as an important value set sits at the heart of the initiative as a thread that is woven through all seven charter characteristics (secure work, flexible work, pay, engagement and voice, recruitment, people management, health and wellbeing). There is interest in the evolution of charter design to make EDI more prominent and visible within and across the seven charter characteristics and more broadly as a value that supports the charter's ethos and vision. This interest is also supported by the findings of the earlier evaluation work carried out by Manchester Metropolitan University. Following the evaluation of the good employment charter, a number of recommendations were put in place that address alongside other things EDI challenges and opportunities for the charter and for organisations who participate in it.

To address the areas of interest outlined above, this project explores EDI in its traditional sense in terms of how the charter and participating organisations encounter opportunities and challenges in the attainment of EDI across personal and job demographics, in order to explore parity and equality of opportunity for all employees.

# PROJECT AIMS

**This project aims to provide a multi-stakeholder view of the challenges and opportunities surrounding the EDI agenda for the good employment charter, specifically:**

To explore charter member (and supporter) organisations' experiences in addressing EDI as part of their organisational culture and behaviours;

To bring together a framework of best practice examples regarding metrics for the measurement of EDI and success indicators;

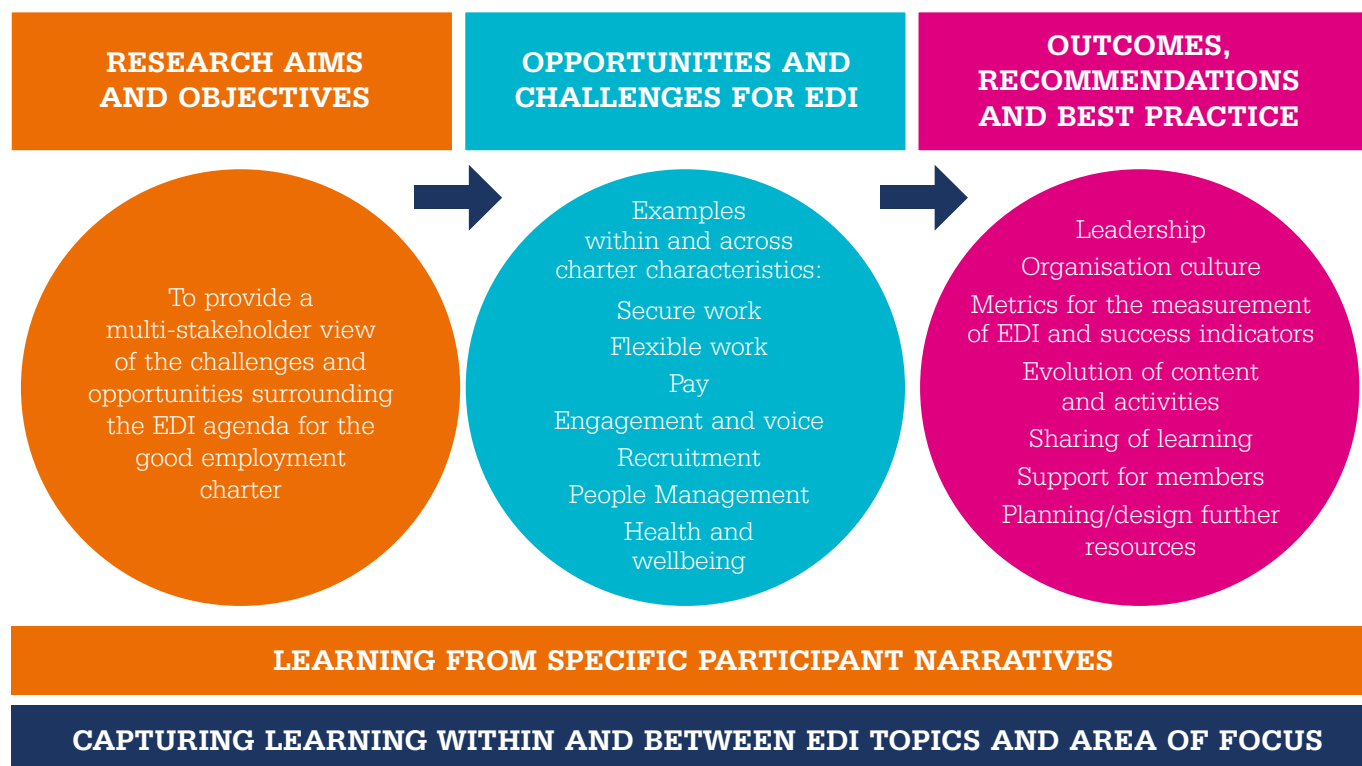
To appraise how EDI is embedded across and within each of the existing charter characteristics in order to draw out the challenges and opportunities encountered by organisations who participate as supporters or members of the charter;

To set out recommendations for building and sustaining an inclusive culture of shared learning that can be applied both within GM and across other localities to enable wider shared good practice.

It is acknowledged that EDI is a broad and complex agenda and by its definition needs to be explored in a way that is inclusive and recognises the diversity of individual differences across vast demographic criteria within and outside of the Equality Act (2010). This need is balanced against the size and scope of this study. It is not possible within a study of this size to explore each EDI facet or topic in great depth nor singularly, nor undertake a thorough diversity audit of many

characteristics. Instead, this report engages a variety of perspectives and narratives and seeks to collate important and emerging themes that are of interest to the broad EDI agenda. The project sought to capture important learning from within and across different EDI topics alongside their intersectionality and apply this learning collectively to developing good practice across the EDI agenda that is applicable to all EDI topics.

A model of the research approach and intended outcomes is represented here.



The project methodology consisted of focus groups and interviews with 22 participants to garner narratives and perspectives to inform each of the aims above. In collaboration with the project team and steering group, a rich question set was developed that mapped to the project objectives. Participants were recruited through the charter network to represent different stakeholder perspectives and included advisory board members, supporter organisation charter leads, member organisation charter leads, supporter organisation employees and member organisation employees. It should be noted that employees who participated tended to be those who had experiences of working with the EDI agenda, and though invitations to employees were cascaded through charter leads, those who responded were typically more senior and held roles that were affiliated with the implementation of the charter within their organisations.

The data was analysed through a thematic template analysis. Each segment of data is set out alongside the corresponding areas of questioning and the report presents detailed narrative quotations from participants alongside summary data of key trends and themes.

# PROJECT FINDINGS

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study findings are summarised in the diagram below. This presents an overview of the data where participant reflections about good employment and EDI are presented alongside examples across each charter theme. In addition, suggestions of how the charter can provide support alongside how the charter may evolve its design, and the study recommendations are presented. These are discussed in further detail at the end of this report.

## EDI AND GOOD EMPLOYMENT

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Buy in, appetite, beliefs, attitudes, culture
- Benefit for employees and for customers/ stakeholders
- Genuine engagement with communities
- Need to build gradually and seek feedback to initiatives
- Building authentic leadership
- Allyship
- Raise visibility of EDI agenda and educate others on the impact and business case
- EDI as a shared responsibility
- Consistency and fairness across large teams
- Place based values in GM history and ability to influence others

### CHALLENGES

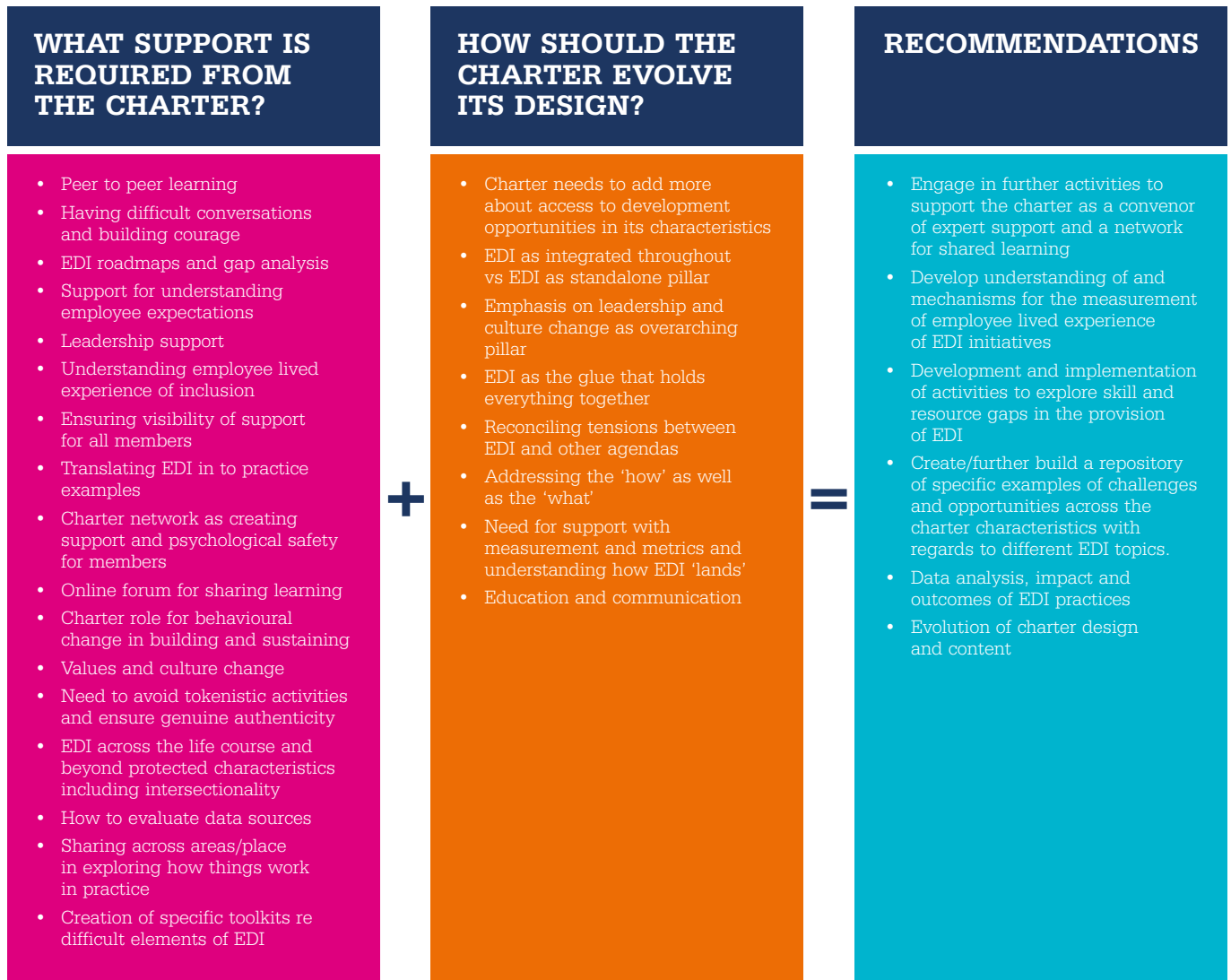
- Cost, resource, time, buy in
- Understanding and managing employee expectations and changing expectations as a function of demographics (e.g. young workers)
- Fear of doing the wrong thing
- Knowing where to start
- Intersectionality and EDI that is outside of protected characteristics
- EDI changes quickly
- EDI as polarising/ 'toxic' debate
- Moving beyond conversations to action
- Consistency in terms of leadership and culture
- Challenges around hate speech, radicalism, political views
- Ensuring values align with behaviours
- Economic context both an opportunity and a challenge

**Links between EDI and good employment – why does it matter?**

- Psychological safety and authenticity
- Creating a thriving environment and happiness at work
- EDI must start with strong values
- Wider understanding of local communities
- EDI as enhancing employee satisfaction and wellbeing and in turn retention and productivity
- Business case for diverse teams = diverse results and engagement with stakeholders
- Emphasis on progression opportunities for all employees

	OPPORTUNITIES	CHALLENGES
 <b>Secure work</b>	Temporary to permanent, managing fit and horizon planning; Real living hours; clear planning and justification for new roles; good pension benefits, holidays and long service benefits; clarity and communication of working hours; understanding individual preference and need for clear communication; sharing financial forecasting/openness; providing training and progression for agency staff	Marginalising experiences of those not on permanent contracts; inclusive language around different contract type to foster belonging; external economic constraint
 <b>Flexible work</b>	Assessments made on individual needs; team development days; flexible working to accommodate caring needs; trust and focus on outcome rather than hours worked – line manager training; challenge your structure and history re traditional ways of working	Discretion and possible bias/unfairness; bringing people into the office for group collaboration; managing changing attitudes and expectations; balancing business needs and diversity in individual roles across different organisational functions
 <b>Pay</b>	Pay reporting across demographics; additional pay/bonuses for all staff; support for staff with additional needs; ensuring opportunity for development is a wider strategic priority; supporting employee hardship; empathy through social diversity in senior staff/board members; benchmarking pay regularly & being transparent; alternative ways to increase social mobility	Need for fair/consistent processes in performance evaluations; training people then they leave for higher pay; understanding challenges of accessing additional costs (e.g. transport); challenges of progression (and pay) in small company
 <b>Engagement and voice</b>	Fostering psychological safety and belonging; authentic and compassionate leadership; encourage expression of difference and whole self; building trust through voice and removing power distance; involving employees with EDI issues; employee groups around specific EDI challenges; technological opportunities for engagement; impacts wellbeing	How to engage all employees genuinely; managing the consequences of employee populations with no voice; ensuring that feedback is representative of all employees; actioning feedback; reliance on momentary metrics
 <b>Recruitment</b>	Appraise and redesign existing systems; situating recruitment data alongside other organisational data; disparity between recruitment and development; networking with local community; data driven decision making; using systems and onboarding to capture data on diverse groups; proactivity in assessing demographics; values based recruitment; making jobs appeal to diverse populations; supportive policies; promoting internally; Simple changes can reduce unconscious bias	Disparity between recruitment and development; diverse employees but only at the bottom of organisation; recruitment technology as marginalising; inclusivity in recruitment and complexities in fit; family owned business and recruitment challenges; need for cultural change; not a quick fix for EDI
 <b>People Management</b>	Key for EDI enactment in values and behaviours; line managers as responsible for allyship and advocacy; genuine compassion and empathy in building inclusive cultures; key to translating policy into practice; training for people management and EDI – drawing on external expertise	Complex skill needs for managers: moving between wellbeing conversations and performance management; consistent support for people from minority groups and progression; career progression and development and its intersections with EDI
 <b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	People management as critical; raising awareness and provision of education and training; health and wellbeing as an outcome of fair and good work; skills for managing reasonable adjustments; interplay with other characteristics; providing support for long term health problems in a compassionate way including dismissal challenges and links to performance; job design and horizon planning for redeployment; organised support	Poor values, culture and behaviours at the local level; health and performance challenges; balancing employee and organisational responsibility for health and wellbeing; translation of policy in to practice and managing employee expectations; need for more specialist knowledge; unpredictability of employee health and disability status; accessibility provision and prevalence of disabled employees – links to recruitment





## PERCEPTIONS OF GOOD EMPLOYMENT AND EDI

### In what ways are experiences of good employment linked to equality, diversity and inclusion and why does EDI matter for good employment?

Participants felt strongly that EDI and good employment were in many ways synonymous. A common reflection noted that if organisations were committed to the creation and maintenance of good employment that they would proceed in such a way that afforded these positive employment experiences to all of their employees irrespective of their personal or job demographics. They noted the opportunity to

create a thriving environment and signposted the connections between inclusive workplaces and positive outcomes for employees, and in turn for organisations and productivity. Participants also spoke of the need for psychological safety as a key component of EDI in order to retain staff. They asserted that good EDI practice enhances happiness, employee satisfaction and wellbeing, that then impacted retention and productivity. Participants also spoke about the importance of ensuring that values align with behaviours at all levels within organisations. They explored how good EDI practice not only links to important impacts for employees but importantly also for their customers, stakeholders and communities they serve.



“I don’t believe, especially now, that organisations can possibly function as effectively as they might without EDI. They just can’t. They cannot achieve their objectives, they cannot be competitive, they cannot future proof themselves without having a laser sharp focus on diversity and inclusion. And what is that? It’s about creating a space where everyone, in particular in a region which is as diverse as Greater Manchester, it cannot function if it does not leverage and capitalise as many people in its community as possible. It can’t. And there is, of course, the business imperative. We know the research on that which talks about productivity and profitability, employee engagement, all of those are key things. We know that fundamentally, but it’s just for me so much more fundamental than that. If we just use an understanding of basic human dynamics. How do we function when we’re in a space where we don’t feel welcome on a basic human level, when we don’t feel that our voice is heard, our voices respected, or who we are, is respected and valued? Then we close down. We don’t give our best, we don’t contribute fully. And ultimately, if the situation allows, we go somewhere else, where we are welcome. It’s that simple. And we know there is so much more agency that people have now in particular. I think COVID accelerated that sense of agency where people are forced into lockdown. They began to re-evaluate what mattered to them as far as employment was concerned”.

(ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER)

“I was thinking if when we talk about EDI, it’s basically creating this environment, isn’t it, where everyone can feel safe and therefore do their very best. And I think for us, our experience of that is that that links to our key core measure of happiness. And we know that people do really great work and that people who do really great work help our business to become much more successful. So, I think this is really important to our business and should be to many because we’ve seen that as we’ve focused on happiness, which is linked with inclusion and diversity, that we’ve become a much more successful business.”

(CHARTER LEAD)

“Actually, what it’s all about is the inclusive bit, so you can have the law, you can have diversity, but what’s the reality of it? Do people feel included, valued etcetera or not? In terms of its link to good employment, I think this is one of the reasons why Great Manchester Charter marbled it through that because it impacts on every feature of somebody’s working life....And so some of the poor examples you see is that everybody maybe talks the talk, we’ve got the policies, we’ve got the procedures, but we don’t do enough to embed that into our workplaces. So for example, we might not train our managers in these things. So the board might be committed to this agenda. But if it doesn’t translate into what they experience for ordinary workers and employees, when they might ask for things, or they might want to voice a concern, or they might want to voice an idea: if it doesn’t translate into that experience, then you’re definitely not achieving equality. So EDI does find its way into every aspect of the employment relationship.”

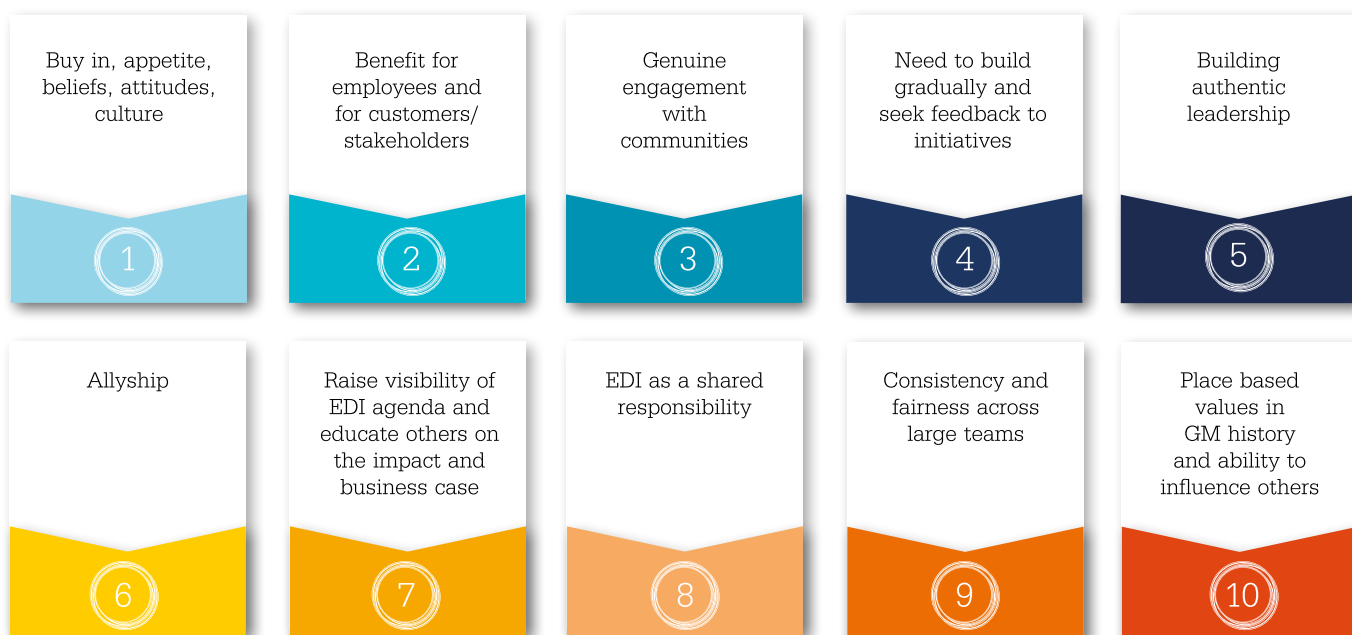
(ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER)

## WHAT ARE THE BROAD CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDI AND GOOD EMPLOYMENT?

When asked during the focus groups about the challenges and opportunities for EDI as it relates to good employment, a range of interesting themes were addressed. These are split into key challenges and opportunities for how EDI and good employment come together. Opportunities encompassed the appetite, compassion and momentum for engaging with the EDI agenda, and a desire to truly understand employee motivations and needs. EDI and impacts on customers and stakeholders in addition to focusing on employees was also considered very

important. Participants punctuated their accounts of EDI opportunities and good employment with reference to the cultivation of positive organisational cultures and climates in order for all employees to thrive. They emphasised a need for genuine and authentic leadership to enable engagement with all stakeholders, and suggested that a focus on EDI enabled higher growth, innovation and productivity. Opportunities were also rooted in action and the need to move beyond ideas to evident behaviours and activities to support the enactment of EDI in practice. Greater Manchester's heritage surrounding equality was also positioned as a strength.

### OPPORTUNITIES



## CHALLENGES



In terms of challenges, these were multifaceted and reflective of the complex landscape. EDI was considered by some to be costly, and though acknowledgement of the business case was highly evident, nonetheless some participants noted concerns with how initiatives and roles were funded and sustained over time. There was an emphasis for many participants on the underexplored or emerging elements of EDI; a difficulty in keeping up with frequent changes to language, definitions and scope of the EDI agenda, and a need for organisations to be agile and responsive to this.

Similarly, challenges encompassed a need to understand and manage changing employee expectations and ensure good leadership and people management to accommodate employee needs. Cuts to training and development in terms of leadership training was seen as a potential

derailment of the EDI agenda. Other participants noted feeling overwhelmed and not knowing where to start or which topics to prioritise and feared alienating certain demographics in having to start somewhere. The fear of doing the wrong thing was sometimes seen as contributing to inaction.

Participants also noted challenging political discourses that had the potential to create pertinent tensions. Participants spoke of not feeling confident in managing the content of conversation and language in these instances. Other challenges outlined included a potential for good employment as a barrier to optimising diversity, in that, should retention be high because of the positivity of the workplace experience this could mean the organisation does not have the capacity to recruit and therefore does not have the opportunity to increase diversity.

**“I definitely think it starts with the leadership team. I think the colleagues doing the jobs are the most important, but I think the leadership team have got to role model these behaviours...There was a really good discussion recently about, like how a lot of leaders feel like they need to look like they have all the answers...but it’s not true. I think, you know, in our business we find that what works really well is if we’re having a bad day, we’ll say, ‘oh, you know, I’ve had a really rubbish weekend or this has happened or I’m facing this challenge’... And I think that to go first gives others the courage to do that as well. And I think that’s amazing. And I think that that really works in our organisation and is why people are so real with each other.”**

(CHARTER LEAD)

**“You need processes and routines, and you need to change behaviours. But if the reason for doing it isn’t really clear and the motivation isn’t clear, it doesn’t matter how many processes you put in, you’ll never have impact with it.”**

(EMPLOYEE)

**“You know it’s about making sure that you’re doing the right thing for individuals that might not have as good a voice or as strong a voice, or a louder voice. It’s great to be an ally. But what does it mean to be an ally? It actually means, you know, that you’re taking a bit of a lead, that you’re giving your voice to those people whose voices aren’t as loud.”**

(EMPLOYEE)

**“I think it’s still relevant in the political discourse at the moment. There is a lot of antagonism toward diversity and inclusion, which is incredibly unhelpful. And I feel that we now need businesses more than ever to take hold of the conversation and to lead it with competence because irrespective of whether or not we want to engage with it, it’s not going away.”**

(ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER)

“Just looking at the protected characteristics, it’s huge. And the intersectionality of all of them. But then there’s the other things that can create that atmosphere for colleagues that doesn’t feel inclusive that aren’t based on necessarily the protected characteristics but still need to be considered and still need to be considered in terms of how we guide, support and lead colleagues ...But that’s a big focus when we talk about EDI, we talk about bullying and harassment because it’s not just to give out the protected characteristics as ultimately important as they are, but it’s also about the atmosphere you create in other ways that might not necessarily be linked to the protected characteristics but are still not aligned sort of the values and the behaviours that we would want to see in the organisation.”

(EMPLOYEE)

“We were tippy toeing around some things because we just weren’t sure. For fear of doing the wrong thing, we probably didn’t do the right thing, I guess would be a way of looking at it.”

(EMPLOYEE)

“But I think the other thing that also gets cut is leadership development, which then also has a massive impact on EDI... And I think that’s another thing that we’ve seen, go on the chopping block relatively early is the development aspects.... And I think your culture is driven by leadership, isn’t it, and how colleagues interact with their leaders, how line managers, you could have the all the best initiatives around culture, but if your line manager isn’t bought into that and leading you in that way, you feel a completely different culture from everybody else. So anything from me that impacts on the capability and performance of leaders will then have a detrimental impact on the overall culture regarding EDI”.

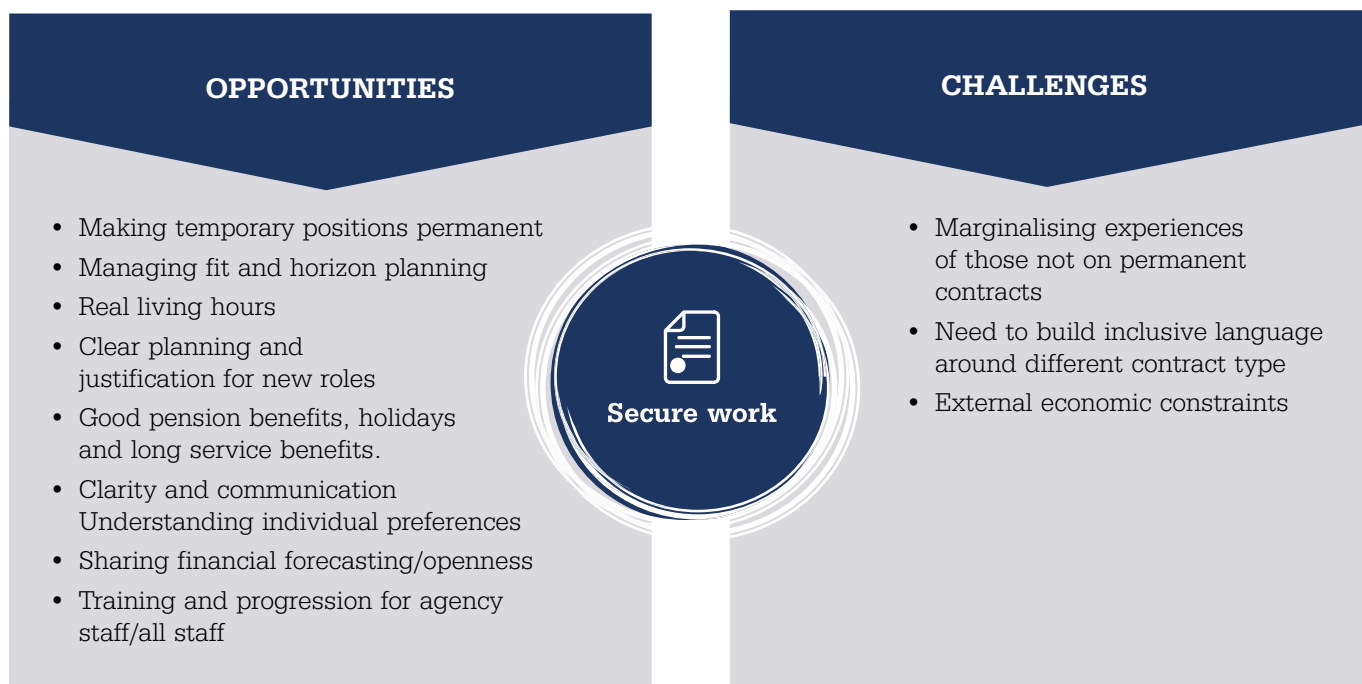
(Advisory board)



# CHARTER CHARACTERISTICS: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR EDI

**Participants were invited to share their reflections across each of the charter characteristics and share examples of opportunities and challenges.**

## SECURE WORK



In discussing secure work and its implications for EDI, participants raised a number of challenges and opportunities surrounding fairness in the attainment of secure work for all employees. Some organisations stated that secure contracts were their only form of contractual arrangement and this constituted fair practice. Others talked about the need for detailed horizon scanning and forecasting to research how more temporary contracts could be made permanent. Participants also noted the need for real living hours and the clear planning of justification for new roles within their organisation

in order to ensure that they don't overrecruit. There was also a need to ensure a consideration of inclusive language in order to build self-esteem and avoid stigmatisation or marginalisation of those employees who were not on secure contracts (e.g. avoid the use of the word 'temp' to describe temporary members of staff) and cultivate language that enables them to feel belonging and included in the same way as permanent members of staff. In fostering security, examples were also given regarding other related benefits such as offering good pension benefits, holidays and long



service benefits. It was deemed important to take time to learn about individual employee preference for different working patterns and security and the need for clear communication of contract type to all employees. Other examples cited transparency and openness with respect to sharing financial information with all employees, and ensuring

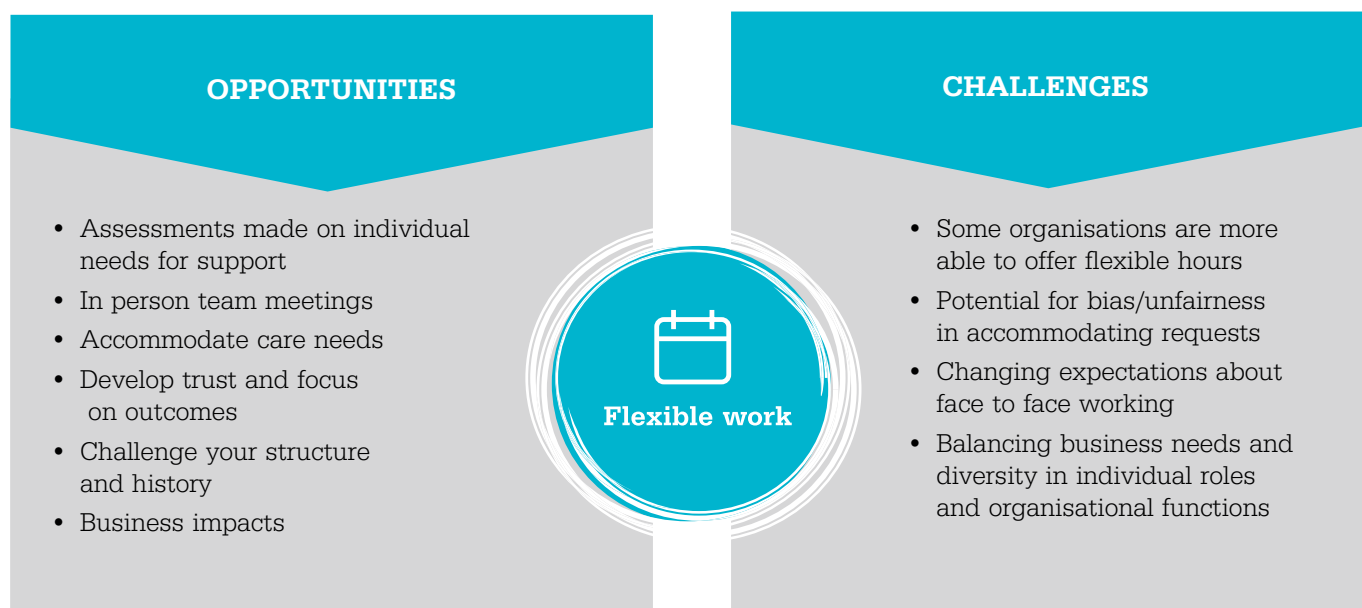
that agency staff also benefit from developmental opportunities. Wider economic constraints were cited as a challenge in the provision of secure employment for all.

**“So we often had students who said ‘please, can I have a zero hours contract because you know this is how I’d like to work with you’. But what we saw with the secure work was then putting in all the basics in place about, you know, rosters and worked hours and all of those things and having to change behaviours in the organisation where it had been a conversation about the number of hours but with no connection to people’s needs.”**

**“So when I think about secure work, I think the most significant thing that we’ve done actually is because we probably always did regular, you know, secure hours, but becoming a real living hours employer. Because I think that makes a really clear statement. We can put that out publicly now and say that we will make sure that you’re not subject to changes, you know, irregular hours and changes to your shifts and things like that. And we can definitely commit to being real living hours and in some ways we think that’s more significant than real living wage, because real living wage is great. But if your hours are subject to change, then you can’t plan can you? Can’t live your life with that. I think also it’s reflective of our industry and the business that we’re in. But we’re quite a lean business in a way. So we’ve tried to be as efficient as we can and I think that means that for us we don’t overemploy and we’re really careful. There’s quite a strong justification if we have a new position that we’re doing that for the good of the business and often we’ll invite colleagues to be part of that discussion as well. So that we can make sure that a post is really needed and quite a strict process for us in justifying a new hire so that we’re not making a decision that then ends up not being the right decision a little bit further down the line.”**

(CHARTER LEAD)

## FLEXIBLE WORK



In linking flexible work with the EDI agenda, participants spoke of the need to ensure that assessments are made based on individual needs and support required, and that a 'common sense' approach needs to be taken by leaders and managers in ensuring fairness for all employees who request such arrangements. The notion of inclusivity and good employee support was also thought to be heightened by face to face contact for some participants, and it suggested that some team events and development days took place face to face. It was acknowledged that flexible working was needed in order to accommodate a wide variety of caring needs, and that allowing people flexibility also strengthened inclusivity through the fostering of a trusting organisational climate where the focus needs to be upon outputs not on specific hours worked. An opportunity to promote the values of flexible working and their enactment were seen as an important training need for line managers. Participants also reflected on the need to challenge existing structures and traditional ways of working in order to make flexible working available in instances/job roles where it may previously have been deemed inappropriate.

It was however acknowledged that some workplace environments lend themselves more readily to flexibility than others – and that this

could create challenges in creating equity across different employee populations. It was considered important to use management discretion in the utilisation of flexible working but this was seen as both a possible opportunity and a challenge in seeking fairness across all employee populations. The intersection of flexibility with other charter characteristics and the inclusion agenda was also noted: for example, how flexibility may be part of reasonable adjustments for health and disability.

Challenges for flexible working and EDI were centred around managing tensions. One example was the balance between the success seen post covid from working remotely and the perceived needs for face to face working patterns to heighten team cohesiveness and shared learning. Participants cited changing employee expectations and values surrounding cost and convenience with regards to home working as barriers in the provision of flexibility for all workers. Similarly, principles of fairness and flexibility were highlighted as potential challenges when an organisation had distinct worker populations that differed in terms of their environment. Balancing business needs and the diversity across individual roles (for example warehouse staff vs office staff, and expectations for remote working) were also seen to impact fairness agendas.

“Yeah, so flexible work I think is a good one because we on the other side look like a traditional business. So we’ve got, you know, our kind of operating hours. So we’re open from 6:00 in the morning till 10 at night. We’ve got a lot of traditional roles. Some of them operate a machine for example, or work in the warehouse. I would encourage other employers to really challenge this notion that if you’re a business like ours, that flexible working isn’t possible because it really is. So half our people work flexibly...we’ve got loads of kind of remote working and home working. But other than that, pretty much unlimited flexibility. If people have something that’s important to them, we’ll work it out and cover for each other. I think that’s something that I feel really proud of because, you know, whether it’s your family or a hobby or, you know, an event that’s really important to you, if it’s important to the colleague, it should be important to the business as well.”

(CHARTER LEAD)

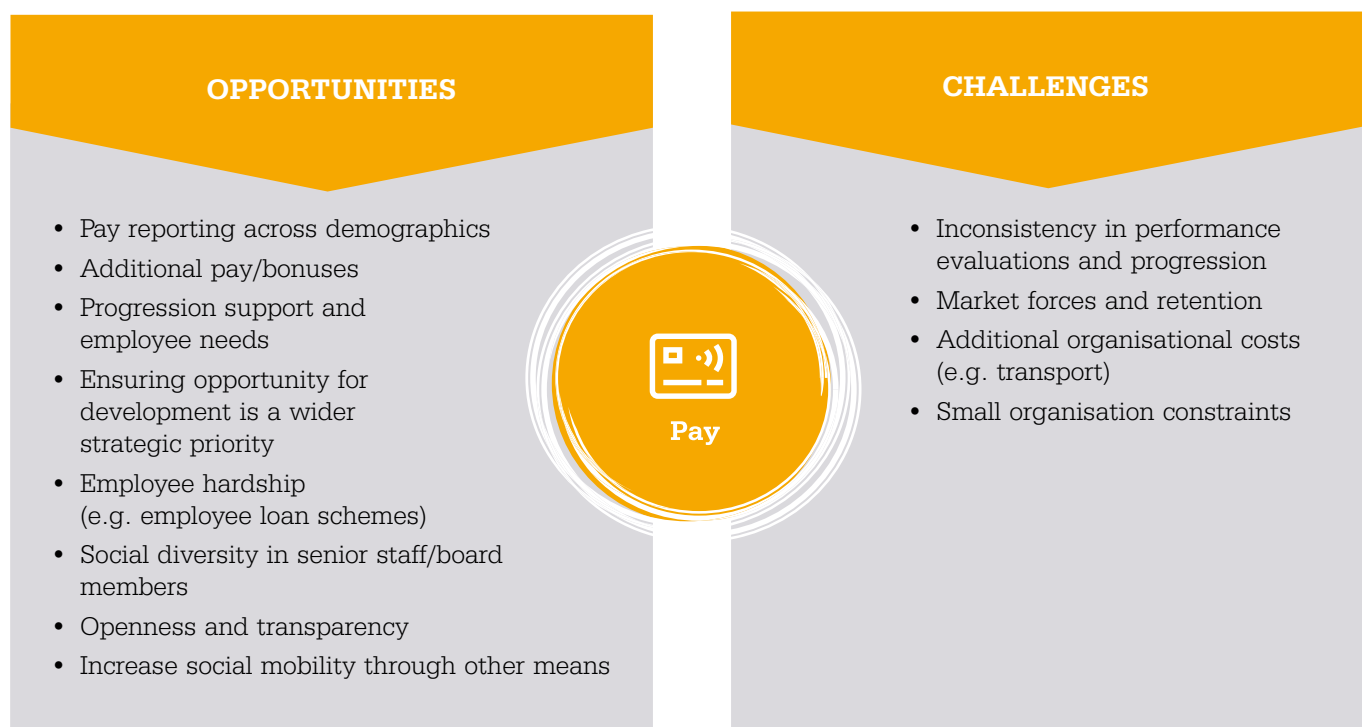
“We advocate flexible working a lot for people, as you can see I’m working from home... we don’t have core hours anymore, we used to but you’ve got the hours that people will tend to work and that you put meetings in. But it varies, like I’m an early bird, so I will quite happily start work at half seven, but my brain will burn out by 3:00. So I finish at 4:00 because I need to go because my [relative] has got terminal cancer. So as soon as I finish I go over there.”

(EMPLOYEE)

“Flexibility is actually really important because we always say to people, to managers especially – focus on the output. It doesn’t really matter, where you’ve got childcare responsibility and where you’ve got personal stuff that you need to do. You know, it’s like I’ll sometimes message my manager, and I’ll go, I’m just popping to [run an errand] and she’ll message back and say I don’t need to know that. I’m not monitoring you. But obviously some roles don’t lend themselves to flexibility where you’ve got to obviously serve the customer.... so we do as much as we can within the realms of still serving the customer and obviously being fair. You know, we don’t monitor hours. We take people on trust.”

(EMPLOYEE)

## PAY



Pay and its implications for EDI and the broader fairness agenda was highlighted across many examples. In terms of opportunities for strengthening EDI, participants noted the importance of pay reporting across demographics and the need to collect, analyse and evaluate such data. The importance of fairness in the allocation of additional pay or bonuses was also raised as an important reward and was seen as related to development opportunities though this was recognised as a complexity in attaining fair outcomes for all employees where the potential for bias was acknowledged. Participants spoke of the need to ensure that support, training and development was in place for employees with additional needs so that opportunities for progression are fair for all employees. Likewise, pay increases as a function of progression, and the need for development as a wider strategic priority was seen as very important.

Fairness in pay was also evidenced with reference to performance appraisals, and these were seen as important mechanisms for enhanced pay and progression. Other good practice around pay

and inclusivity centred on supporting employee hardship through, for example, employee loan schemes. The values of caring and compassion that underpin such agendas were seen as an important indicator of organisational culture and climate. There were also interesting discussions around pay and social diversity, where the benefits of senior employees' lived experience across socio-economic challenges was seen as a strength in understanding the importance of fair pay and other benefits surrounding progression. There was also an acknowledgement that other costs are incurred in travelling to and from work and a provision made in some organisations to support employees with this difficulty, in addition to salary.

In terms of challenges, pay as shaped by market forces was deemed difficult for some organisations especially when employees leave for organisations that pay more. Some participants noted particular challenges in this space encountered by small organisations, especially so as a function of limited progression opportunities that were felt to impact upon fairness and equality of opportunity.

**“We get a lot of people that will come with us to get [qualified] and then leave to go to another organisation that pays slightly higher and which is frustrating. It is something we’re trying to deal with, but ultimately we can’t just offer the highest grade because somebody else is. You know, we’ve got to take into account the business needs, the finance of things and the budget.”**

(CHARTER LEAD)

**“When we moved location, we made sure there was no barrier to anyone coming with us. We bought a van, we did a little bus service, we picked seven or eight people up, Then, we got established where we are. The turnover is very minimal.”**

(EMPLOYEE)

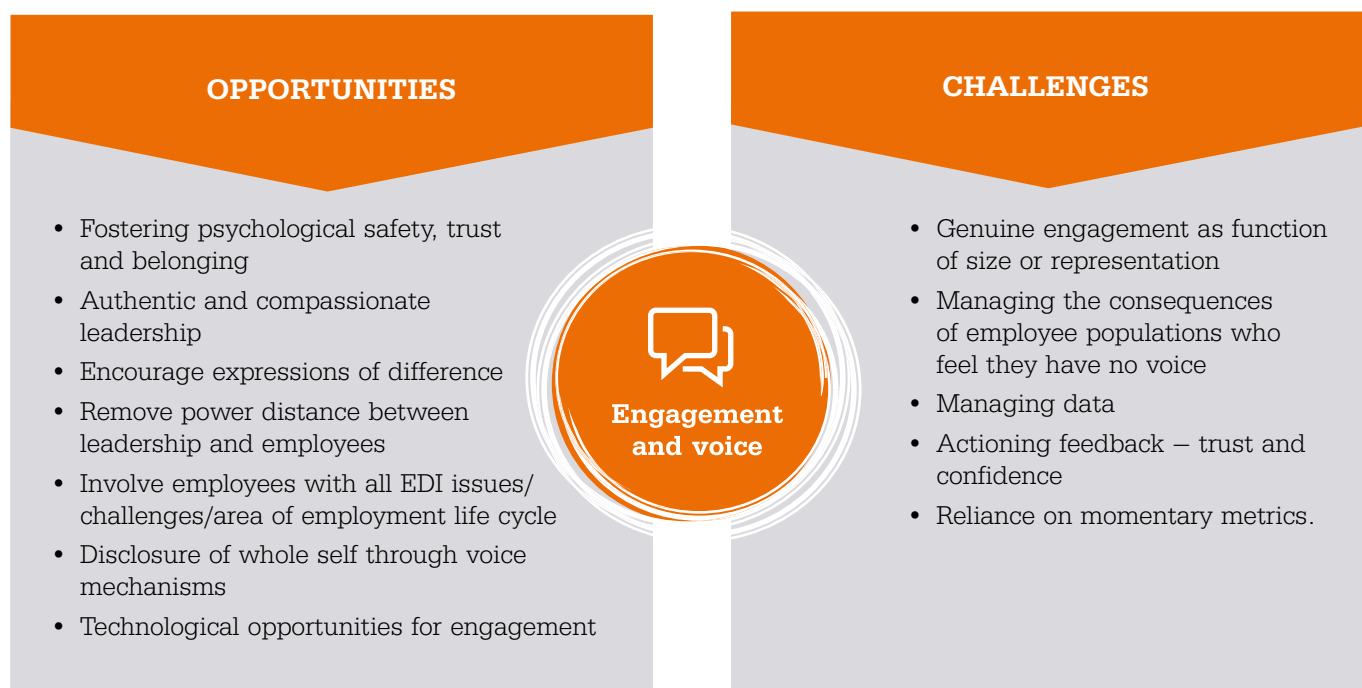
**“We do things like we’ve got access to wage streams so people can stream their wages sooner if needed. So if you know if you’ve got an emergency with your car, or your boiler breaks down or something, you can stream your wages sooner. And obviously it’s just deducted off payroll at the end of the month which a number of the team have used and fed back how useful it’s been. Also, and everybody has access to the credit union as well. So automatic savings that go out from your pay every month if you opt into it, and there’s a standard savings account, but there’s also, like a Christmas savings account....Also where people are having any financial issues and concerns. Obviously you know that can create huge, huge anxiety for people, especially during the cost of living crisis. So we regularly send out information on, you know, signposting people and obviously we’ll deal with that on a one to one basis as well, if people are in financial difficulty.”**

(CHARTER LEAD)

**“So we’re a living wage employer, over half our colleagues are in traditionally lower paid roles like warehouse operations. And our board I think looks a little bit like that. So, there’s enough of us in the board that know what it’s like not to have any money, that knows what it’s like to grow up in a council estate or, where there is low economic investment. And I think that’s really important because it means that we understand what people are going through....”**

(CHARTER LEAD)

## ENGAGEMENT AND VOICE



The provision of engagement and voice was positioned as synonymous with the creation and maintenance of an inclusive culture. Opportunities encompassed the development of open and positive cultures where employees can share and foster a strong sense of belonging. The role of leadership in the cultivation of genuine employee voice was paramount. Some participants shared stories of where leaders' transparency and expressions of their own vulnerabilities allowed open communication channels for all employees to emerge. Similarly, there was a focus on the need for supporting of individual employee needs in terms of engagement activities where individual differences were important. Many of these examples centred around the need to create a climate of psychological safety. Support for leadership with this important endeavour was suggested as an important opportunity in order to cultivate accessible and approachable leaders within a nurturing environment. It was felt important to permit openly an expression of difference and individuality in order to encourage a culture of uniqueness, trust and inclusion.

As with other charter characteristics, opportunities for employee voice were predicated upon strong values and an open culture that genuinely embodies the need for authentic voice and engages in voice opportunities in the form of detailed and genuine consultation with employees at all levels. Building trust through voice and removing power distance between leadership and employees was also considered vital in building genuine engagement. Asking employees about their perceptions of EDI and how well organisations are doing was also seen as an important element of engagement and voice, where it was deemed imperative to ask rather than assume what support is required. The outcomes of employee voice were associated with creativity and innovation. Opportunities for engagement and voice were also punctuated with reference to their intersection with other charter characteristics, for example communicating financial information in an open and transparent way (pay) and the impacts of engagement and voice upon outcomes such as health and wellbeing.



Challenges for engagement and voice centred on issues of how to engage all employees genuinely, especially in larger organisations or in those that had more or less representation from certain groups; managing the consequences of employee populations who feel they have no voice; and managing feedback mechanisms and ensuring that feedback is representative of all employees.

The disparity between the collection of data on employee feedback and actioning such feedback was also a concern that if not implemented could erode trust and confidence in voice mechanisms. Likewise, participants were mindful that metrics such as employee engagement surveys only captured momentary data and only represent employees specific views at one point in time.

**“It’s one of those key themes around inclusivity, that sense of belonging and feeling safe and heard. And I think engagement and voice actually has a really powerful role in convening all of those issues collectively and sometimes it’s a bit of a balance and I think it works best when you’ve got a diverse workplace, because for example it’s very easy to scatter a load of rainbow flags everywhere. Yeah, for pride month. But it’s a bit more difficult to think of like an inclusive way of doing like Islamic Society events, for example. And I think sometimes the more simple and colourful bits of inclusion swamp other ones and that kind of nuance is important... But I could imagine there are some workplaces where, like one group might feel really stifled and another one very enabled.”**

(CHARTER LEAD)

**“I think one of the biggest things for us, that comes back to psychological safety is... a number of networks within our organisation, we call them colleague resource groups ... We’ve got LGBTQ, armed forces, ethnicity and culture etc. Recently we started a parents and carers network. We’ve got a neuro-inclusive network and actually the power of those, is they’re there for support and they’re there for people to share experiences. But actually it’s a collective voice upwards. If there are challenges, barriers that a particular group of people are experiencing, that’s probably unique to that group as well. It’s a way of kind of getting their voice escalated. We only started these about two years ago. We’ve got 180 people involved in the networks now, they’ve driven some really positive change.”**

(EMPLOYEE)

“it’s really important that our colleagues are involved in the running of the business and have a say on how we run the business...we have a people’s voice group, which may might be called a workers’ council elsewhere... we have this open culture where people share and boy do they share, you know, tell each other and tell leadership, especially everything. And then we do a number of one to ones as well. I’ll meet once a year with every single colleague. And we’ll ask some questions like what would you do if you were the boss for the day... And what do you feel really proud about working for this business, you know, so we can really understand where we can be better. And I think that that’s contributed to some of our own discussions around diversity and inclusion. We actually went out to the business and said we think we do inclusion really well. We think we’ve created this wonderful environment where people feel like they belong... But we want to be better, and it was fantastic, actually, because colleagues talked really openly about how we’re getting better, but we don’t actually reflect properly the community that we work in and how can we attract people from different backgrounds and, you know, different sections of community. And I found that really powerful. Actually, we had one lady who was [from a minority background] and she said there are no people here that look like me. You know, I want to see more people that look like me in this business and I think that’s really powerful.”

(CHARTER LEAD)

“But you have to build trust. It’s about building trust and it’s about that sort of voice, I think. So [when people can speak up] then all the wacky stuff that comes in and you’ll suddenly find that you’ve got somebody in a team with a tremendous talent that you weren’t aware of.”

(EMPLOYEE)



## RECRUITMENT



EDI and the interplay with recruitment was a very relevant topic for participants and they shared many reflections of opportunities and challenges. Metrics were considered important where a need to see beyond representational diversity in recruitment activities to the impacts of diversity demographics on progression and retention was necessary. Participants also noted the need to be data driven in exploring recruitment gaps and successes across demographic criteria. Other opportunities involved the appraisal and redesign of existing systems to become more inclusive. Participants spoke of the need to engage with and network amongst local communities in order to develop genuine understanding of different cultures, and recounted examples of inviting underrepresented groups to their organisations to explore possibilities for future employment in order to raise awareness about what their organisation could offer. Participants spoke of the benefits of values-based recruitment in decreasing or overcoming bias.

Similarly, good practice such as the removal of identifying demographic information in applications was considered an opportunity in overcoming elitism, bias and discrimination in the shortlisting process. A range of challenges were outlined by participants. These encompassed a difficulty in understanding how to design and apply metrics to appraise how recruitment efforts follow through to development opportunities from an EDI perspective; the challenges of diverse recruitment in smaller family owned businesses that have always recruited through informal 'word of mouth' methods.

**PARTICIPANTS SPOKE OF THE BENEFITS OF VALUES-BASED RECRUITMENT IN DECREASING OR OVERCOMING BIAS.**

It was also noted that some elements of the recruitment process, including an engagement with technology could be marginalising or exclusionary for some individuals and that more work was needed to understand alternative approaches to ensuring inclusivity of opportunity. It was also felt that where diversity was achieved through recruitment activities that this did not translate into the full hierarchy of the organisational pyramid and that much further work was needed across the EDI agenda in terms of progression and development. The notion of 'fit' between an individual and an organisation was also discussed in terms of potential bias and implications for fairness. The existence of antiquated or archaic recruitment processes in some industries and sectors was also highlighted as a challenge where a need for value and culture change was required in order to necessitate acknowledgement from leadership that change was required. The time taken between inclusive recruitment activities and actual change in outcomes was also perceived as a complexity.

**THE NOTION OF 'FIT' BETWEEN AN INDIVIDUAL AND AN ORGANISATION WAS ALSO DISCUSSED IN TERMS OF POTENTIAL BIAS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FAIRNESS.**

**"There's that recruitment and development piece almost. I would say it definitely is about both. In our organisation we call it progression. Once you're in. And I think we reflect that we found it easier to broaden recruitment then we have to achieve the targets that we've set ourselves in terms of progression. And from an EDI perspective, it's almost every under-represented group is harder to progress through than it should be. But the research that we've commissioned, which is based on our own sort of progression information, is that low socioeconomic background is the most intractable one, and the least visible. Yeah, and not a protected characteristic...organisations tend to be more diverse at the bottom than the top."**

(CHARTER LEAD)

**“You know, do we have everything in place which enables a diverse group of individuals to apply for those roles?**

**Yeah. And I would say we’re going further away from it as we become more and more tech-driven sometimes... If we take neurodiversity and we take learning difficulties, that a traditional way of recruiting, of applying for a job actually doesn’t work either.”**

(ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER)

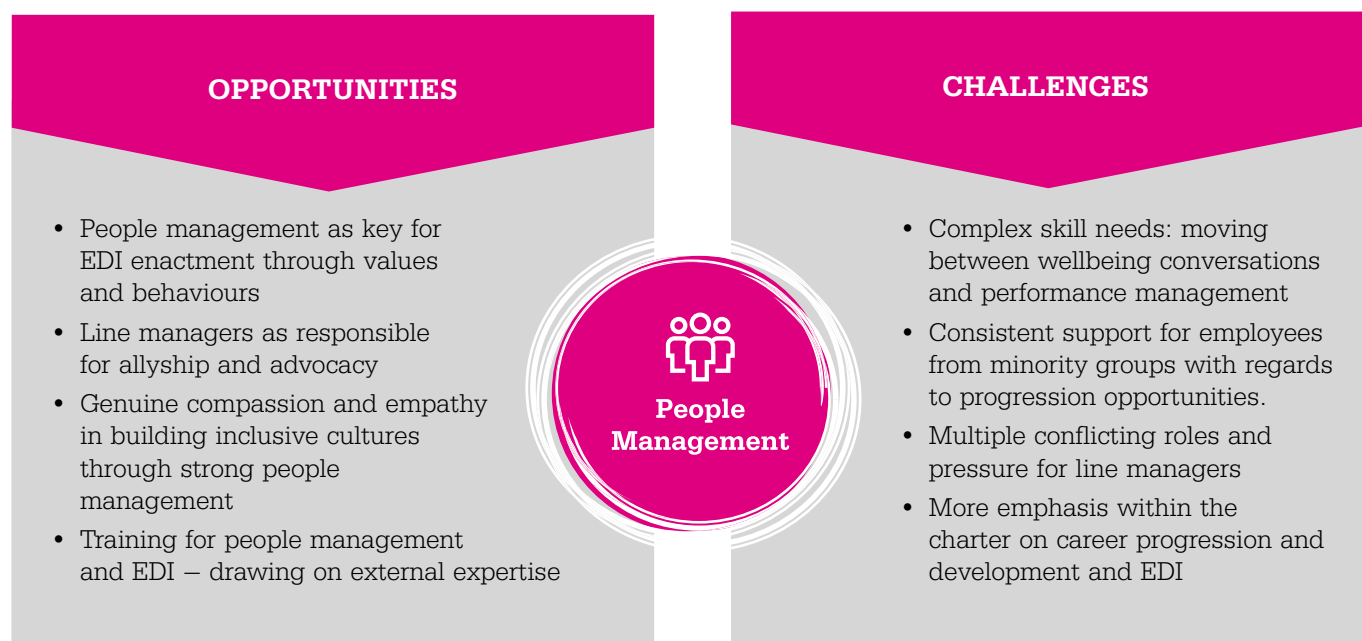
**“And we do talk about kind of cultural fit. And I go, OK, but sometimes cultural fit gets mistaken or gets misinterpreted as a ‘like for like’ recruitment. So where you’ve got Bob, the 50 year old white guy who’s left, you want another Bob, you want another 50 year old white heterosexual guy to take Bob’s place because you liked Bob and you’re just trying to replace Bob. Sometimes having somebody that doesn’t fit...is better [for EDI]”.**

(EMPLOYEE)

**...and frankly for us it’s the next bit that’s our biggest challenge. We are a family business, so it’s owned by a family and we tend to employ people from other families. So when it comes to diversity, I always tongue in cheek say, you know, we’re really diverse. We have people who live in [town] and we have people who live in [another town]...When we recruit the first port of call is to ask everybody who works here; ‘who do you know who’s looking for a job? Would you recommend them to work here?’ And that makes it easier for us if they’re coming in on the recommendation of a friend or family member because we get somebody who is much more likely to be in inverted commas a good employee, somebody who turns up, somebody who puts the shift in, somebody who tries and cares, that’s what we want. But what that means is we don’t get diversity. And we get that lower likelihood of diversity”.**

(CHARTER LEAD)

## PEOPLE MANAGEMENT



People management was considered by many participants as the catalyst for the success or enactment of the EDI agenda within and across the other charter characteristics; *“the basis of everything is good people leadership”* (Employee). The presence of exemplary people management was seen as pivotal in how EDI practice comes to be and is maintained within organisations. Genuine empathy and compassion in line managers was deemed an important artefact of a safe and supportive organisational culture and climate. In terms of specific opportunities for people management and EDI, participants noted the need for allyship and advocacy and cited this as an important role for senior people within the organisation in order to increase the visibility of positive behaviours and empower line managers at all different levels within the organisational hierarchy to model such behaviours. Participants noted the need for line managers to take the time to understand the individuals they manage in promoting an inclusive culture.

Similarly, people management and good line management was seen as the key to how organisational policies are translated into practice. Participants discussed training needs for managers and employees, such as those surrounding difficult conversations and language at work and noted the benefits of this in shaping positive impacts around comfort in challenging inappropriate behaviour in employees and managers, and therefore as an important mechanism in the building blocks of positive culture change. Complexities regarding the different tasks in support provision for employees provided by managers such as moving between wellbeing conversations and performance management were challenging and required a great deal of skill. Other challenges identified centred on a need for people managers to consistently support people from minority groups for progression. It was highlighted by some participants that more emphasis within the charter on career progression and development and its intersections with EDI would be welcome.

**“It makes such a massive difference, and I think as an employer, if you’ve got managers who understand that from a personal point of view, what somebody else is going through, you know where they can, where they get down, where they can empathise. And they can really understand the personal challenges that somebody’s going through, that’s really something...”**

**(EMPLOYEE)**

**“And I think that goes back to me to what leadership is about is if you’re leading and managing people, your starting point is you need to understand your people. And if you’re not investing in that relationship, then you’re not going to understand what’s important to them. ‘Cause, it’s only through those conversations, in many cases where you’ll have a conversation about flexible work. Or you have a conversation about what’s difficult. So I sometimes think that we don’t give enough time to the building of those relationships, because that way you find out what works for people...And because otherwise you do end up with that power based relationship and then nobody wins in the end.”**

**(EMPLOYEE)**

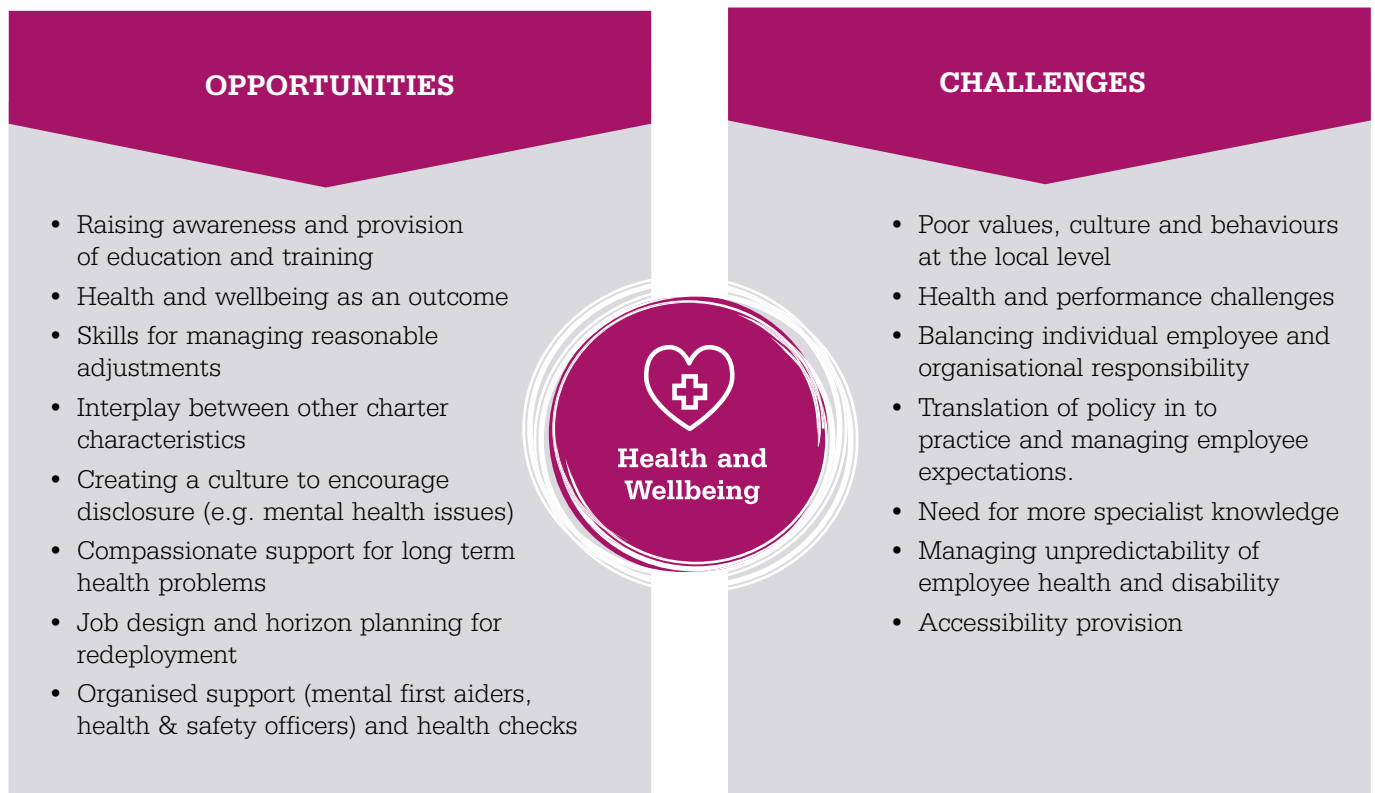
“Managers have like an incredibly difficult job to do. They’ve got lots and lots of responsibilities and there is a hierarchical relationship that exists in organisations and when we talk about some of the issues to do with inclusivity and indeed wellbeing, I think what we’re talking about, we’re trying to tap into a different relationship. You know, it’s like that kind of hierarchical relationship can’t work or generate the kind of conversation that you need to have in those things. So, I can’t come along and say. Now I’m your manager. Tell me what’s going on. You know, now, if it was like a genuine transactional thing. Why didn’t you turn up for work or something like that? Or why did you not give the customer the service, that you can ask what’s going on. But when we’re inquiring about the person and what might lie behind it, we’re trying to do that on a different plane. As far as I can see. But managers have to be able to navigate between these planes. And that’s tricky to do and some are better than others at doing it you know. So I think for me, I think when we when looked at promoting the charter, we have zoned in a lot on that critical role that people management piece can play because, you know, that’s the bit that intersects with everything.”

(ADVISORY BOARD)

“We do a bit of training for managers and leads... you know, make sure that colleagues are comfortable with the language that they’re using. And we’ve done some courageous conversations on race training, for example... And this just opened the door for people to have conversations with each other about differences and what I really loved was after it, and it was pretty much an introduction to, like, how we can get comfortable with that language. And in that space, but immediately afterwards because I kind of sit in the thick of the office and get to listen to some of the conversations I could hear people talking about it and someone used a phrase that was like quite outdated. But what was really lovely was someone said to him, you’ve had your training and do you know that that’s not a phrase that we use anymore. And it was really good because the guy that had been kind of called out on it went, ‘Oh my God, I can’t believe that that’s inappropriate. I haven’t even realised’.”

(CHARTER LEAD)

## HEALTH AND WELLBEING



As with some of the other charter characteristics, health and wellbeing was discussed in terms of its intersectionality with other workplace experiences of EDI, and indeed as a consequence of exposure to other charter characteristics. The interplay between people management and managing of employee health and wellbeing was a pertinent opportunity and challenge for participants. This was discussed in terms of line manager skills in managing, for example, reasonable adjustments needed as a function of health or disability. Examples of where organisations provided multiple health and wellbeing initiatives (such as employee assistance programmes, mental health first aiders, family friendly policies, age related health checks etc) were illuminated, but the success of these was once more believed to be predicated upon strong underpinning values and cultures that had a genuine concern for employee wellbeing. Activities that focused on supporting employees to feel valued were linked to positive outcomes.

Raising awareness and the provision of training and education were valued by participants as important ways to promote health and wellbeing as an important consequence for individuals and organisations. Likewise, flexible working and its impact on health and wellbeing were signposted as instrumental in the perpetuation of positive organisational climates. Some examples of organisations supporting employees with long term health challenges and competency implications discussed how they avoided dismissal. This involved innovations such as job design and horizon scanning for deployment/displacement opportunities. Where dismissal was the option after exhausting all avenues, it was important that such employees were supported well by a strong financial buffer. These examples were once more predicated upon doing the 'right' thing within a supportive and compassionate value system and culture. Participants also spoke of the need to be agile and adapt to health and wellbeing topics that they had less exposure or awareness of.



Challenges for health and wellbeing and its intersection with the EDI agenda included examples of where values were not reflective of a need to look after employees, for example: one employee suggested a manager 'did not believe in mental health'. Other concerns centred on how to become an accessible workplace, and how to resource and manage accessible premises in the absence of any current employees who would make use of such adjustments. This was also discussed in terms of implications for recruitment. Managing long term mental ill health was also seen as challenging to organisations and there were some discussions about the difficulties encountered in balancing individual employee and organisational responsibility for health and wellbeing in this regard, and in turn, in managing longer term impacts on performance and competency. Participants often felt ill-equipped to cope with certain facets of employee health and wellbeing such as some women's health issues, age-related wellbeing challenges, neurodiversity, and complexities in the definition of health conditions that may not be termed disabilities, or may be temporary or unpredictable in nature. Therefore a range of skill gaps at the employee, manager and organisational level were identified.

**"Someone once said to me 'my manager doesn't believe in mental health problems' and that is a perfect example of a really challenging and discriminatory value that then feeds through to what happens for that employee, and can sadly remain unchallenged."**

(EMPLOYEE)



“What we try to do is look at each case on an individual basis, and I would say first of all it’s very, very rare actually that people are in a position where they can’t do anything [any work related tasks]. An employee was just desperate to kind of hold on to some of who she was [while encountering long term care responsibilities], so actually to be able to work, even though it wasn’t to the same extent that she was before, was really important to her. And we were like, well, if you can do some commitment, we can pay. Yeah, it doesn’t matter, you know. And I think that’s fantastic that we’re able to do that. And I also think if we’re a smaller business and we can do that, then perhaps more people and organisations can. But there are some examples where it was kind of a long term health issue or wellbeing issue and very generally the measure for us is if it’s not improving or it’s not going to improve, you know. So, we’ve had people with sort of complex mental health. But again, I think what we do is quite different. So, we wouldn’t process that person and exit them with the minimum that they could get. What we look to do usually is have a really open discussion and typically would do a settlement with them. So they get a big buffer and we try and work it that they’ve got, you know, at least six months headspace to be able to just focus on themselves.”

(CHARTER LEAD)

“There is a colleague of ours that, you know, she was in a role and she had long COVID. So she’d had this role for [a long time]. And she couldn’t do the things she used to do, so she needed to lift carry, you know, and reasonable adjustments are not going to fix those elements. So, she worked in this department and we went through occupational health. We did all the things that we could possibly do in terms of reasonable adjustments...She now works in another part of the organisation where she’s [in a very different role]. You know, so she now does a job that she can physically do without having to exert herself because of this long COVID where she’s really suffered physically. And I think in any other organisation you’d probably turn around and go right, you can’t do the job, we’ll get rid of you on ill health. But we don’t. We do actually say, well look, what can you do? What jobs have we got or what have we got coming up? Do a little bit of workforce planning to say, well look, we know that someone is going to retire next year. If you can hang on until then we’ll earmark that job for you and potentially we could just move you across. I’ve seen it not at our place, in other organisations where somebody is gone because they can’t do the job and then they recruit another job and you go that person probably could have done that job. You could have retained that good person. But I think managers in the know, [and] we’re very lucky because we’ve got a very hands-on HR team”

(EMPLOYEE)

# LOOKING AHEAD: WHAT SUPPORT IS REQUIRED TO BETTER ADDRESS EDI AND THE ATTAINMENT OF GOOD EMPLOYMENT?

Peer to peer  
learning

Having difficult  
conversations and  
building courage

EDI road  
maps and gap  
analysis

Support for  
understanding  
employee  
expectations

Translating EDI  
into practical  
examples to  
express its  
contribution to  
those who are  
yet to engage

EDI across the life  
course and beyond  
protected  
characteristics

Need for  
leadership  
support

Charter network  
as creating  
support and  
psychological  
safety for  
members

How to evaluate  
data sources

Understanding  
employee lived  
experience  
of inclusion

Online forum for  
sharing learning?

Sharing across  
areas/place and  
exploring how  
things work  
'in practice'

Ensure visibility  
of support to  
all members

Creation of  
specific toolkits  
re difficult  
elements of EDI

Charter role for behavioural change  
in building and sustaining values  
and culture change

Need to avoid tokenistic activities –  
ensure genuine authenticity

Participants raised many ways in which the charter could support their knowledge gaps across good employment and the EDI agenda. For many this entailed the provision of expert support in a safe place where the complexities of a particular EDI topic(s) could be discussed openly alongside the fear of 'getting it wrong', and where they could explore and learn from others over time about their journey with a particular element of EDI. Some of these themes encompassed having difficult conversations, how to manage conflicting views about EDI, and how to recover when getting things wrong. It was also felt that support resources that allowed participants to reflect upon their skill gaps with EDI would be helpful. It is anticipated that the 'suggested reflections for metrics' alongside the 'mapping your EDI journey' that we present in the next pages of this report may form a useful starting point for assimilation of such reflections, and may, with development and refinement be formalised in to further resources or activities.

**PARTICIPANTS SPOKE OF  
THE NEED TO CREATE AND  
BENEFIT FROM COMMUNITIES  
OF PRACTICE WHERE SHARED  
LEARNING IS WELCOMED.**

Leadership, values and culture were deemed important foundations for meaningful change and participants suggested the need to avoid tokenistic activities and ensure genuine authenticity with how EDI is enacted.

Participants spoke of the need to create and benefit from communities of practice where shared learning is welcomed. They also suggested that support in evaluating their efforts for the implementation of EDI activities would be useful. Participants acknowledged across all areas of questioning the broad and diverse composition of the EDI agenda and suggested activities that mapped the entirety of the topic in terms of not just protected characteristics but beyond would be helpful. Indeed, it was suggested that addressing EDI across the life course could be a useful framework for understanding the interaction of this topic with different phases of the employment lifecycle and may add a further intersectional lens for understanding the complexity in this agenda. Importantly a focus on context-specific examples and the understanding of context was key. Furthermore, it was felt that the charter network could allow members the opportunity to engage in reflective practice, especially so in terms of their positionality/reflexivity in addressing specific EDI topics. In the spirit of EDI as a value set, participants noted the need for the charter network to provide open and accessible content for all and to ensure visibility of support to all members and supporters. Some participants suggested that an online forum for sharing of challenges and existing practice would be helpful.

**“You know what should we be focusing on? How do we have those inclusive conversations and absolutely... there is in the EDI space a lot of fear out there for leaders on saying the wrong thing or doing the wrong thing or having those difficult conversations with people, so it’s how to support that, particularly for I guess smaller organisations.”**

(EMPLOYEE)

**“I think it is really, really powerful for that environment that the charter creates is so, so important because people having been in a few people, really open up and I think it’s regarded as quite a safe environment.”**

(ADVISORY BOARD)

**“What is the platform that will enable employers to convene to have these difficult conversations in relation to support? I’ve touched on that it’s clear that employees need safe spaces to have these conversations around EDI, there is a lot of fear. There’s a lot of concern in relation to race, in relation to the transgender movement. There are so many areas where there is so much ambiguity. Employers don’t know where to have a safe conversation. I think that the charter can go some way in convening those spaces, bringing expertise in.”**

(ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER)

**“We have a responsibility as a charter to start pushing the other questions and this is one of the questions that we should take on to really show leadership, which means we need to test, try and practice and see what comes through. But it’s that next step, isn’t it? In terms of the ‘OK, so what did they do? What do we need to tweak? Have you taken it back, translated into your business and is it making a difference for your people?’ That’s what we need to follow up on. That could be an area where we actually as a board say we want to show we really want to have leadership in order to inform the future...but I also think that it’s also really important for us to be like that because actually then you’re curious and you’re open and hopefully we’ll be able to move it forward together”**

(ADVISORY BOARD)

**“Knowledge sharing in the charter happens organically but perhaps there’s a more structured way we could do that like to have, I mean the platform that we use for employee engagement, that was on recommendation from another charter member. So we’ve taken that and taken the lived experiences of that organisation and said actually that would fit really well with us, and you don’t know what you don’t know, do you? So, I think that the combined and progressive experience of the charter members will obviously push us all forward together. I think it’s just making sure at every opportunity that we share, we’re willing to share and we’re willing to listen to each other and our experiences, cause also some things that people might do or try that don’t work we can potentially take insights from that as well.”**

(EMPLOYEE)

**THERE WAS A NEED  
EXPRESSED BY MANY  
PARTICIPANTS TO UNCOVER  
IN MORE DEPTH THE IMPACT  
OF EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY  
UPON THE INCLUSION AGENDA.**

A further key support required was expert help in assimilating, making sense of, analysing and evaluating data sources. A need identified earlier was the engagement with metrics, and participants noted that specialist support and the sharing of others’ experiences regarding the ‘how to’ of EDI and data would be very useful, in particular EDI road maps and gap analysis tools.

There was a need expressed by many participants to uncover in more depth the impact of equality and diversity upon the inclusion agenda, which for many participants entailed the lived experience of those within the organisation in terms of factors such as trust and belonging. We explore this further in the recommendations of this report.

In sum, it was acknowledged that the charter had great convening powers for: creating support and psychological safety for members; the creation of specific toolkits re difficult or underexplored elements of EDI; a role to play in education, awareness and changing mindsets; the provision to address skill gaps in EDI; and overall to foster a strong collaborative and ongoing peer learning network.

A core aim of the project was to bring together a framework of best practice examples regarding metrics for the measurement of EDI and success indicators. Across the participant narratives many suggestions and reflections about the need to evidence progress and plug skill gaps for EDI and each charter characteristic were surfaced. These are collated from each of the separate charter themes and illustrated in the figure below. We suggest that these act as a resource for organisations in reflecting upon their experience with each charter characteristic and how it intersects with the EDI agenda, and may act as a useful starting point for collating their data and designing strategies for evidencing their progress. This is not intended as an exhaustive or complete list of metrics but provides some integration of ideas from across our data.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR METRICS AND MEASURES OF GOOD PRACTICE

Charter characteristic	Suggestions for data gathering, reflective questions and potential metrics
 <p><b>Secure work</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we gather data on employee preference for contract type?</li> <li>• How do we measure the number of employees on secure contracts/do we benchmark this data against others?</li> <li>• What data do we collect to gather projections/horizon planning about managing contract type?</li> <li>• How do we capture employee perceptions regarding fairness in job security across the organisation and split by personal and job demographics?</li> <li>• Do we gather data on real living hours/real living wage in relation to security?</li> <li>• How do we appraise the extent to which those on less secure contracts/peripheral employees feel a sense of inclusion and belonging in comparison to those on a permanent contract?</li> <li>• How do we gather data on development/training/progression activities across contract type?</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Flexible work</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the process for assessing applications for flexible working requests?</li> <li>• How does the rate of application and outcome of application differ across different employee groups and job and personal demographics?</li> <li>• What are the proportions of flexible working arrangements across different organisational functions? What are the reasons for increased/decreased representation?</li> <li>• To what extent do flexible working arrangements proportionately impact different demographic groups/different line managers?</li> <li>• How do we appraise job design/evolution in terms of exploring the possibility for flexible working options?</li> <li>• What are the impacts of flexible working on outcomes such as retention, productivity, employee attitudes, commitment, wellbeing, satisfaction etc?</li> <li>• In what ways are flexible working arrangements evaluated?</li> <li>• What proportion of flexible working requests are denied? What are the reasons for this and how is this segmented across different personal and job demographics?</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Pay</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we monitor pay gaps across different personal and job demographics?</li> <li>• How do we make sense of this data and how do we use it to transform our existing practices?</li> <li>• How do we monitor development and progression rates?</li> <li>• How do we evidence or assess differentials in performance related pay or bonuses where applicable?</li> <li>• What data do we gather about performance appraisals across job/personal demographics? What are performance appraisals used for in relation to pay and progression?</li> <li>• What evidence can we provide of how we support employees with their financial wellbeing (e.g. hardship funds etc) – what more could we do?</li> <li>• How do we examine sick pay and sickness absence across different organisational functions and across personal and job demographics?</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Engagement and voice</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In what ways do we capture/measure the extent to which our culture is open and transparent?</li> <li>• What do we do to support individuals needs with access to engagement activities?</li> <li>• How do we know the extent to which employees feel psychologically safe at work and able to share their concerns?</li> <li>• In what ways do we work to remove power distance between leadership and employees?</li> <li>• Do we conduct an engagement survey and if so, how do we use good practice in its design? How is it communicated before, during and after? What is the uptake for participation? How satisfied are employees regarding how results are communicated and in terms of actions from it?</li> <li>• What are employee perceptions regarding the effectiveness of communication strategies – how does this differ across different job and personal demographics?</li> <li>• How do we assess representation in employee voice mechanisms?</li> <li>• How do we capture changes in employee perceptions over time/move from a reliance on data at one time point?</li> </ul>





## Recruitment

- What data do we gather about representational diversity/demographics across not only for recruitment but retention, progression and attrition?
- How do we identify recruitment gaps across demographic criteria? How do we learn from positive and negative experiences?
- What do we do/what can we do to audit the potential for bias in our existing recruitment and selection practices (across advertising, targeting, outreach, design of competencies, interview questions, interviewer training, bias etc)?
- How do we evaluate our practices?
- Do we use/have we used values-based recruitment? What are the challenges and opportunities for this?
- What do we do to overcome the potential for elitism bias in our selection and assessment procedures? Can we evidence activities and track progress?
- How do we enable accessibility of every element of our recruitment process from technological methods at application to accessibility requirements during interview and beyond?



## People Management

- How do we train our people managers/line managers with regards to EDI? How do we assess the impact of any training provision?
- How do we evidence the translation of our values into behaviours with respect to the creation of an inclusive workplace?
- In what ways do we appraise skill gaps surrounding for example advocacy and allyship?
- In what ways are line managers empowered within the organisation?
- How do we appraise line manager comfort, confidence and credibility across the different elements of the EDI agenda?
- How can we identify and act upon training needs for managers?
- What areas do people managers need the most support with regarding EDI? What specialist support/resources do we need and where can we find this? What learning can we share with others?
- How might line managers support one another and develop spaces for shared learning? How can we capture the impact of this?



## Health and Wellbeing

- What data do we collect on indicators of employee health and wellbeing? Example sources of data may include: stress and wellbeing tools; exit data; motivation, morale, commitment, satisfaction data; sickness absence data; occupational health referrals etc.
- How do we appraise the differences across personal and job demographics with respect to the data sources collected?
- How do we address the confidence and knowledge of managers in assessing and supporting health and wellbeing?
- What formal and informal support mechanisms do we provide for employees and how do we assess their impact in terms of: how accessible they are; staff awareness; uptake; utility; impact on outcome measures?
- What are our knowledge gaps regarding different health and wellbeing topics?
- In what ways do we raise awareness and provide information to all employees regarding workplace health?
- How do we gather data on employee health conditions and disability at all stages of employment – from recruitment to progression, to attrition and absence rates?
- How do we measure the extent to which employees feel supported with their health and wellbeing?
- To what extent do we engage in job redesign/horizon scanning/succession planning to manage redeployment as a function of health/disability needs?
- How can we evidence values and behaviours surrounding health?
- What mechanisms do we use in support provision for both short and long term health issues? How are these separate from absence management and performance systems?
- How do we evidence how we support staff during/upon return from health or disability related absence?

# HOW SHOULD THE CHARTER DESIGN AND CONTENT EVOLVE TO ADDRESS THE EDI AGENDA FURTHER?



There was a clear divide in participants' views as to how the charter should evolve its format and content with reference to the EDI agenda. Many participants felt that EDI as a thread that runs through the existing seven charter characteristics was an adequate way of capturing how EDI interacts with all elements of good employment. In contrast, many other participants felt that because EDI is such an important and consequential agenda that more prescriptive

standalone guidance outside of the charter characteristics was warranted.

One consideration across both of these positions is the need for the charter to support members with the 'how' as well as the 'what' of EDI. There was a need to demystify and stipulate further detail and depth regarding how good practice is built, sustained and evaluated in order to provide parity of experience for all employees.



“My worry if we pull it out and it’s on its own, it won’t be integrated. And it’s so, so important, but it’s almost like a fundamental, isn’t it?”.

(ADVISORY BOARD)

“Because I think if you measure it on its own, you’ll be down the policy process route rather than actually really being able to feel, you know, this is about how do we make people feel”.

(ADVISORY BOARD)

“Simply being a thread through all of those [charter characteristics] is not a sufficient place. It’s not adequately explicit to get the visibility in conversation that’s needed to bring that mobilisation. I think that has proven to be true, that it needs to be more explicit, it needs its own lane, as it were, to have the spotlight, the focus and the conversation”.

(ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER)

“...equality always came first to try and send that signal to say we want equality in our society and it will apply to workplaces too. I think the agenda then moved on to diversity in recognising that we were part of a diverse society. That was part of changing and workplaces changing too and recognising what the benefits of a diverse workplace might be in all of its forms. And I think even diversity...what it encompasses now is expanded. You know, diversity has become diverse and it’s understanding that I think traditionally we might have just focused on race and gender, you know, but as society catches up and says, ‘oh, actually, no, we are more diverse than that and we have all of these kinds of different features and characteristics’, I think we’ve seen expansions in that area. And then the next wave...actually is what it’s all about is the inclusive bit, so you can have the law, you can have diversity, but what’s the reality of it? Do people feel included, valued etcetera or not now? In terms of its link to good employment, I think this is one of the reasons why the charter marbled it through its design because that impacts on every feature of somebody’s working life if you think about the employment life cycle. The recruitment – how you even get into that workplace -you’ve got to have equal opportunity, you’ve got to have the things that you can bring being valued by that organisation and measured fairly and accurately and people who understand that we genuinely want to do this because it will make our workplace a better workplace”.

(ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER)

**“... I think that maybe EDI could be kind of embedded into what we mean by leadership. So again, it's another example of marbling. But with a specific focus within that and the other thing is what do we mean by the culture of our organisations and I think you know that could be embedded there... with something about how do we know? So have it up and focused, particularly in leadership and culture with a bit of measurement from employees. That might elevate the discussions and understanding and debate around EDI as a fundamental principle of good employment.”**

(ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER)

**“I think EDI, I think it should have more of a focus. You know, being a good employer – it doesn't necessarily mean that you're a good employer to everybody”.**

(EMPLOYEE)

**ONE CONSIDERATION ACROSS BOTH OF THESE POSITIONS IS THE NEED FOR THE CHARTER TO SUPPORT MEMBERS WITH THE 'HOW' AS WELL AS THE 'WHAT' OF EDI. THERE WAS A NEED TO DEMYSTIFY AND STIPULATE FURTHER DETAIL AND DEPTH REGARDING HOW GOOD PRACTICE IS BUILT, SUSTAINED AND EVALUATED**

A further consideration is not only how EDI is operationalised as part of the charter content, but also how it is addressed in terms of membership assessment. Some participants who felt they were early on in their EDI progress felt concerned that if EDI became very prescriptive as a set of criteria (for example with the need for provision of very detailed representative diversity metrics as part of membership) that this could dissuade participants from charter membership and go against the supportive culture of working towards standards that the charter has fostered.

This interesting dynamic suggests some further scoping work to examine these tensions, especially when taken alongside the vast, broad and ever-changing EDI landscape.

Additionally, some participants noted a lack of focus within the charter on employee development and this was noted across different themes (e.g. in making comparisons with recruitment, and in terms of pay and people management).

# MAPPING EDI JOURNEY AND SKILL GAP ANALYSIS

A collection of reflection points taken from across our data are presented here. It is intended that they may support the reflection of an organisations' EDI journey and may help to explore

where particular gaps in skills, awareness and knowledge may lie. This may help to support the building of confidence and credibility and development of an inclusive culture and climate.



# CONCLUSION

This project sought to gather perspectives from employees, charter leads and advisory board members regarding how the good employment charter interacts with the EDI agenda. In particular, it aimed to appraise how EDI is embedded across and within each of the existing charter characteristics in order to draw out the challenges and opportunities encountered by organisations who participate as supporters or members of the charter; to bring together a framework of best practice examples regarding metrics for the measurement of EDI and success indicators; and to set out recommendations for building and sustaining an inclusive culture of shared learning that can be applied both within GM and across other localities to enable wider shared good practice.

The data gathered during this project has presented many perspectives and narratives from participants that have drawn out numerous complexities for this important agenda. The findings began by exploring the broad interaction between good work and EDI, alongside participant perspectives regarding why EDI is relevant in good employment per se. Here some interesting dynamics emerged, where participants noted a number of support needs that related to the implementation of EDI within their diverse organisations and contexts. From issues with resourcing to gaining buy in; from intersectionality to the ever-changing EDI landscape; from being fearful of getting things wrong to knowing where to start, participants noted their concerns and areas of existing confidence and credibility. From this came a number of implications for EDI skill gaps, which we suggest can form the basis of

shared peer to peer learning and the development of ongoing support systems that the charter network is well placed to provide. A number of underexplored EDI dynamics emerge from our findings and they are broadly concerned with the need to demystify the 'how' of embedding EDI alongside the 'what' to do relative to specific contextual needs.

This report began by recognising the sheer scope and size of the EDI agenda and recognised that for the purpose of this project, some summary level understanding that cross-cut singular EDI topics was required. To this end, across the different segments of this report it appears that a number of important foundational elements that either enable or constrain the enactment of EDI practice emerge. These comprise leadership, values and culture. These constructs are seen time and again in participant narratives as catalysts for the enactment of EDI practice across and between all charter characteristics. Participant accounts suggest these uniting principles transcend each of the charter characteristics and help to bring together the contribution of EDI activities to foster overall experiences of fair and good work for all. Leadership, values and culture are also rooted within each characteristic. Similarly, these value systems help to assert that EDI needs to be a shared responsibility for all employees at all levels within an organisation. Much further work is required in order to assess the interplay between these important values and employees experiences of good employment.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations from our research complement the likely evolution of the charter's strategy and approach to assess values, culture and leadership that underpin the enactment of the current seven charter characteristics in attaining 'good work for all'.

- **Engage in further activities to support the charter as a convenor of expert support and a network for shared learning:** Employment charters and similar initiatives can build further upon their convening powers for the provision of support through networks of shared learning and expert advice in demystifying specific underexplored EDI challenges. There is appetite for events for members that target key themes that emerged (e.g. sharing of difficult experiences and challenges; language; future proofing/horizon scanning; learning from other networks/specialist skillsets). Sharing across other charter initiatives both within and across different UK localities would be useful.
- **Develop understanding of and mechanisms for the measurement of employee lived experience of EDI initiatives:** There is the need for the development of an EDI 'climate' resource or a similar initiative that includes some key constructs that measure how EDI 'lands' with employees and captures their lived experiences across the value sets that are discussed in this report. It is likely to include experiences of inclusivity, fairness, belonging, psychological safety, trust, authentic and compassionate leadership etc. This may be used as a support resource for member organisations or built into charter membership assessment in terms of impact measurement. The development of such a tool is a complex academic undertaking that would require a distinct resource and funding. It comprises a number of detailed stages including scoping of theoretical principles, formation of an expert panel, item generation, testing and refining, piloting, role out, and validation activities.
- **Development and implementation of activities to explore skill and resource gaps in the provision of EDI.** The two resources designed and included within this report can provide the first steps for engagement in this space. They may be used in facilitated exercises with charter members to assess their progress and to establish a learning agenda and peer to peer support.
- **Create/further build a repository of specific examples of challenges and opportunities across the charter characteristics with regards to different EDI topics.** These resources can in part be gleaned from the narrative examples within this report but more work is required to provide deeper dives in to specific topics that are not addressed in depth within this scoping study. This enables sharing and learning regarding the 'how' as well as the 'what'. It would also enable a consideration of how challenges and opportunities vary across size and sector and allow tailored support (for example, engaging employees in larger organisations may have different challenges than in smaller ones; recruitment practices in small family firms encounter a different set of challenges than in larger organisations).
- **Data analysis, impact and outcomes of EDI practices:** The charter and organisations should collect and reflect on data available and gather further data. This is an important requirement for ongoing evaluation work regarding the impacts of good or challenging EDI cultures and climates on a range of markers at different levels. There is a need to support organisations in the collection, engagement with and analysis of difficult or challenging data findings. There is a need to assess the impact of EDI practice over time and through multiple lenses. As with the evaluation

study recommendations, it would also be useful to capture data from organisations not currently engaged with the charter to act as a control group to assert the impact of charter involvement across a range of individual, organisational and economic growth outcomes. This also allows a focus on the 'process mapping' of EDI in terms of how it is embedded within all stages of the employment life cycle and how lived employee experience impacts upon outcomes.

- **Evolution of charter design and content:**

consider the further integration of uniting principles of EDI climate across leadership, values and culture, and undertake some conceptual modelling of charter evolution to address tensions between retaining EDI in each characteristic and as a separate 'umbrella' topic/uniting theme that sits above as well as within each characteristic. There is also a need to recognise the intersectionality

and interwoven nature of this in assessment activities and the need to capture how EDI is experienced by employees/enacted in practice as a shared agenda within organisations alongside policies and other evidence sources. Develop strong guidance for measurement of culture as shared practices and ensure evidence is gathered from employees at all levels and across all demographic criteria. In addition, the development of more detail and guidance regarding career development in the charter design and content was a related reflection that was seen to cross-cut a number of themes (e.g. pay, recruitment, people management) and was strongly associated with the fairness agenda in participant narratives.

In sum this report presents a key learning agenda for the good employment charter. Organisations engaged with the charter in Greater Manchester and beyond can share in and reflect upon the existing practice illuminated, and the areas where further support is required. The findings suggest that there are many ways through which good employment charters or similar initiatives can support organisations with the vast and diverse landscape of EDI. Importantly, the findings show how getting things right with EDI is an ongoing and complex journey that requires a genuine and longstanding commitment to listening to others and creating time and space for shared learning.

The intersectionality of the charter characteristics are also very important, alongside the broad values that sit above them. Excellent people

management, open and reflective organisational climates brought to life by strong, authentic and compassionate leadership were integral mechanisms for embedding strong EDI practices across all areas of good employment.

Many challenges within and across the charter characteristics were evidenced. The EDI agenda was challenging for fear of getting things wrong or lacking the knowledge about where or how to start. For others, there were challenges in prioritisation and resourcing of initiatives and practical concerns about their implementation. Moreover, employees signposted the complex, ever-growing and interconnected nature of EDI and signposted the need for further resources and means to capture the development of truly inclusive cultures, leadership and values.



## A NOTE ON STUDY SCOPE AND SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

In any research study the self-selection of volunteers to participation raises potential issues of representativeness and polarisation of responses. It may be, for example, that because participants are members of the charter that there is a bias towards the sharing of positive experiences and the omission of negative experiences within their narratives. Similarly, when confronted with a research invitation to share experiences with EDI, it may be that those less confident or comfortable with the agenda do not choose to participate. It is encouraging that participants in the sample recounted challenges and opportunities and though it is likely that skewed data is minimal, it should be considered a possibility, as is the case with any research study.

Similarly, though the research invitations asked for charter leads to cascade the invites to employees within their organisation and a sample of employees was forthcoming, there was a tendency for employees to be those who had some engagement with and experience of the EDI agenda within their work. It is possible therefore that this study does not represent the employee voice in its full form and that further work is required to address employees working at all levels within an organisation. Further work that explores employee experience, through for example, the development of the EDI climate tool may help to strengthen findings in this domain and collect data on larger sample sizes and from a quantitative perspective. Likewise, the use of qualitative data allows the sharing of rich and discursive narratives but it does not allow for the mapping of experience against specific outcome variables. Further work may seek to explore the consequential nature of EDI experiences on outcomes such as employee satisfaction, productivity, retention, employee health and wellbeing etc.

## FURTHER RESOURCES

Further narratives from participants are included as a supplementary document. If you require access to this please contact [s.crozier@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:s.crozier@mmu.ac.uk)



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