

## INCLUSIVE CULTURE CASE STUDY: SHAW TRUST

*Michelle Jackson is the head of diversity and inclusion at Shaw Trust, where she's worked since January 2019. Shaw Trust is a charitable organisation in the UK that supports people with complex needs into good work. It has approximately 3,500 employees, and Shaw Trust surpluses are reinvested through its charitable Shaw Trust Foundation into programmes to improve prospects for individuals and communities. Clare Gray has been at Shaw Trust for 17 years, and is the organisational lead for disability advocacy, focusing on advocating for disabled people externally, especially with an employment focus.*

Shaw Trust has a stated aim of achieving diversity at all levels, taking proactive steps to remove artificial barriers to progression across the organisation.

The central facet of creating an inclusive culture at Shaw Trust is the clear commitment to diversity and inclusion exhibited by senior leaders. There is a constant two-way dialogue between senior leaders and managers with their staff, and a willingness to work collaboratively to understand and address issues around diversity and inclusion - they are opposed to a top-down approach. One of the best examples of this is their employee resource groups (ERGs). These were initially set up to raise awareness and provide a safe space for colleagues to discuss key diversity issues related to disability, race, women, neurodiversity, LGBTQ+, and menopause. They are now viewed as critical internal consultants. Insights and opinions are requested by senior leaders to address policies, practices, critical business objectives and aid continuous improvement.

ERGs have helped develop and deliver specific training for colleagues, such as neurodiversity awareness training, have been instrumental in ensuring processes for providing reasonable adjustments are fit for purpose, and have informed discussions about language around ethnicity.

To ensure all staff understand the importance of an inclusive working environment from the start, Shaw Trust has introduced a mandatory training session for all new and existing employees called 'Why Inclusion Matters'. This is reinforced in their annual appraisal process.

Senior leaders support group-wide awareness raising sessions and share their lived experiences in order to model the inclusive culture they are developing. For example, one senior leader has shared her experience of the menopause during a menopause awareness session, and this resulted in a menopause support group being set up. Another senior leader shared his experience of managing his

mental health during a Mental Health Awareness Week event, which led to an increase in colleagues sharing mental health struggles and in them seeking support from the company's Health and Wellbeing Team. Shaw Trust reports that having these open discussions has made staff feel more comfortable to share their lived experiences which the company can then act on.

### Data

Shaw Trust is committed to having a diverse workforce at all levels of the organisation. Qualitative and quantitative sources of data are used to assess progress and establish trends. These include staff surveys, feedback from ERGs, monitoring of the employee lifecycle, including recruitment, take up of development opportunities, progression, appraisal scores and leavers.

Shaw Trust actively campaigns internally to encourage employees to share their diversity data. They have launched campaigns to explain the importance of data and how it will be used and have shared trends and analysis internally. Leaders have also shared why they have been prepared to share their data. As a result, there has been significant reduction in the numbers of staff unwilling to share EDI data. Numbers have declined from 28% pre 2021 to 4% in 2022, and there was a 6% increase in colleagues willing to share that they are disabled.

### Representation and progression

To reflect and demonstrate the organisation's commitment to EDI, the organisation diversified their Board. They worked with an executive search firm specialising in recruiting diverse senior leaders for Board positions, and because of this positive action, 40% of the Board are now female (an increase from 20% pre-2021), and 33% from ethnically diverse backgrounds (an increase from 20% pre-2021).

In terms of progression, their strategy is to develop and promote from within the organisation to demonstrate the value placed on existing employees. The main strategy is to diversify the talent pipeline, particularly into senior roles. A range of formal and informal development opportunities exist to give colleagues at all levels of the organisation, the opportunity to gain the skills and experience required to progress. Examples include accredited and non-accredited management development programmes for people at all stages of their career, a Future Leaders programme preparing existing leaders for c-suite positions, a shadowing programme with a senior leader, secondments, and a mentoring programme.