Everyday life at work
Inclusive language

Language is intrinsic to us as humans. It is how we convey meaning and communicate, but it also has the power to include or exclude people.

Inclusive language aims to promote equality, respect and fairness in communication by being mindful of the impact on different people. It involves avoiding terms that perpetuate stereotypes, are exclusionary or reinforce biases. Instead, inclusive language allows you to be open and respectful by using terms that encompass and acknowledge the diversity of individuals and communities.

Gender
Use gender-neutral terms instead of assuming someone's gender; for instance, use 'chair' or 'chairperson' instead of 'chairman'. For pronouns use 'they' as a singular pronoun instead of 'he/she'. Where a language does not have a gender-neutral pronoun, ask the person how they would like to be referred to.

Race and ethnicity
Avoid using racial or ethnic stereotypes and instead use terms that are respectful and inclusive. This will vary regionally, but for example in the UK, use 'Black' or 'South Asian' rather than 'BAME' or outdated derogatory terms.

Disability
Use person-first language to prioritise individuals over their disabilities. For instance, say 'a person with a disability' instead of 'disabled person'.

LGBTQ+
Use inclusive terminology for sexual orientation and gender identity. For instance, use 'partner' instead of assuming 'husband' or 'wife'.

Age
Avoid ageist language or assumptions about someone's capabilities based on their age. For example, use 'older adult' instead of 'senior citizen' or 'elderly'.

It's important to note that language continually evolves, and it's crucial to stay open to feedback and adapt language usage as societal norms and understanding progress.

Speaking up

Everyone has a responsibility to speak up when they see behaviour that excludes others. Don't assume that the excluded person can or should be the one responding to the behaviour, either directly or through a grievance or whistleblowing.

It is everyone's responsibility to prevent exclusionary behaviour at work, but additional responsibility lies with leaders.
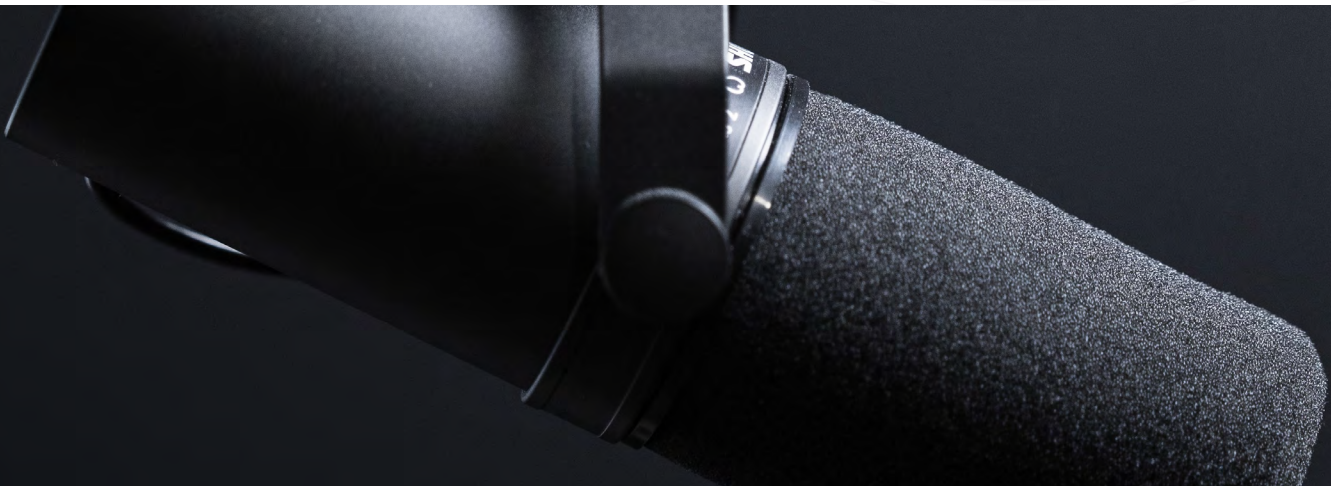
As an individual

1 If you are safe to do so, point out exclusionary behaviour when you see it, even when there is no one in the room who you think might be in the group being excluded. Calling out exclusionary behaviour when you witness it can have a lasting effect – it will set the tone for what is acceptable in the workplace.

2 If you do not feel safe to point it out at the time, think about how you can raise it afterwards.

3 Offer support to anyone who you think was excluded – check how they are feeling and offer your help if they want to raise concerns.

As a manager or leader

1 If you see, or are told about, behaviour by someone you manage that has excluded, upset or offended someone, think about how and when you will address it. Speaking up immediately might be the best option in some circumstances, but having a private conversation later might help to avoid defensiveness.

2 Unless you have reason to think otherwise, assume there is no malicious intent. Describe your understanding of what happened and why you think it was exclusionary. Focus on the event or statement, not the person making it.

3   Listen to what they have to say in response, and offer suggestions for how things could have been done differently.

4   Someone may need time to work through their defensiveness, and so you can offer to pick up the conversation when they have had time to reflect.

5   If the behaviour is repeated or doesn't change, you need to take action to maintain trust in your organisation. Don't look for excuses for poor behaviour or find reasons not to act.

As an organisation

1   Have a non-discrimination policy that tells employees what they can do to raise concerns about how they are treated by clients and suppliers as well as colleagues or managers. Ensure that all staff know their concerns will be taken seriously and in confidence.

2   Expectations should be made clear to clients and, where appropriate, other visitors at the beginning of your relationship with them or when they attend premises where your people work. You may wish to create a charter or code of conduct where you lay out your expectations for the way your staff will be treated by clients/visitors.

Tools

Unconscious bias training that works describes how rigorous unconscious bias training programmes help employees become aware, develop the empathy that combats bias, diversify their networks and commit to improvement.

The **Cognitive bias codex** has mapped the 188 different cognitive biases, which are the brain's short cuts to processing the millions of pieces of information we experience every second.

In **How can acceptance drive more diversity in property?** JLL's Eve Larard-Tansley talks about her journey on coming out at work.

This example of a **Customer code of conduct** from Birmingham Museums outlines the expectations of customers visiting their sites and attending events in person or online.

Planning employee events outside the office/workplace

Social events with colleagues or clients could unwittingly exclude people. Events that happen before or after work may exclude those who have caring or other out-of-work responsibilities.

Events that involve sporting activities may exclude those who haven't had the opportunity to learn that sport because of their gender, a disability or their social background. Events that involve consuming alcohol may exclude people of faith or those with addiction issues.

If your firm's events are always of the same type, or held at the same time of day, consider whether you could offer more variety so that more people can participate and feel included. Ask your team for suggestions and create a list of different activities, days and times that would allow you to create a programme across the year that works for different needs.

Be particularly careful about whether people are excluded from events that would make them more visible to clients or senior colleagues – these should be organised to allow as much participation as possible.

Social media

Social media networks are now an important resource for many to share information, develop business opportunities and network with fellow professionals.

RICS members, like all professionals, are representative of their professional community.

Some concerns have been raised about whether the content of some posts crosses a line that could undermine public trust in the profession.

The standards expected of members do not change because they are communicating through social media rather than face to face or by other traditional media.

Tools

The **Use of social media: guidance for RICS members** sets the expectations for RICS members' behaviour on social media. You may wish to use this guidance to set requirements and expectations about any social media content that is connected with your organisation.

Creating employee resource groups and affinity networks

Employee resource groups (ERGs) bring together employees with shared identities or experiences to provide support, networking and career development opportunities.

Common groups include those for women, carers, veterans or LGBTQ+ individuals, or they are organised by faith, race, language, accessibility or neurodiversity. Understandably, smaller organisations may find it difficult to set up ERGs due to numbers, in which case you could set up an umbrella DEI group where members support and guide each other through challenges.

Making the most of ERGs

- Empower ERGs to play an active role in fostering an inclusive environment and contributing to the organisation's diversity and inclusion initiatives.

- Collaborate with ERGs to identify and address barriers to advancement for underrepresented employees and implement strategies to overcome them.

- Think of ERGs as your eyes and ears communicating staff experiences that you might not otherwise be aware of.

ERGs play an important part in wider business development for the organisation. To be successful, ERGs require substantial time from those who are involved in running them.

- Ensure that the wider organisation understands the value that ERGs bring to the business and support those people involved in running the groups.

- Give staff the time to attend meetings and support the groups' leaders and administrators in setting their own goals and agendas.

Tools

CIPD: **ERGs and staff networks: how to set up and run business groups**

Delivering confidence

We are RICS. As a member-led chartered professional body working in the public interest, we uphold the highest technical and ethical standards.

We inspire professionalism, advance knowledge and support our members across global markets to make an effective contribution for the benefit of society. We independently regulate our members in the management of land, real estate, construction and infrastructure. Our work with others supports their professional practice and pioneers a natural and built environment that is sustainable, resilient and inclusive for all.

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