Guidance on inclusive recruitment, development, and retention of trans, nonbinary and intersex people

XX X Month 2023

This paper sets out our recommendations on how to make recruitment inclusive of trans, non-binary and intersex people. Many of these recommendations are principles that make recruitment more inclusive for **all** underrepresented groups.

Key recommendations

1. Encourage applications from all groups with explicit support for underrepresented groups that goes beyond a generic statement e.g. staff network promotion, development schemes, training.
2. Application sifts and interviews should always be conducted without sight of diversity data of applicants.
3. When gathering diversity data questions on sex and gender should be inclusive of trans and intersex people.
4. Once applicants are recruited, promote career progression and development opportunities to avoid people, including trans and intersex colleagues being held back in their roles.
5. Ensure line managers and team leaders are signposted to appropriate training and relevant networks who can help support them and their staff.
6. Exit interviews and career discussions should be conducted to improve future recruitment practices; these should include the option to provide diversity data and report bullying, harassment or discrimination as reasons for leaving.

This paper follows the stages in the recruitment process, with tips and commentary on each. Terms like ‘trans’ and ‘transgender’, ‘non-binary’ and ‘intersex’ are used in the widest sense and as such, this includes gender non-conforming people and people with variations of sex characteristics.

1. Outreach

Publicly committing to support trans and intersex people and treat them with respect will help show that an organisation is safe to work in.

Providing people, particularly those in marginalised groups, with resources on how to apply to the Civil Service is essential. By upskilling candidates, it will ensure that everyone, regardless of background, has the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate the unique Civil Service approach to recruitment.

Advertising roles widely increases the chance of vacancies being seen by more potential applicants, regardless of any protected characteristics. This could include going to platforms aimed at certain groups, or ensuring the platforms used have diverse audiences.

1. Application

Inclusive job descriptions should include statements of support for underrepresented groups and a commitment to being fair in the recruitment process. This could also include brief information on staff networks that an applicant may wish to join, if they are successful, to help show the variety of support on offer.

Where submission of CVs is involved, this should be conducted in a name-blind way, so they contain minimal personal data, hiding the applicant’s name for example, that could highlight a protected characteristic.

Name-blind recruitment can particularly help trans people who are changing their legal name or whose name may usually be associated with a different gender to their own. Removing personal identifiers can also help reduce unconscious bias from the sifting panel and has long been used as a technique to ensure applicants are being reviewed on the basis of their skills, not assumptions regarding their gender or any other attribute.

1. Interview

Flexibility with online interviews and pre-interview communication is important as people may fear judgement in relation to their gender expression or alternatively in relation to their voice during a voice-only telephone interview.

If diversity data needs to be collected, it should be done so by a separate person to minimise impacts of unconscious bias, with the exception of information regarding any adjustments to the interview. The same should apply for any verification of identification documents, which should occur separately to the interview where possible, and not in front of other applicants.

An interviewer may become aware that an interviewee is trans or may perceive an interviewee to be trans, for instance if they introduce themselves using gender neutral pronouns or neopronouns, or if the interviewer makes a subconscious assessment of the applicant’s gender expression compared to their legal name.

Interviewers should receive high quality inclusion training to help them to address any biases or knowledge gaps they may have and reduce any impacts of these on interviewees.

Interview panels should be diverse and representative of the current and future workforce. Active effort should be made to ensure an interview panel includes people from different demographic groups. This can signal to applicants that an organisation is genuine about diversity of their organisation.

Consider encouraging the sharing of pronouns when everyone involved introduces themselves, whether face-to-face or a video call, to foster a welcoming environment. Visual indicators of allyship including email signatures, lanyards or meeting backgrounds can also show genuine commitments to hiring people based on talent, regardless of their background. These techniques should be used for all applicants/interviewees, regardless of whether you perceive them to be trans or not, to ensure fairness and encourage inclusion throughout.

1. Onboarding/Induction

All employees should be encouraged and supported to take opportunities for development, regardless of whether they have protected characteristics or not. This should begin during the early process of onboarding them.

Inducting a new employee involves a lot of introductions to people and might put extra burden on a person who may be undergoing a transition (medical or social) or who is non-binary as these people may face additional stresses because of having to constantly introduce themselves with their pronouns/correctly gendered language.

Recruiting managers could check with their new team member to see how they want to be introduced to make sure they have the correct details, as well as offer help with any introductions, whether over email or in meetings.

Onboarding also involves a lot of forms that can require people to misgender themselves or provide incorrect data to complete it, for example where there are only Man/Woman options, or where a legal sex indicator has been copied across from legal identification documents. All HR forms should be assessed to see if the sex and gender questions are appropriate and inclusive. For further information on this, please see our position paper on sex and gender survey questions.

Line managers should also familiarise themselves with where to find workplace policies on topics such as transition and medical leave.

When a line manager meets a new trans or intersex employee, they should only ask questions that are appropriate and necessary in order to manage them. Workplaces should have a zero-tolerance on inappropriate questions being asked, including where a manager knows or suspects that an employee is trans or intersex.

Where possible, line managers should also be flexible with a new joiner’s working location as this can help make the onboarding process less stressful, particularly if someone is feeling especially vulnerable due to transitioning or any other reason.

Line managers can also support their team members in requesting appropriate security passes for work that match their name and expression as well as pronoun/name badges if they wish to.

1. Exit interviews

Asking colleagues about their treatment during an exit interview can help to inform better recruitment (and retainment) processes going forwards. It is particularly important that these are conducted with someone who the exiting employee trusts and that this is sincere.

At this stage, this is too late to change any work circumstances for the benefit of the outgoing employee. However, this can be a learning opportunity for current and future employees who may have come across similar issues, particularly where someone has felt unable to speak up. Important questions that could feature include ascertaining what could have or should have been done to make the employee feel comfortable to stay in the organisation.