

Unconscious bias and workplace EDI

A guide for residents involved in staff recruitment at Newlon

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Part 1. Unconscious bias: what do you mean?

- Unconscious = something you are not aware of
- Bias = a preference or inclination that inhibits you from being impartial

I don't think I'm biased!

- Bias is unavoidable - it is part of being human
- Members of any group can have biases
- It is possible to become more aware of your biases

Your experience

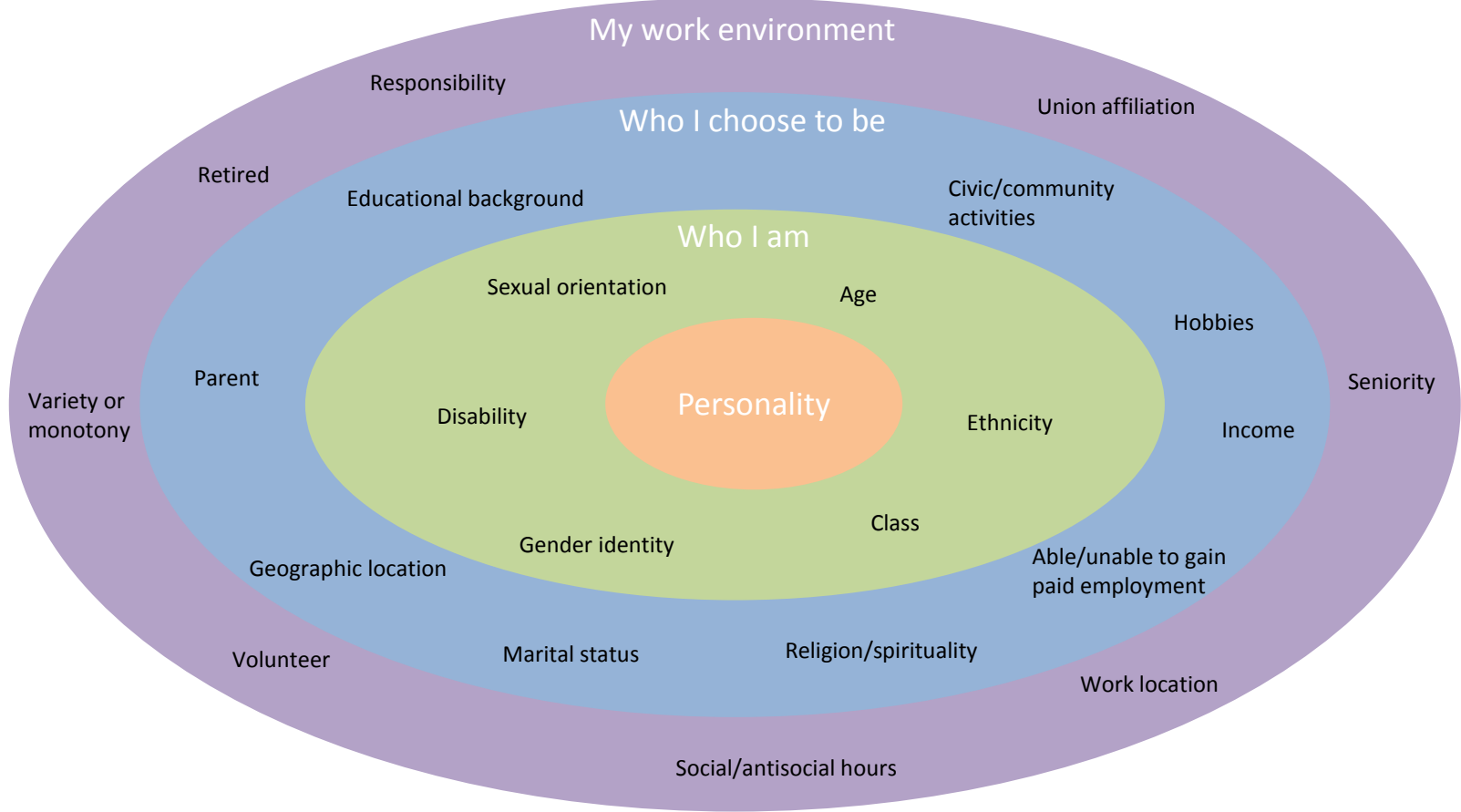
- We have all experienced someone making an assumption about us, or feeling that an assumption was being made
- What was the assumption, or the feeling you got, based on?
- Was it accurate?
- Can you think of any examples of stereotyping you have encountered, either professionally or personally?
- Is there such a thing as a positive stereotype?
- What have been the major influences on how you feel and think about difference?

Where do these biases come from?

- Behaviour we witness and things we are told as we grow up
- Early experiences and upbringing
- Family and peers
- Religion or lack thereof
- The media
- Societal norms

Biases: using a diagram

- The next slide has a diagram showing types of diversity in an oval shape
- It's designed to illustrate that biases and types of diversity can intersect and overlap – very often they aren't single issues



What are most biases based on? Equality Act 2010 +

- Gender
- Ethnic or racial background
- Disability
- Age
- Sexual orientation
- Religion
- Marital status
- Whether you have children
- Gender identity (trans, non binary etc)
- Class/political affiliation
- Employment status
- Education level
- Wealth – earning potential, benefit recipient
- Housing tenure/geographical location

Bias stereotypes

The weaker sex

That's a boy's toy

Natural hair = messy

Benefits scrounger

Where are you really from?

Tattoos = criminal

Football fans are trouble makers

You don't look disabled

Old people can't use tech

That's gay

Why don't you get a job?

You're too young to know

Real men don't cry

Types of workplace unconscious bias (1)

- Affinity bias - the tendency people have to connect with others who share similar interests, experiences and backgrounds. When companies hire for “culture fit,” they are more likely to fall prey to affinity bias.
- Confirmation bias - often plays a detrimental role when you form an initial opinion before meeting a candidate based on inconsequential attributes like their name, where they’re from, where they took qualifications etc. This can remain into the interview process.
- Nonverbal bias - when you interview a candidate (in person or virtually), nonverbal bias can creep in. Whether it’s a gentle handshake, folded arms or difficulty holding eye contact, it’s easy to take these cues as disinterest, overconfidence or an overall negative attitude.

Types of workplace unconscious bias (2)

- Authority bias - refers to when an idea or opinion is given more attention or thought to be more accurate because it was provided by an authority figure. It is very easy to find in the workplace because hierarchies are already in place.
- Conformity bias - the tendency people have to act similarly to the people around them regardless of their own personal beliefs or idiosyncrasies. It's also known as peer pressure. It can cause individuals to sway their opinion of a candidate to match the opinion of the majority.
- The contrast effect - When you're reviewing multiple candidates, it can be easy to compare one application and interview answers to the next, rather than to the job description and person specification.

The science

- Studies show people can be consciously committed to equality, and deliberately work to behave without prejudice, yet still possess hidden negative prejudices or stereotypes. *Project Implicit, Harvard*
- So, even though we believe we see and treat people as equals, hidden biases may still influence our perceptions and actions.

How does that affect me?

- Recognise our own vulnerabilities: our traits and people biases
- Recognise the contexts when our biases may be most active
- Assume bias will be at play, pause and think
- Do your best

Part 2. What does EDI stand for?

- Equality (and Equity), Diversity and Inclusion

*“**Equality** is being invited into the room. **Diversity** is getting a seat at the table. **Inclusion** is sharing your views and being heard.”*

EQUALITY VERSUS EQUITY



In the first image, it is assumed that everyone will benefit from the same supports. They are being treated equally.



In the second image, individuals are given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access to the game. They are being treated equitably.



In the third image, all three can see the game without any supports or accommodations because the cause of the inequity was addressed. The systemic barrier has been removed.

Courtesy Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide for Municipalities, City for All Women Initiative (CAWI), Ottawa

Why is workplace EDI important?

- Besides being discriminatory, a non-inclusive labour market will not benefit from diversity of thought, ideas and ways of working that come about when people from different backgrounds, experiences and identities are employed.
- It makes good business sense: employers recognise the business benefits of employing a more diverse workforce; there is still some (considerable) way to go.
- Studies have proven that being more inclusive in the workplace has personal benefits for staff's wellbeing. Wellbeing and openness to change are strongly linked to inclusiveness - the more inclusive a person is, the better their wellbeing – in all of the areas measured. *(Do Something Different, Fletcher, 2016)*

Why Newlon supports workplace EDI

Strategy: An organisation that values its people as individuals and encourages everyone to recognise their unique and different perspectives, abilities and contributions is one that creates value for the individual, their teams, the organisation and its stakeholders.



Performance: An organisation that supports inclusive development, sustainability and resilience in a competitive and changing environment is one that values its workforce and residents.



Benefits: An organisation with a strong EDI record recognises the worth and supports the individuality of its workers, its residents and their communities.



Legislation: An organisation that keeps abreast of current legislation, follows current best practice and trains staff and residents where appropriate is one that creates a positive environment to live and work.

Examples of how Newlon supports workplace EDI

- Hybrid working and flexi time
- Disability Confident scheme committed
- Reasonable adjustments
- Age diversity
- BAME employee career progression
- No strict clothing policy
- Staff benefits – healthcare costs, cycle scheme, fitness
- Company policies and training