

JSCC Discussion Paper – Addressing microaggressions and unconscious bias in the workplace

A microaggression is a comment or action that negatively targets a marginalised group. They are often linked to stereotypes. They are often unintentional but can be intentional. Whilst they may seem subtle, the impact on an individual (or individuals) can be significant, particularly in relation to their mental and emotional wellbeing. They can accumulate over time, leading to a hostile work environment and decreased employee morale.

Unconscious bias is defined by ACAS: 'How a person thinks can depend on their life experiences. Sometimes they have beliefs and views about other people that might not be right or reasonable.' It leads to automatic and often unconscious judgments we make about others based on stereotypes or preconceived notions. That then leads to unfairness in how people are treated.

Both microaggressions and unconscious bias can hinder diversity and inclusion efforts, affecting team dynamics and overall organisational performance

It is crucial to address microaggressions and unconscious bias to foster a respectful and productive workplace. The Council is committed to creating an environment where all employees feel valued and respected. This is reflected in our value 'Inclusion' and supported by our Inclusion group.

Consequences of not addressing these issues

Failing to address microaggressions and unconscious bias can have severe consequences. It can lead to increased employee turnover, reduced job satisfaction, employee disengagement and potential legal ramifications. It can damage the Council's reputation and hinder its ability to attract and retain good employees. By proactively addressing these issues, we can create a more inclusive and supportive work environment, ultimately enhancing organisational performance and employee well-being.

Training and awareness raising

To combat these issues, the Council has implemented several initiatives:

- Our recruitment training for managers covers unconscious bias training to ensure fair and equitable hiring practices.
- Our Learning Management system provides various eLearning modules that all staff must complete, including Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion. These modules are designed to raise awareness and provide practical strategies for recognising and addressing unconscious bias in the workplace.
- The inclusion group have produced posters to further develop employee awareness of microaggressions and run personal development mornings focussing on unconscious bias and microaggressions.
- Inclusion group, HR and Leadership Team have attended training on microaggressions to deepen their understanding of these issues and to lead by example.

Next steps

Addressing microaggressions and unconscious bias is not just a moral imperative but also a strategic necessity. By fostering an inclusive and respectful workplace, the Council can ensure that all employees feel valued and empowered to contribute their best.

Additional training and awareness raising is planned to further develop employee understanding of inclusion, diversity and equalities. This includes bitesize sessions for managers and encouraging employees to consider their own bias. In addition, we plan to re-launch our values, which will further imbed the value of Inclusion.

Examples of our microaggressions posters:



Discussion points

Other ideas for addressing unconscious bias and microaggressions?

Are Councillors aware of the issues?