

Elizabeth Douglas:

My name's Elizabeth Douglas and I'm a learning and development manager with a care home and sheltered housing provider in Edinburgh. I've been involved in recruitment for around 30 years now, and diversity is now a very high profile subject in the world of recruitment, and you need to have your managers who are involved in recruitment educated in the subject of diversity.

The first thing you have to ask is why? Why is diversity awareness so important? If you refer to the book you will see various reports detailing diversity studies, and these show that workforces with more diverse approaches do have better productivity and increased performance, and this has been proven. So to have an awareness of diversity enhances the recruitment procedure to allow you to open your mind to a wider workforce make-up.

By human nature we are attracted to people like ourselves, so in recruitment it's very, very easy to gravitate towards the types of employees who are like ourselves. Over the years I've heard comments such as, "they'll fit in", "they speak our language", "I know what language they're talking", and, "they're a safe pair of hands", for example. Now that doesn't mean to say the person who has been recruited is not going to be effective in the role but it does close down potential avenues for other types of employees to come to the workforce.

The first thing you have to do is make your people who are involved in recruitment aware of what diversity is. When I first started working with our managers in my current organisation I asked them what they thought diversity was, and the majority came back and said, "We're all right, we employ all different nationalities, so we're fine". Now that's certainly part of diversity but it's not all of it, and you have to educate your key people in recruitment, then, to be aware of the other areas of diversity; disability, sexuality, age, all the protected characteristics in the Equality Act come into diversity as well. You also have to sell the benefits of having a diverse workforce.

It brings different views, different outlooks, different work experiences, and increases debate, and, in turn, that leads to better quality of workforce input because you're not all from the same sort of background.

The other thing that we've done in the past year where I work is train our key people in unconscious bias, and that's a very interesting subject based on our upbringings, our education, our values, our parents, our schooling, we all have different values, prejudices, stereotypes, they're not always healthy when it comes to discussing diversity. So what unconscious bias training does is make you aware of your own prejudices and stereotypes, which really can affect

recruitment and makes you aware of avoiding your prejudices and stereotypes affecting your recruitment practices.

So the key steps are: identify what diversity is with your workforce; train them in the appreciation of what it is and sell the benefits.