Case study

Rachel Winfield,
Learning and Engagement Manager, Leeds University Union

Inclusion at Leeds University Union (LUU) isn't driven by an L&D strategy - an inclusion strategy is the driver instead, with lots of L&D within that. Since January 2021, we've been using eLearning to support some of the conversations that we're having, which has been really valuable when working in a hybrid way. We have five mandatory EDI courses - we introduce one every two months for our 500 staff.

eLearning - then discussion

Everyone does a piece of eLearning in their own time, and then comes together as a team, virtually or in person. The team lead then facilitates a reflective conversation based around the recent module. Once all staff have done the five courses we will add to the collection, branching out to other areas of diversity.

The discussion includes questions like:

- What have you learned that you didn't know before?
- What do you want to look at further? (Part of our learning strategy encourages self-learning)
- What behaviours can you change?
- What behaviours can your team change?
- What can you challenge our organisation to change?

Results

We really want these conversations to drive changes in personal behaviour and what we do as an organisation. Afterwards, the team lead reports back to me about what they're going to do next and what's been added to the teams' learning objectives. Suggestions for what changes they want to see in the organisation also get added to the inclusive action plan.

We publish these actions on our intranet and feature them in our weekly communications. This helps to share great ideas and also hold teams to account. We also highlight actions to our senior leaders and managers, so they know what their teams have said. This keeps the conversation going at all levels.

In our most recent annual performance cycle - which started in August 2021 - we introduced EDI objectives for our one to ones. This is a huge victory for us - previously, we were chasing teams to add inclusion initiatives and learning to their agendas. Now it's being driven by our Senior Leadership team, and this means that everyone has permission to use their time contributing to this work. All of our staff have four objectives to work towards each year and now we've included: Support LUU diversity inclusion and anti-racism at work. That's now in everybody's objectives, along with key performance indicators (KPIs) to aid progress.

Team leads can ask:

- How will you meet this objective?
- Are there any barriers?
- What have you achieved so far?

Through doing this we can track, to some extent, the progress that each employee is making on their journey.

Measuring change

We have a pulse survey that goes out every two months asking four questions. One of the questions focuses on inclusion, with a free textbox for more detailed feedback:

How strongly do you agree with the statement: 'I feel that LUU is an inclusive place to work'?

In order to preserve anonymity, we only ask respondents to tell us what team they're in and what tier (using drop down lists). We don't share the raw data with anyone else, and only two people have access to it.

We use the results of each survey question as a KPI for every team. Team leaders are sent a summary report of what their team said along with the scores. They then respond with commentary about what they're going to do to address any concerns. And if there weren't many responses from their team, they're expected to comment on how they'll encourage more responses next time! We really put the onus on our managers.

All of the reports are then sent to our senior managers and they're asked what they plan to do in response. Ultimately, they're responsible for all of the teams. We want to hold everyone accountable on all levels.

The survey feedback has been really insightful and the results for this question have gone from strength to strength. The last time we ran it, which was in September 2021, 93% of staff agreed that LUU is an inclusive place to work. That has come a long way from 56% when we started only a year ago in October 2020.

Rachel's top tips

- Provide a toolkit for staff members, so that anyone missing team workshops can complete a set of reflective questions and submit their answers, so they're not left out

- The best surveys include free textboxes. This is where you start to get a sense of what really matters to staff; why they may not feel included and the things that make them uncomfortable. This highlights where to focus your attention.