

Diversity and inclusion seminar with Paralympian Anna Turney, Permanent Secretary Sue Owen, and CEO Lesley Longstone

30 January 2017

Event Summary



The Association of Chief Executives was delighted to host a private roundtable seminar with Paralympian Anna Turney, Department for Culture, Media and Sport Permanent Secretary and ACE central government sponsor, Sue Owen, and Lesley Longstone, Chief Executive of the Independent Police Complaints Commission. This was an opportunity for members to hear an inspirational story; see why diversity is a priority for the public sector; and hear from a member who has strived to improve diversity at her organisation. The event was

introduced by ACE Chair, Graham Farrant.

Anna began the session, describing how, having broken her back snowboard racing, she wondered how she could lead a fulfilling life again. However, having seen a mono-ski, she was determined to ski again. Her passion and hard work led her to representing Great Britain in the 2010 Vancouver Paralympics within three years of the accident. Four years later, she was part of Team GB's most successful Winter Paralympic Team in the 2014 Sochi Paralympic Games. She won 31 medals during her career.

She explained how Team GB was a diverse group of athletes, in age and disability. There was little money but they had a coach, a van, a team ethos and were all passionate with a dream, prepared to train in all weathers. Anna said that the team's success came from working together with their different disabilities, because they had to.

Anna described how people she meets are often intrigued by her disability, but do not know how to approach it – to avoid awkwardness she recommended that people should just ask! Television programme The Last Leg's hashtag was #isitokto, which encouraged people to discuss what's OK around disability. Anna said that people with a disability are a huge resource but people's fear means that it is not being used, but if the fears can be dispelled, people can do incredible things.

ACE Government sponsor Sue Owen explained that having a diverse workforce was not only the right thing to do morally, but that it is a waste of resource if people from a diverse background are not employed. She described how having organisations that represent the population led to better service, better policy and happier people. Sue talked through the figures from staff engagement surveys, which showed that a more concerted effort was required across the Civil Service to increase diversity. LGBT and BAME staff and those with a disability were more likely to have felt bullied and harassed; they are more likely to be

classed as poorly performing. She recommended that objectives are adjusted accordingly, processes for recruitment are reviewed, and policies for bullying and matters such as gender re-assignment leave can be revisited to support colleagues. Sue also described how the Civil Service is looking at how it can encourage people from all backgrounds, so there is greater social mobility – starting in schools so children know what the Civil Service is! She also described how diversity networks have been set up, which can help with providing information, supporting people and assist human resources. She advised that people participating in the networks should be given the time to do this extra work, and not be penalised for the time spent, particularly in organisations that are performance driven. Sue concluded by saying that much continued effort was required to this work!

Lesley Longstone described how when she joined the IPCC, it was felt that the organisation did not do enough to work with the public it was most likely to be in contact with, as lack of trust in the police is greater with young people and the BAME community. So, she obtained an independent 'SWOT' analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats), which dissected the business to look for issues surrounding diversity, which found that whilst employees bought into the value of diversity, they did not 'live' it. Lesley continued to lead on the matter, engaging the executive directors and the Commission, chairing the equality and diversity board, and employing an equality and diversity lead to drive the work forward, who reports to her.

Lesley described the difference between equity and equality, by ensuring help was given to those at a disadvantage, so they can compete on the same basis. The organisation decided to focus on the matter of recruitment at a time when the organisation was doubling its workforce, and only 8.5% of employees were from a BAME background. Past recruitment processes were examined and identified the stages where BAME candidates were dropped. This part of the selection process was changed and within a year, 14% of employees were from a BAME background. Lesley felt that it helped that this was at a time of bulk recruitment. Equality impact assessments are also completed for all projects and people have been trained how to do this. She has also instigated a talent management programme. Staff networks were established to act as 'change agents', initially focussing on internal issues, but also looking external work – recently supporting an investigation. Lesley finished by saying that whilst the work has raised expectations and made the problem of lack of diversity more visible, it can also empower people to raise issues.

A question and answer session followed, which raised the following points:

- Performance management regimes, language used, attitudes to disabled people can make people feel bullied and harassed.
- Mental ill health is a big issue and managers can be trained to talk about this with their staff.
- People with disabilities do not want to 'stick out' and small things can make a big difference. For example: give them their own key to the disabled lavatory so they do not need to ask for it every time they want to go to the bathroom; ensure the disabled person's team is sat with them.
- In recruitment, broaden the group of careers people may have come from and ensure the induction and training programme are changed accordingly.
- Objectives can be adjusted so people are not set up to fail. For example, someone with dyslexia may need more time to read something.
- Assess IT changes before they are rolled out.
- Engagement in diversity networks impacts on time and can be included in objectives.
- Skills are not just developed through length of service and can be gained outside of the workplace.
- Managers need to be trained to lead a diverse workforce.



Finally, should any members have practical examples of things they have done at their organisation to, and increase diversity and inclusion and improve equality, or have 'do's and don'ts' that they would like to share with members of ACE, please email: secretariat@associationofchiefexecutives.org.uk We will be pulling these together and making them available on our website.