

The Women and Equalities Select Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

1st March 2016

Dear members of the Women and Equalities Select Committee,

Re: Women and Equality Select Committee Inquiry into 'employment opportunities for Muslims in the UK'

Whilst we have no specific research evidence of our own on the topic of the enquiry, we are pleased to make some general observations to the Committee about progressing diversity and inclusion, which are likely to have a bearing on it and its recommendations. These observations draw on extensive research into diversity and inclusion, people management and development issues, thought leadership in the field, as well as practitioner experience and observations.

To give you a bit of background, the CIPD has nearly 140,000 members working in HR, learning and development, people management and consulting. Our membership base is wide, with 60% of our members working in private sector services and manufacturing, 33% working in the public sector and 7% in the not-for-profit sector. In addition, 76% of the FTSE 100 companies have CIPD members at director level.

Public policy at the CIPD draws on our extensive research and thought leadership, practical advice and guidance, along with the experience and expertise of our diverse membership, to inform and shape debate, government policy and legislation for the benefit of employees and employers, to improve best practice in the workplace, to promote high standards of work and to represent the interests of our members at the highest level. As an independent and not-for-profit organisation, the CIPD is committed to championing better work and working lives for the benefit of individuals, businesses, economies and society.

CIPD position on diversity and inclusion

As thought leaders on the issue of progressing diversity and inclusion, we see this as essential to all aspects of people management and the advancement of talent. We have evidenced managing diversity and inclusion as a business imperative. Doing it successfully adds value to business performance as well as being morally valid.

We recommend that people are valued as unique individuals with many diverse identity characteristics, backgrounds and experiences, which go beyond the protected characteristics covered by discrimination law. These can contribute fresh insights and perspectives to operational activities; product and service design, and can help organisations to improve their competitiveness and delivery to customers and clients.

Tapping into these rich resources demand open and inclusive cultures in which people feel comfortable and willing to contribute their ideas because they feel these are valued. Open cultures are supported by appropriate policies and working practices, trust and leadership, and alertness to the removal of direct and indirect discriminatory practices and the damaging effects of various biases, including unconscious biases which influence decision making.

There are no quick solutions to help deliver success in progressing diversity and inclusion. It is a complex process dependent on systemic change and the removal of barriers related to the way organisations do things, as well as personal behaviours, motivations, aspirations, expectations, abilities and experiences, and potential both and inside and outside the workplace.

Against this background of complexity, some general observations about the representation of Muslim men and women in the workplace are as follows. It is important to remember that individual Muslim men and women will be affected by these in different ways, according to their personal circumstances, characteristics, values and experiences, and the kind of work they do, as well as the organisations that they work in.

Factors likely to influence the levels of inclusion of Muslim women in the workplace

The challenges facing Muslim women in the UK in progressing careers to senior levels – while being similar in many ways to those facing women generally – will be compounded by overt and covert barriers related to:

- language and levels of fluency in English.
- family and cultural values related to the role of women in the home and involvement in the labour market.
- new or recent migrant status.
- closeness to extended family members, living in a tight-knit or geographically dispersed Muslim community.
- care responsibilities including childcare, and the care of other dependants such as the elderly or disabled.
- religion and belief and access to employer provisions to enable prayer and expression of faith identity, such as wearing the Niqab.

- travel to and from work and away from local communities to study or work, and to travel alone or unaccompanied by a male family member.
- type of work experience.
- age, skills and educational achievements, qualifications and ability to navigate the UK education system, transferability of overseas, as well as qualifications.
- personal confidence, soft skills and social capital and access to support networks.
- poverty and low income, access to funding and the constraints of the Sharia Law.
- access to role models and mentors and informed parental guidance.
- availability of careers guidance in schools and elsewhere.

General points for consideration regarding the inclusion of members of black and ethnic minorities in the workplace

- Joseph Rowntree Research suggests that members of people with BAME backgrounds neither progress to senior levels as far as their white counterparts, nor as easily. This is a phenomenon even if organisations that have equal opportunity policies and practices.
- The progress of diversity and inclusion generally is hampered by direct and indirect discrimination – the CIPD has no statistical evidence on cases, but Acas would be a resource for such information, such as unconscious biases and stereotype threat.
- Poorly designed approaches to recruitment and training.
- Poor capture and use of monitoring data (numerical and qualitative), related to identity characteristics, which would help to expose exclusive practices and behaviours which block progress.

Recommendations

Steps to improve employment policies and practices for Muslims:

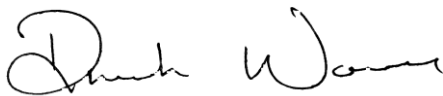
1. Encouraging more accessible information and guidance to help employers and individuals themselves to understand and overcome the barriers that get in the way of diversity and inclusion will contribute to progress.
2. Promote the 'name-blind' recruitment initiative recently advocated by the Prime Minister, which the CIPD supports, as a mechanism to improve the chances of people from BAME backgrounds to get ahead in employment.
3. Call for more clarification and guidance about monitoring identity information to bring good practice up to date with issues addressed by discrimination law
4. Commission research to explore the agenda and evidence the design of interventions to deliver improvements.

5. Promote 'flexible working' as a vital response to support the progress of diversity and inclusion generally.

I am sorry we do not have any research evidence of our own specific to the topic of interest to the Committee but I hope our general thoughts and observations are helpful. Committee members may find it helpful to know that the CIPD is in the early stages of developing a new standard with the British Standards Institute to support the progress of diversity and inclusion.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you would like to discuss any issues we have mentioned further. Our Public Affairs Officer, Paddy Smith, on p.smith@cipd.co.uk or 020 8612 639 will be happy to make appropriate arrangements.

Yours faithfully,



Dianah Worman OBE
Public Policy Lead, Diversity