

GUH as part of the Health Service Executive apply the HSE Policy on Diversity in the Workplace. To ensure effectiveness and efficiency in managing diversity, the organisation merged various committees dealing with different areas of diversity and equality into the now Galway University Hospital Diversity Steering Committee. While applying the HSE policy on diversity, the GUH has made strides to go beyond the basic requirements of the policy and create a culture at all levels in the organisation around equality and diversity. As a large organisation cultural change can at times be slower to implement, however, definite progress has been made.

GUH carried out extensive studies looking at various best practices benchmarked by other organisations in and outside Ireland, and adapted equality and diversity policies as strategic corporate objectives as apposed to just dealing with issues as they arise.

The organisation recorded a number of successes for their efforts and received a number of awards in areas of managing diversity in the workplace. GUH is the only hospital in Ireland to receive the O2 Ability Award for their initiatives with regard to disabilities.

The Human Resources Department is responsible for ensuring the progress of the GUH Diversity Steering Committee and has in place a training plan within the organisation's equality and diversity strategy for organising continuous staff training on equality and diversity matters. The committee regularly conduct surveys of patients and staff to appraise the impact of the implementation of its diversity policies. The committee recently held an Information Day and a stereotyping exhibition in the main lobby of UCHG encompassing displays from organisations covering the nine equality grounds such as Age Action Ireland, a range of disability organisations, Galway and Tuam Traveller Movements and the Equality Authority.

Looking at GUH from a business perspective, there are a number of aspects which are important to ensuring that the core values of the organisation are maintained while the respect and dignity is provided to the diverse patients and workforce. Having a clear equality policy in place is one thing, but having the buy in from all parts of the organisation is significant to its successful implementation. It has proved better to create a culture of tolerance and openness rather than adopting a "fire-fighting" approach when issues arise. Such an approach simply leads to greater exposure to litigation, employee turnover, complaints and ultimately poor quality of service delivery.

While GUH would suggest that they are very much at the early stages of having a Best Practice of managing diversity in the workplace in place, they have made great in roads in the area having won recognition from the HSE and other awards for their efforts.

Lessons to be learnt from Galway University Hospitals

1

Make diversity a multi-departmental responsibility, not just the HR function, with strong strategic direction and leadership from top management. Consider putting in place a working group or sub committee made up of a cross range of staff, managers etc that can help monitor the practices in place and promote diversity in the workplace.

2

Be sure to consult with your clients, staff, and stakeholders on their needs and how they feel that issues of diversity are being handled.

3

Look at what others in your sector are doing to create a workplace which is equal and diverse. Benchmark your organisation's practices.

4

Publicise and celebrate your achievements.



Conclusion

A number of key success factors for equality and diversity initiatives in the workplace have been identified:

Leadership and top management commitment and support to equality and diversity policies and practices

Training to raise awareness and develop staff skills, understanding and buy-in to equality and diversity policies and practices

Staff involvement in the design and implementation of equality and diversity policies and practices

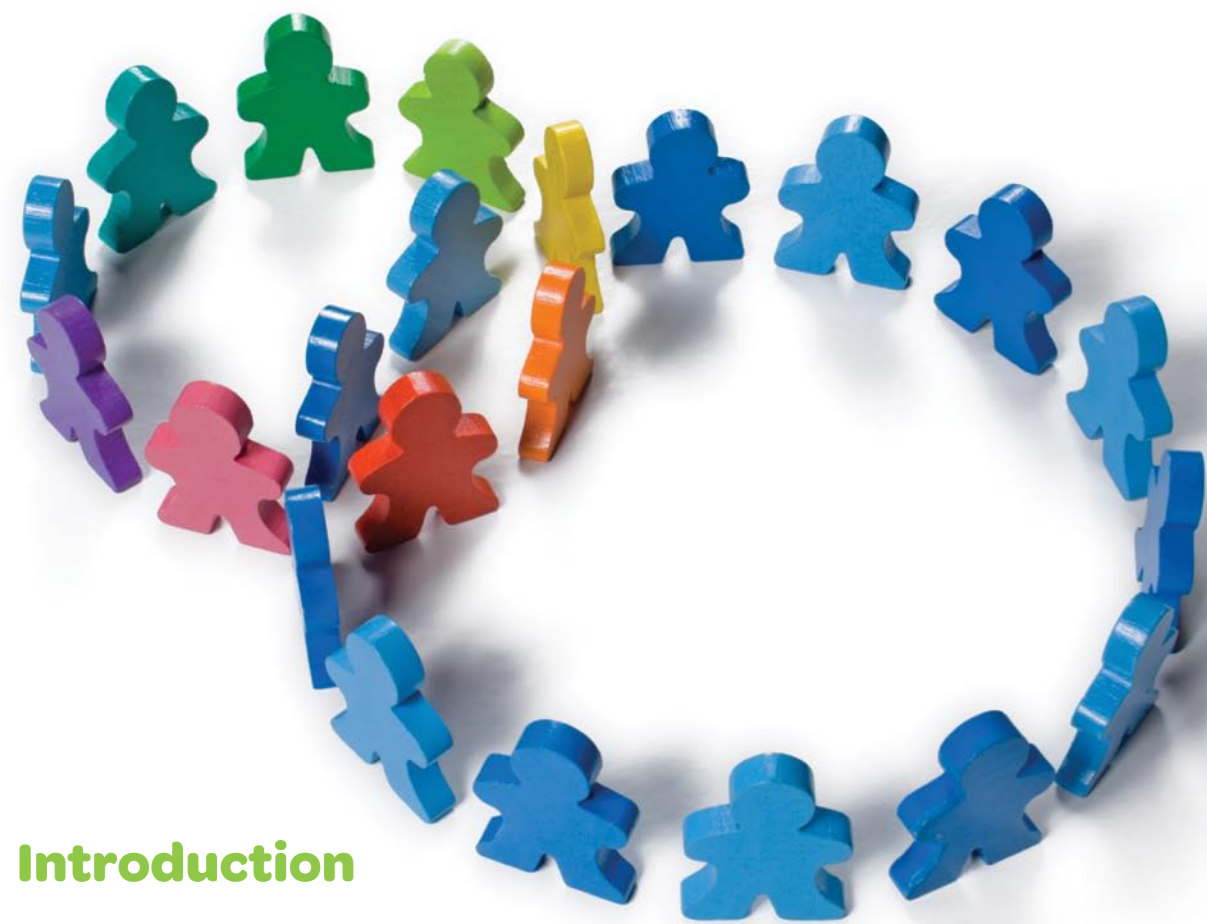
Equality and diversity initiatives need to be integrated into the fabric of an organisation in order to ensure that the benefits to be gained from investment are achieved and that potential problems are avoided. However, there is no "quick fix".



Managing a Diverse Workplace

Case Studies & Best Practices from Galway Businesses





Introduction

A recent report commissioned by the Equality Authority entitled “*The Business Impact of Equality and Diversity – The International Evidence*”, reviewed a wide range of research evidence on the relationship between equality and diversity on one hand, and business performance on the other. The report concluded that there is a positive relationship between the existence of equality policies and employee outcomes. These include job commitment, job and life satisfaction; work-life balance and reduced stress, absenteeism, staff turnover, improved employee relations and workplace innovation and creativity. Businesses also perceive performance outcomes from investment in equality and diversity initiatives in four related areas:

- Human capital benefits, such as the ability to resolve labour shortages and recruit and retain high calibre staff
- Increased market opportunities, with access to more diverse markets
- Enhancement of business reputation to suppliers, customers and prospective and existing employees
- Changes in organisational culture, such as improved working relations and reduction in litigation.

The Equality Authority has continued to support and promote equality and diversity in the workplace through various initiatives. The current initiative ‘*Supporting Integrated Workplace Strategies*’ is part of the EU-funded *European Year Legacy Action Plan*.

Galway Chamber collaborating with Galway City Partnership worked on the initiative to raise awareness among businesses and organisations in Galway City of the benefits of an increased focus on equality and diversity, identifying some local case studies to highlight some of the work that they currently undertake in this area and from which other businesses can learn from. The case studies were conducted following face to face interviews with the relevant representatives from the organisations and the findings are outlined within.

This equality and diversity case study booklet forms a supplement to *Galway City Intercultural Toolkit for the Workplace*.

Galway Chamber and Galway City Partnership wish to thank all contributors for the information contained in this booklet.

CASE STUDY 1

Galway Bay Hotel No. of Employees: 195

The 4* Galway Bay Hotel was opened in May 1998 and is situated on the Promenade in Salthill, Galway. The hotel has a staff of approximately 195 including 80 working fulltime. Fairness and equality are core objectives to creating a conflict-free working environment at Galway Bay Hotel. Ensuring that all employees are free to conduct their work without fear of unfair treatment and discrimination is a key strategy to creating a working environment which encourages loyalty, commitment and pride in the organisation.

The hospitality sector in Ireland has undergone significant changes in the last 10 years. Recruitment of staff into the sector was very difficult giving the often unsociable working hours and more favourable opportunities in other sectors of employment. The enlargement of the European Union in 2004 and an increased relationship with overseas colleges provided Galway Bay Hotel with a pool of talent to tap into. The increase in the number of different nationalities being hired by the hotel in recent years has led to greater diversity in the workforce and more responsibility on the hotel management to create an inclusive, open and equal working environment.

Currently, the hotel has approximately 12 different nationalities working with them. While some of its employees were originally hired to non-front line positions due to less fluency in English, many of these have progressed to positions in the hotel which draw on their specific skill set. An increased focus by the hotel management on staff training and regular consultation has also meant that each member of staff has the opportunity to enhance their skills in the workplace, develop their own competencies in new areas and progress to new and challenging roles in the hotel.

All employees are consulted on a regular basis by means of an Employee Satisfaction Survey. The survey looks at a number of aspects of the employee’s role including the level they feel valued and respected in the workplace, the openness of communication with management etc, and interestingly, whether they feel they have the opportunity to be innovative and contribute new ideas to the hotel. From a business perspective this is very important. A workplace environment which encourages employees to look at new and better ways to operate can be extremely beneficial to the business. The employees are at the heart of the business and can very often see ways in which to provide a better quality service to the customer. Particularly, with a diverse workforce, the hotel has the benefit of learning from members of staff who have had different experiences in other countries that could be adapted to the hotel operations.

The hotel invests heavily into training of all staff members and has a very sound induction and training plan in place. With such investment in training, the cost to the business due to high staff turnover is greatly reduced. Galway Bay Hotel has as one of its core corporate strategies the aim to create a loyal and committed workforce. By ensuring a work environment which encourages equality among employees, creates greater loyalty, provides open communication and opportunities to develop new competencies, Galway Bay Hotel has succeeded in maintaining a workplace free of disputes that affects staff turnover.

The hospitality sector relies heavily on the customer having a positive experience during their stay and to maintain such loyalty in the future. Customers also act as ambassadors for the hotel to encourage others to visit based on their own experience. As a service industry, the interaction of customers with members of the hotel staff and the quality of service to customers are equally as important as the features and setting of the hotel. The hotel is focused on ensuring staff satisfaction and motivation at work and particularly, to address issues relating to discrimination that might impact on employee morale.

The management of Galway Bay Hotel is of the view that there are huge costs associated with guests who may not be satisfied with service delivery. These could range from complaints by guests, reimbursement to dissatisfied guests, staff replacement, costs of retraining and so on.

The hotel management has ensured that their diversity strategy is part of the overall corporate strategy. Galway Bay Hotel has benefited from properly managing diversity, investing time and effort in ensuring their employees from all backgrounds are happy... ‘With a happy workforce, they are more productive, innovative and more likely to remain with the hotel,’ a member of the management team confirms. The knock-on effect for the hotel is a high quality guest satisfaction and more business and referrals.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNT FROM THE GALWAY BAY HOTEL

1

Equality and diversity policy should form part of the core objective of a business to fully benefit from its implementation and not as an add-on. A top down approach with buy-in from all levels of the business ensures its success.

2

Encourage an open and honest communication between management and staff so that any equality related issues or concerns can be raised at an early stage for appropriate management action. Prevention is better than cure.

3

Listen, learn and value new ideas from members of staff.

4

Celebrate the diversity of the workforce at social engagements - staff parties, family days, sports etc.



CASE STUDY 2

Galway University Hospitals No. of Employees: 3200 approximately

Galway University Hospitals (GUH) comprises of University Hospital Galway and Merlin Park University Hospital Galway. They provide secondary, regional and supra-regional services for the Health Service Executive – West. It is one of the major academic teaching hospitals in Ireland and aims to deliver high quality and equitable healthcare services to all its patients, in a safe and secure environment, and to achieve excellence in clinical practice, teaching, training and research.

GUH have two key aspects to managing diversity in the organisation. Firstly, as a health care provider, the hospital deals with a more diverse public. Secondly, as an employer it has a large diverse workforce made up of employees from over 40 different nationalities.

The challenges for GUH has been to ensure the provision of a high quality care to patients while respecting differences on the basis of the nine employment equality grounds of gender, age, disability, marital status, family status, race, religious belief, sexual orientation and member of the Traveller community. This, coupled with the organisation’s large workforce requires managing diversity inevitable on a number of levels. A fully inclusive workplace, with management and staff having mutual respect for each other is essential to ensure the smooth running of the organisation.