

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: Recruitment, management and development

Case study: One Roof Leicester (ORL)

Salma Ravat, CEO

How you connect to diverse talent pools and how you ensure inclusive routes into and through your organisation is vital to ensuring that you have a diverse, high performing workforce. You need to be confident that you can attract, recruit, retain and develop capable people, without bias or barriers.

To achieve sustained progress, colleagues from underrepresented groups need not just to get in but to get on and to flourish in an enabling environment. Your approach to retention, development and progression will make the difference to whether there is diversity at all levels of your organisation.

We spoke to Salma Ravat, CEO at ORL, to learn more about the lessons they've learnt.

Why is Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) so important at One Roof Leicester?

One Roof Leicester (ORL) is a charity providing accommodation and support to single people who are homeless including destitute refugees, refused asylum seekers and EU migrants. We provide intensive support to enable our residents to move on positively from ORL. We offer a wide range of opportunities for individuals, businesses, faith and community groups to support our work.

Leicester is a very diverse community and the individuals we support represent a wide section of the community, in age, gender, socio-economic background, ethnicity, religion, sexuality etc. Therefore, equality, diversity and inclusion are central to the work of ORL and we have an Equality Opportunities policy which is embedded in the organisation. We believe that for this policy to be successful, it is essential that everyone is committed to and involved in its delivery. Our values are: We are compassionate, non-judgemental and person-centred. As a charity, we feel that a commitment to EDI goes hand-in hand with these values.

ORL started as a networking forum in 2011 for small, independent charities and community groups working with people who were homeless. The reason for setting up this forum was because the work of this group was ignored, unappreciated and vilified by the LA and the larger commissioned services. As smaller providers, we faced discrimination because most of the members were from the faith sector, therefore we were viewed as 'do-gooders' who were creating a bigger problem by attracting more people into rough sleeping. There was no recognition of the huge contribution these members made to reduce rough sleeping, supporting people into tenancies and

providing a wide range of mental health and well-being support. Therefore, this group was hugely committed to EDI from its early days.

As we grew, we made sure that as we were a charity tackling social exclusion, inequality, discrimination and disadvantage, and because we support individuals who face multiple disadvantage and barriers due to their ethnicity, religion, sexuality, immigration status we had to design services which were inclusive and welcoming.

You have had diverse trustees and volunteers from the start, what are some of the reasons for that?

When ORL became a charity in 2014 it was the diverse members of these organisations who were the first trustees, different genders, ethnicity, socioeconomic and educational levels.

In 2016 we launched the first Multi-faith Winter Night in the country, we recruited 7 faith venues and support from a further 7, in total 14 different denominations or faiths were involved in the first year. We also had over 350 volunteers representing a wide-section of the community, where we encouraged people from different faiths to work within each other's venues.

From the beginning we had inclusive recruitment practices, so we had opportunities for volunteers with disabilities (including hidden disabilities), people identifying as different genders, wide range of economic backgrounds, ages etc. This helped to create a wide pool of volunteers and supporters from who we could recruit staff and trustees or get their support with recruitment in subsequent years.

What about trustees with lived experience of homelessness?

Our first set of Trustees were from our networking members, but as we started to grow we identified skills, knowledge and experience gaps. Whenever we have a Trustee vacancy we consider not only the skills and experience but also which voice is missing from the board. We've actively recruited volunteers to the board to have their voice represented and we now have plans to appoint a former resident. To ensure the resident feels welcome, confident and supported we have developed a pre-appointment training and development plan, including appointing an existing Trustee as their mentor and guide.

How do you approach recruiting new staff?

A [CIPD survey](#) in 2017 estimated that for a not-for-profit entity the cost per vacancy is £700 when in-house resourcing time, advertising costs, agency or search fees are taken into consideration.

ORL is a small charity with limited financial resources therefore recruitment has to be efficient and cost effective. We use a wide range of platforms to advertise a vacancy

because by limiting external vacancy advertising to one or two platforms it limits the pool of applicants and the most suitable candidate may fail to apply. We use our wide network of volunteers, supporters, residents, online advertising, social media, WhatsApp messages, emails. Whilst we prefer applicants to complete a form on-line we will send out a paper copy if requested, we can't assume that everyone is IT literate. And we make the form as simple as possible to complete.

When we interview we call every interviewee and introduce ourselves and give them a choice of time slots for the interview, rather than expecting them to fit in with our schedules. We also check accessibility needs and will change the venue if needed. We keep the interview informal (never sitting behind a desk) and keep the process as informal as possible.

Recruitment isn't always about the educational level of staff, or their past experience. Believing in our values, and having the commitment to delivering our mission, is actually more important.

Through our positive recruitment practices, we have a wide range of staff, from different ethnicities, genders, age etc and our retention rate is very high.

What about onboarding and training of staff?

Once we hire a candidate, we have a robust on-boarding process, checking if they have any needs that we can meet beforehand. Staying in touch with them before their start date makes their first day less stressful.

We invest heavily in training and developing all our staff. By having this commitment, our staff have a wide range of skills, therefore promotion or redeployment can be upward, lateral and cross-functional. This also enhances the employee's long-term employability. We review staff training needs regularly and identify appropriate training for them to attend. We also offer regular supervision, counselling and reflective practice to all staff.

How do you ensure that your volunteer pool remains as diverse as possible?

We offer a wide range of volunteering opportunities and, similar to staff recruitment, we advertise the roles in a variety of places. As with the former night shelter, we have inclusive practices which welcomes volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds. We offer the same training pertinent to their role.

Do people with lived experience of homelessness work and volunteer in your services?

We give our residents who have lived experience of homelessness employment and volunteering opportunities at ORL. When vacancies arise we inform our residents and if they are interested we support them to apply. If we can see the potential and

commitment, we will support and encourage them, providing them with training and development opportunities.

And more widely, how do you ensure their voice is heard?

A key strength at One Roof Leicester is the opportunities we give to our residents and volunteers to influence, change and re-design our services. We have a strong ethos of 'No decision about me without me': we develop services, and action plans firmly based on individual collaboration with our residents.

Ours is a relatively small organisation with around 40 residents at any one time. So, our service user participation is built around individual relationships, rather than surveys or large meetings. Every resident has a close relationship with their key worker and progress is reviewed in weekly support team meetings, where feedback from residents is regularly reviewed and acted on.

We use the PDSA – plan, do, study, act approach to support continuous improvement. This way of working gives our residents dignity, respect and feeling valued which develops their confidence.