

Tool 23: Intersectional leadership

This tool helps you to consider actions to take as a leader to embed intersectionality.

1. Read the reflections below.
2. Reflect on the questions and discuss these with colleagues.

Reflection one:

'The culture that you have starts with the leadership that you have. We are all different as human beings. It is important for leaders to understand what is going on in the lives of people who work with them.'

Everyone wants diversity but do you know what to do with the diverse talent that you have? Use the time that you have with people and make time with people to understand them, so that you don't miss opportunities to build on strengths.

Leaders need to understand the human impact of what they do. And they need to acknowledge this, particularly when something has an adverse impact.

You cannot have diversity and inclusion without leaders who know how to understand the human beings they work with.

The first step to being an ally is to acknowledge different lived experiences, and the privilege that you have – we all have privilege. That creates the bridge of empathy. Then to have genuine curiosity about people's lived experiences.'

Taken from: Talent on Tap (n.d). Leadership Tips for Diversity and Inclusion (You Tube).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xl904SWbjTM>

Reflection two:

'What makes people feel included in organisations? Feel that they are treated fairly and respectfully, are valued and belong? Many things of course, including an organisation's mission, policies, and practices, as well as co-worker behaviours.

But mostly it comes down to leaders. We find that what leaders say and do makes up to a 70% difference as to whether an individual reports feeling included. Inclusive leaders share a cluster of attributes:

Intersectional commitment: *They articulate authentic commitment to intersectionality, challenge single axis lens and atomisation, hold others accountable, and make intersectionality a personal priority.*

Intersectional humility: *They are modest about capabilities, admit mistakes, and create the space for others to contribute.*

Awareness of bias: *They show awareness of personal blind spots, as well as flaws in the system, and work hard to see and overcome the embedded inequity.*

Intersectional curiosity: *They demonstrate openness to others' situated knowledge, curiosity of and willingness to name the intersectional experience of others.*

Intersectional intelligence: *They evidence a proactive anti-oppressive and anti-racist intersectional position naming the adaptive changes required.*

Intersectional action: *They take continuous action to tackle personal bias and systemic inequity.'*

Taken from: Bourke, J. and Titus, A. (2020). [The Key to Inclusive Leadership \(hbr.org\)](https://hbr.org/2020/07/the-key-to-inclusive-leadership).



Reflective questions:

- > What attributes of inclusive leadership do you have?
- > How do you show commitment to intersectionality? Is this visible to others?
- > How do you understand the impact of your intersectional leadership?
- > What needs to happen to realise your potential as an intersectional leader?

You may find these thoughts from those who took part in the Change Project helpful:

- > *'It is important that leaders and managers can learn about intersectionality.'*
- > *'Leaders need to be intersectionally curious; they can ask questions, find out from people and then act on this.'*
- > *'Conversations need to be held at all levels of an organisation; otherwise how can practitioners be expected to embed this in their practice?'*
- > *'Need to ensure that actions are very visible, and create a culture where diversity is celebrated.'*
- > *'Intersectionality is key to think about how we are addressing equity, not just in relation to race but also gender and other aspects.'*