youth futures
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What works to promote employer action and behaviour change in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

A Rapid Evidence Assessment

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Youth Futures Foundation is the national What Works Centre for youth employment, with a specific focus on marginalised young people. We want to see a society where every young person can achieve good work.

Our work has two overarching objectives to bring about system change for marginalised young people:

1. To find and generate high-quality evidence to better understand England's youth unemployment and inactivity challenge, and most importantly to learn what solutions work to address this.

2. To put evidence into action with policy makers and employers who have the means to make direct impactful change within the system for young people

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About the research team

The Institute for Employment Studies (IES) is an independent, apolitical, international centre of research and consultancy in public employment policy and organisational human resource management. It works closely with employers in the manufacturing, service and public sectors, government departments, agencies, and professional and employee bodies. For 50 years the Institute has been a focus of knowledge and practical experience in employment and training policy, the operation of labour markets, and human resource planning and development. IES is a not-for-profit organisation which has around 50 multidisciplinary staff and international associates. IES expertise is available to all organisations through research, consultancy, publications and the Internet. Our values infuse our work. We strive for excellence, to be collaborative, and to bring curiosity to what we do. We work with integrity and treat people respectfully and with compassion.

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Authors' Note on Inclusive Terminology

The terminology used to define ethnicity continues to evolve, and greater awareness has arisen about gender, cognitive differences as well as of disability. IES seeks to be a learning organisation; as such we are adapting our practice in line with these shifts.

We aim to be specific when referring to each individual's ethnicity and use their own self-descriptor wherever possible. Where this is not feasible, we are aligned with Race Disparity Unit (RDU) which uses the term 'ethnic minorities' to refer to all ethnic groups except white British. RDU does not use the terms BAME (black, Asian, and minority ethnic) or BME (black and minority ethnic) as these terms emphasise certain ethnic groups and exclude others. It also recommends not capitalising ethnic groups, (such as 'black' or 'white') unless that group's name includes a geographic place.

More broadly, we understand that while individuals may have impairments it is society that disables them. Hence, we refer to disabled people. Not all people identify with male or female and we reflect their self-descriptions in our work and use the term non-binary should abbreviation be necessary. We value neurodiversity. Where possible we always use people's self-descriptors rather than impose categories upon them.

Executive Summary

Youth Futures Foundation commissioned the Institute for Employment Studies to conduct a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) to explore effective approaches for promoting employer behaviour change in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). This research focuses on addressing disparities in youth employment outcomes due to persistent barriers, particularly for young people from ethnic minority backgrounds. With one-quarter of England's future workforce coming from ethnic minority groups (Youth Futures, 2024), this research aims to identify evidence-based strategies to engage employers in fostering inclusive recruitment, retention and progression practices for young people.

Though efforts have been made by employers to prioritise EDI initiatives in recent years, challenges persist including lack of resources, data, senior leadership commitment and the confidence to implement and enact change. The findings from this research seek to inform Youth Futures' ongoing work on generating high quality evidence and engaging with employers, including through their Evidence to Action and Connected Futures programmes.

The research was conducted by the IES team with key inputs from Youth Futures, an Advisory Group of external experts, and a consultation with wider stakeholders to ensure practical relevance and applicability. A scoping exercise was initially carried out to assess the strength, quality, and relevance of available evidence, particularly focusing on robust impact evaluations using control methods.

The scoping phase highlighted a lack of sufficient high-quality evidence pertaining to young people from ethnic minority groups. A wider Call for Evidence was issued to substantiate the desk research. Finally, the REA protocol was developed to include high quality peer-reviewed qualitative and grey literature case studies due to insufficient Level 3 evidence[1]. Overall, 30 studies met the adapted inclusion criteria and are included in this review.

The findings are reported thematically covering key **organisational drivers** and motivations for employers to act on EDI and inclusion of marginalised groups; **organisational enablers** that support inclusive retention, recruitment, progression; **organisational barriers** that prevent or slow down the rate of change and uptake of inclusive programmes; and **changes** resulting from effective employer action on EDI. Lastly, implications for Youth Futures, employers and employer-facing bodies are discussed.

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[1] NESTA Standards of evidence over 5 levels can be accessed here.

Drivers

Environmental drivers

Employers' EDI behaviours are shaped by external demands, including regulatory compliance, stakeholder and client expectations, and market competitiveness. Legal, economic and reputational pressures encourage compliance, while stakeholder and social demands link legitimacy to trust and proactive inclusion efforts.

Operational drivers

Operational drivers reflect organisational priorities related to performance and growth which influence employer engagement with EDI. These include the need to diversify talent pools to address labour force shortages, or to attract skilled workers, particularly in innovation-driven industries. EDI is also increasingly seen as a tool to enhance creativity, innovation, competitive advantage, and efficiency.

Enablers

Organisational enablers for EDI include a supportive culture driven by leadership commitment, participative strategies, and shared values. Effective cultures promote board-level engagement, inclusive strategy-making, and collaboration across diverse teams. Leadership also plays a central role with senior leaders prioritising adaptability and creativity, while line managers act as role models. Employee participation, through resource groups and feedback forums, fosters inclusivity and innovation. HR structures, such as flexible practices, diverse hiring committees and systemic data collection also support EDI efforts. Internal and external collaboration and targeted EDI training equip organisations to drive inclusive practices effectively.

Barriers

Organisational barriers to employer action on EDI include resource constraints such as financial limitations, staffing shortages, time pressures, and knowledge gaps. Structural barriers include inconsistent HR policies and cultures focused on efficiency and financial results over inclusion, along with unconscious bias and entrenched norms, which obstruct change for minority groups. Leadership gaps and insufficient employee buy-in further challenge EDI integration. Overcoming these barriers requires adequate resourcing, strategic alignment, and shared responsibility across organisations.

Changes resulting from employer engagement

Employer engagement with EDI can drive transformative changes across recruitment, retention, employee attitudes, inclusion, and organisational performance. Inclusive hiring practices, supported by diverse committees and targeted initiatives create equitable talent pipelines and address systemic biases. Inclusive retention and progression strategies create an environment that fosters fair promotions and boosts employee satisfaction and engagement. Diversity training can raise awareness of workplace bias,

though challenges like resistance from staff, and uneven implementation persist in some contexts. Diverse teams also enhance innovation, improve customer satisfaction, and result in improved financial performance. Employers must be cautious of superficial commitments and inconsistent leadership practices which can undermine and prohibit progress.

Implications

The review underlines the need to address gaps in evidence on what drives employer behaviour change in equality, diversity and inclusion. Youth Futures Foundation should lead efforts to build a robust evidence base by funding and trialling well-designed interventions. Key focus areas could include inclusive leadership, line manager training, employee resource groups and testing of behavioural insights approaches. Engaging employers to collect high-quality workforce data and aligning EDI priorities with long-term business benefits are also critical. Attention to intersectionality is another important theme with implications for future research and design of intervention trials.

Employer-facing bodies must adopt tailored approaches, acknowledging diverse motivations across organisations and addressing gaps in leadership commitment. Youth Futures' CEO immersion programme along with Business in the Community is an innovative approach to engaging senior executives and getting buy-in from employers. Other efforts could include developing evidence on international best practices, sector-specific evidence and employer case studies. Stakeholders should also resist superficial or performative EDI efforts and instead focus on foundational principles, challenging anti-EDI narratives that hinder meaningful change. Finally, collaboration is needed to test the effectiveness of legislative measures and to design impactful interventions to accelerate EDI progress.

1. Introduction

As the national What Works Centre for youth employment, Youth Futures Foundation (Youth Futures) has a specific focus on marginalised young people. One of Youth Futures' overarching objectives is to find and generate high quality evidence to better understand England's youth unemployment and inactivity challenge, and to learn what solutions work to address this. Another is to put evidence into action with employers who have the means to make direct impactful change for young people.

Toward these aims, Youth Futures Foundation commissioned the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) to conduct a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) to understand what works to promote employer behaviour change in relation to equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). This REA aims to identify effective approaches for engaging employers and promoting action and behaviour change toward inclusive youth employment. The research establishes the existing evidence base on employer engagement with EDI, which Youth Futures can tap into to influence employers they work with and build on through their programme of employer trials.

A key focus of this research is workplace inclusion of those from ethnic minority backgrounds, and is both about their access to employment, and in-work retention and progression. Under its Connected Futures[2] programme, Youth Futures is funding place-based partnerships with committed organisations to support young people from black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds into employment. This involves working closely with employers to support the recruitment, retention and progression of young people. Supporting young people from these groups is a core focus of Youth Futures' refreshed strategy, since young people from these groups experience high NEET (not in education, employment or training) rates, and can often experience remaining NEET for the longer-term, with worse outcomes than their peers.

Existing evidence notes that ethnic minorities are underrepresented in employment compared to their white counterparts; their employment rate is 62.8% compared to 75.6% for white groups (McGregor-Smith Review, 2017), with further disparities between ethnic minorities groups. There are persistent pay gaps between ethnic minority and white workers, and ethnic minority workers face additional barriers in areas such as career advancement despite being overqualified for roles. Young people especially struggle to access jobs for reasons including recruitment channels and advertisements that do not effectively target them; poor selection methods including a focus on past experience which rules out disadvantaged youth; and unconscious bias in selection (Youth Futures, 2022). In a recent survey of ethnic minority

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[2] For more information about the Connected Futures programme, please visit Connected Futures - Youth Futures Foundation.

young people, almost half (48%) reported experiencing prejudice and discrimination in the workplace, with many reporting that they were looking to change companies or industries because of this (Youth Futures, 2024).

The Chartered Institute of Personnel Management's (CIPD) inclusion and diversity survey (2022), reports that race and ethnicity is the second most common action area for employers in equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) programmes. However, the latest 'Inclusion at Work' panel finds some well-meant practices to be counterproductive and, in some cases, unlawful (Inclusion at Work Panel, 2024). These include, for example, the wrongful application of positive action principles and the proliferation of diversity training programmes which may be ineffective. Employers cite barriers to doing the 'right thing', including a lack of time, data, resources, confidence, fear of legal action, and fear of saying or doing 'the wrong thing'.

Despite guidance for employers on promoting inclusion of and reducing discrimination against ethnic minority young people, actions remain inconsistent. Improving employment outcomes for young people from marginalised backgrounds, especially those from ethnic minorities, is critical as the proportion of ethnic minority workers in England's future workforce rises. The 2021 Census shows that a quarter of England's future workforce will soon come from an ethnic minority background (Youth Futures, 2024). At the same time, NEET rates for young people continue to rise, and young people from some ethnic minority groups experience higher than average NEET rates.[3]

Recent developments in the socio-political and economic landscape in the UK and comparable country contexts such as the United States, portend a negative and anti-EDI narrative. Combined with increasing cost pressures on employers, owing to the hike in National Insurance contributions, there is a real risk of rollbacks to employer investments on workplace inclusion efforts. This could further hurt the most marginalised in the UK labour market, that being young people from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Research aims

This REA aims to understand the most effective approaches for engaging employers and promoting effective action and behaviour change towards inclusive youth employment. The following research questions guide this review:

1. What works to engage employers to implement equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives on recruitment, retention and progression?

2. What works to engage employers to take action to support people from ethnic minorities in recruitment, retention and progression?

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[3] Youth Futures Foundation analysis of the Annual Population Survey (APS), September 2024. See NEET - Youth Futures Foundation.

3. What works to engage employers to take action to tackle workplace prejudice and discrimination, particularly racial discrimination?

4. What can be learned from what works to promote employer action and behaviour change in other areas – e.g. employee wellbeing?

5. What would behavioural insights literature suggest about promising / effective approaches for promoting employer action and behaviour change on equality, diversity and inclusion?

It must be noted that the initial focus of this research was on young people, aged 16-24 years, from minority ethnic backgrounds, with special attention to black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi youth. The REA also aimed to identify robust evidence on factors influencing employer behaviour and engagement with EDI at a Level 3 as per the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) Standards of Evidence framework.[4] Following an initial scoping phase to assess the range and strength of available evidence, the IES research team and Youth Futures agreed to modify the study inclusion criteria. As discussed in Appendix A, the studies reviewed here include all age groups as well as covering broader EDI engagement not limited to the inclusion of ethnic minority youth. This is due to the lack of existing evidence on employing young people, and on employing specific ethnic minority groups. Table 1 provides an overview of the key outcomes of interest examined under each research question.

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[4] NESTA Standards of evidence over 5 levels can be accessed here.

Table 1: Research questions and outcomes of interest

Research question	Outcomes of interest
What works to engage employers to implement equality, diversity, and inclusion initiatives on recruitment, retention, and progression?	• Recruitment, Retention, Progression/development practices • Organisational enablers such as culture, leadership, line management, lived experience • Organisational barriers such as resources, norms, unconscious bias • Impact on workplace prejudice/discrimination • Systemic changes • Inclusion • Transferable learning • Employee attitudes/ feelings about how they're included and valued at work • Narratives around EDI
What works to engage employers to take action to support people from ethnic minorities in recruitment, retention and progression?	
What works to engage employers to take action to tackle workplace prejudice and discrimination, particularly racial discrimination against young people?	
What can be learned from what works to promote employer action and behaviour change in other areas - e.g. employee wellbeing?	
What would behavioural insights literature suggest about promising/effective approaches for promoting employer action and behaviour change on equality, diversity and inclusion?	• Insights on behaviour change • Motivations • Implementation • Organisational impact • Cultural change • Behavioural change • Systemic change

There are other caveats to this review, tied to the current lack of evidence in the existing literature, which are worth highlighting. These include variability in the quality of evidence, with the extent of methodological robustness varying substantially, and differences in the contexts where the studies are conducted. Many studies included use small samples and are mostly academic primary qualitative and mixed method studies, followed by secondary studies. The period covered is from 2010 onwards, based on the introduction of the Equality Act in the UK which established new parameters for EDI practice. Geographies covered are mostly the USA and the UK, with some international and theory-based studies. Most of the studies were conducted with private sector employers, and only a small minority with public sector ones.

Given these limitations, some of the parameters for this review have been modified, following scoping and protocol development, in agreement with Youth Futures, to orient the research towards an exploratory review of this under-researched field, and open important avenues for future research.

Structure of the report

Owing to the variability and range of evidence across each research sub-question, the findings in this report are presented using a thematic approach. The report sets out chapters synthesising the evidence on drivers of employer engagement with EDI, organisational enablers, organisational barriers, and changes effected following EDI engagement (in the absence of evidence pertaining to impact). This is followed by a detailed discussion of implications of this review for Youth Futures and future employer engagement.

We adopt this thematic structure for a two-fold reason:

The first, is that the evidence does not lend itself to an analysis by individual research questions, as there is a wide overlap between research questions in the way studies discuss the evidence. Therefore, a coherent and meaningful discussion needs to highlight the interconnectedness and continuity between themes – for example, the implementation of EDI practices is part of taking action (question 1) to support people from minority backgrounds (question 2) and is tied to efforts to reduce discrimination (question 3). Appendix C provides the detailed coverage of each of the five research questions across the studies included in this review. It is worth noting that negligible evidence from the behavioural insights' literature (question 5) indicates that nudge approaches on employer behaviour change remain an untested territory. This has implications for future research to build an evidence base on which behaviour change approaches work through clear intervention designs.

The second, is that this thematic approach allows for deeper exploration of the processes of employer engagement, from drivers for action to changes effected. In this way, the review aims to provide a narrative account of key factors which support good practice, from inception to end results, while still accounting for the limitations in the quality of the evidence.

While the evidence base is thin in terms of high quality, randomised controlled trials (RCTs) or robust research evidence, the findings around organisational drivers, enablers, and barriers will not be unfamiliar to Youth Futures' audience. The main value of this work is that it offers the first systematic exploration of the evidence on how to engage employers, with a specific focus on young people from ethnic minority backgrounds. It provides Youth Futures and other stakeholders with a baseline picture of the existing evidence from which to develop further studies and trials.

2. Drivers of Employer Engagement

This chapter outlines findings on the drivers of employer engagement, attitudes and behaviours in relation to the development and adoption of EDI policies and practices.

Drivers focus on the motivations and intentions behind change and action. From the evidence, two types of drivers emerge – environmental and operational. Environmental drivers are those which are determined by external pressures and demands on employers, such as regulatory compliance, market, client, stakeholder, and societal demands. Operational drivers are those determined by organisational internal needs around performance and growth, and include workforce and skills needs, innovation and creativity, growth and productivity.

2A. Environmental Drivers

Visual summary of key environmental factors	
Regulatory compliance	Legal mandates and equality duties
	Public procurement and Active Labour Market Policies
Market competitiveness	Market differentiation and advantage
	Benchmarking and industry pressures
Reputation or brand image	Increasing brand attractiveness
	Reputational risk avoidance
Stakeholder or client pressure	Visibility and legitimacy
	Client expectations and trust
Public or social expectations	Growth of Corporate Social Reponsibility and social justice
	Influence of wider national policies

Regulatory and institutional compliance

Government regulations, such as equality legislation, exert significant influence on employers to adopt diversity practices. This influence operates through a combination of coercive pressures, legal mandates, and incentives that compel organisations to address both explicit and implicit biases, often

by linking compliance to legal, economic, and reputational consequences. A recurring theme across the evidence is the dual role of compliance as both a stick and a carrot. Legal requirements serve as a stick, compelling organisations to adopt diversity measures to avoid litigation and regulatory penalties (Podsiadlowski and Reichel, 2013). At the same time, economic incentives, such as those tied to public procurement and market access, act as a carrot, encouraging compliance (Sarter and Thomson, 2019).

Laws like the *Title VII of the Civil Rights Act* in the USA, which seek to dismantle systemic patterns of discrimination, and the UK Equality Act 2010, which introduces a Public Sector Equality Duty mandating public bodies to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity, are key examples of regulatory influence (Kamenou et al., 2012; Williams, 2018). Public procurement policies can tie the award of government contracts to equality-related stipulations. For instance, in Scotland, where public procurement represents significant spending, equality stipulations have incentivised some employers to implement gender and ethnicity equality measures (Sarter and Thomson, 2019). By making public contracts contingent on adherence to specific EDI measures, governments create a business case for compliance, linking potential profits to adopting inclusive practices. A related aspect is the use of active labour market policies (ALMPs), such as subsidised employment, which aim to promote inclusion of vulnerable groups by involving employers in employment support programmes. Although such policies rely on employer participation, their success depends on the regulatory structures incentivising inclusion (Kersten et al., 2022).

Market competitiveness

Market competitiveness as a driver of employer attitudes and behaviours around EDI emerges from the strategic interplay between the economic value of diversity, competitive market pressures, and the broader social and institutional environment in which firms operate. Shared across the evidence is the idea that EDI policies are often driven by their capacity to confer competitive advantage, particularly around attracting talent and increasing commercial value.

Diverse teams bring unique perspectives, foster creativity, and enhance problem-solving, which in turn drives innovation and financial performance (Hogan et al., 2023; Fodor et al., 2023). Organisations leverage this by aligning their EDI efforts with broader strategic goals, such as accessing diverse markets and improving client satisfaction. In particular, evidence highlights that ethnically diverse workforces which often bring unique linguistic and cultural competencies, allow firms to access and navigate culturally diverse markets more effectively by differentiating themselves from competitors to attract new customers (Kele and Cassel, 2023; Podsiadlowski and Reichel, 2013).

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The resource-based view (RBV) of diversity management underpins much of this discourse. It emphasises diversity as a valuable resource that drives competitive advantage (Ortlieb and Sieben, 2013; Yang and Konrad, 2011). Smaller firms, in particular, may leverage EDI policies to establish an early-stage competitive edge, while larger firms may not place as much focus on EDI, relying on other resources and capabilities which historically contributed to their success (Fodor et al., 2023). When different diversity management practices are combined together, the combinations may be difficult to imitate by competitors and may serve as a source of competitive advantage (Yang and Konrad, 2011).

This economic rationale for promoting diversity also intersects with a desire to avoid negative outcomes. Discriminatory practices, particularly around gender, incur significant costs, including reduced competitiveness in talent acquisition and retention (Sarter and Thomson, 2019). Firms increasingly recognise that exclusionary behaviours are liabilities, further strengthening the economic imperative for inclusivity and driving proactive diversity efforts (Balakrishnan et al., 2023). Similarly, benchmarking against competitors and aspirational firms pushes organisations to enhance their EDI policies to maintain parity or achieve leadership in inclusivity, as evidenced among employers who strive to create more inclusive workplaces for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer (LGBTQ+) colleagues (Opall, 2021).

Reputation and brand image

Linked to market competitiveness as an environmental driver, some studies argue that employers take proactive rather than reactive approaches to commodify diversity to enhance their brand image. Evidence highlights that employers may project an inclusive environment, particularly through marketing efforts that showcase diversity, for example by portraying ethnic minority employees in advertisements, in an effort to be perceived as socially progressive and differentiate themselves in competitive labour and consumer markets (Burgess et al., 2021; Hogan et al, 2023; Kele and Cassell, 2023). This commodification of diversity highlights how brand aesthetics directly influence the development of EDI initiatives, as employers seek to visually communicate their commitment to inclusion. These types of approaches suggest tokenistic efforts rather than true commitment and buy in to EDI.

Stakeholder and client demands influence employer attitudes and behaviour around EDI by reinforcing the dual need for legitimacy and sustainability, helping employers garner legitimacy with certain groups and access novel or additional resources (Noon and Ogbonna, 2020; Yang and Konrad, 2011). Customers, investors, and employees now scrutinise diversity more closely, and even more so in the aftermath of race and gender equality movements. The perception of non-discrimination or equity generated by an employer's workforce being highly representative of their customer base is likely to enhance the company's relationship with these key stakeholders.

Particularly, this aspect has been highlighted in research on ethnic diversity (Singh, 2007, cited in Ortlieb and Sieben 2013). To external stakeholders, the visible presence of ethnic minority employees in corporate brochures and on websites, can signal compliance with equal opportunity and diversity principles. Such visibility positively affects an organisation's public image (Roberson and Park, 2007, cited in Ortlieb and Sieben 2013). Conversely, a lack of representation can be interpreted as discrimination, which can damage client relations and lead to financial losses (Avery et al., 2012; Balakrishnan et al., 2023; Ortlieb and Sieben, 2013; Sarter and Thomson, 2019). For example, there is evidence showing that law firms strategically position minority employees to reassure clients of their commitment to equity, avoiding perceptions of bias and discrimination that could deter potential clients from engaging with them (Kele and Cassell, 2023).

Ethnic minorities in visible positions may also signal an organisation's authenticity of their products and services and international outlook (Kele and Cassel, 2023; Ortlieb et al., 2014). By embedding EDI into organisational practices, firms not only avert potential reputational damage but also enhance their legitimacy as fair employers (Yang and Konrad, 2011). Research by the Workplace Equity Commission (British Chamber of Commerce, 2024) echoes these findings and highlights that UK-based employers increasingly recognise the business case for recruiting and developing diverse talent to reflect the demographics of their local communities and client bases. This alignment not only enhances organisational relevance but also reinforces their brand image as inclusive and community oriented.

Societal trends and events

The interplay of a range of normative and symbolic pressures makes public and societal expectations important drivers of employer attitudes and behaviour (Heidelberg, 2019). One shared theme across the evidence is that societal events often act as catalysts for heightened public expectations, compelling employers to respond. For instance, the murder of George Floyd sparked widespread societal demands for racial justice, prompting many USA-based firms to establish EDI departments, appoint leaders to sponsor these efforts, set explicit diversity goals, and engage in community and supply chain diversity initiatives (Balakrishnan et al., 2023).

The importance of aligning workplace demographics with societal trends also extends to specific cultural contexts. One study looking at cross-national trends in employer attitudes towards EDI found that the national policy priorities can notably shape organisational behaviour (Podsiadlowski and Reichel, 2013). For example, in Austria, there is considerable public pressure to prioritise equal opportunities for women, but less attention is placed on ethnic minorities. By contrast, in the United States, fostering better policies and practices to support ethnic minority careers is a predominant focus (ibid).

These differences illustrate how societal norms, and cultural expectations shape the specific EDI initiatives employers prioritise, highlighting the role of socio-political context in determining organisational behaviour.

Employer responses to public expectations are also informed by the persistence of systemic inequities in the workplace. Despite progress, ethnic and gender disparities in hiring, pay, and promotion persist, receiving increased public scrutiny in recent years (Bowman Williams, 2018). Internally, employers recognise that while EDI initiatives can initially present challenges such as reduced cohesion and increased conflict, progressive structural adjustments, such as recruitment quotas and proportional representation in promotions, are essential for maintaining alignment with social expectations (Ortlieb and Sieben, 2013). These measurable equality initiatives not only meet public demands but also strengthen the organisational brand as one committed to impactful diversity management. This has knock-on effects on other dimensions such as market competitiveness and customer loyalty (Noon and Ogbonna, 2020).

In sum, environmental drivers highlight how employers' attitudes and behaviours towards EDI are largely shaped by reactive or strategic responses to external demands. Regulatory compliance drives employer behaviour by linking compliance to legal, economic, and reputational outcomes, both positive and negative. Additionally, stakeholder, client, and social demands shape employer behaviour by tying legitimacy and trust to proactive approaches to inclusion and diversity. Employers respond by adopting practices which signal commitment to equality and inclusion, particularly in industries reliant on public trust. Market competitiveness is shaped by analogous factors, with employers looking to gain a competitive edge through the adoption of inclusive practices, while avoiding the financial and reputational costs of exclusionary practices. Across dimensions, the shared theme is that legal, economic, and social pressures act as key forces driving employer behaviour around EDI.

2B. Operational drivers

Visual summary of key operational factors	
Organisational values and culture	Moral imperatives and business advantages
	EDI as leadership value
Workforce and skills needs	Expanding talent pool
	Skills shortages
	Cost-effectiveness
Innovation and creativity	Unique competences and skillsets
	Accessing market niches
Organisational growth and productivity	Enhancing organisational efficiency
	Increasing workforce cohesion

Organisational values and culture

Organisational characteristics that can be classified as 'soft', primarily organisational culture and leadership, are critical drivers of attitudes to EDI-related issues (Nkomo et al., 2019; McCormack and Wergin, 2018 cited in Fodor et al., 2023). Across the evidence, a shared message is that firms embracing diversity and inclusion as core to their identity, tend to engage more actively and strategically in EDI efforts. This alignment reflects both a commitment to justice and equity and a recognition of the business advantages of a diverse and inclusive workforce (Nkomo et al., 2019 cited in Fodor et al., 2023).

In the UK, a number of studies found that employers, particularly Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), want to provide good jobs and opportunities for local people. They are strongly motivated to better reflect the communities in which they are based (BITC, 2024; Groundwork 2024; British Chamber of Commerce, 2024), and many view EDI practices as critical to business success. These employers acknowledge the business benefits of having more diverse teams and of identifying and eliminating barriers to job access and career advancement (ibid). They want to be part of positive action that can benefit them in the longer term, as they view improved EDI not just as the right thing to do, but also as a catalyst for better economic success in the long term.

The evidence also highlights that employers who are driven by organisational values actively invest in the strategic development, promotion and implementation of EDI initiatives to reflect a strategic alignment between company values and operational practices. These organisations tend to value a 'complexity leadership' culture (Hanson and Moore, 2023). This means prioritising adaptive approaches focused on elements such as interconnectivity, interdependence, consensus, creativity, innovation, organisational learning, shared goal building and problem solving (ibid). Resource-based theory further supports the idea that organisations recognising diversity as a strategic resource adopt more comprehensive EDI practices. When diversity aligns with firm strategy, it is treated as a valuable asset, embedded across HR activities to enhance organisational effectiveness (Hogan et al., 2023; Noon and Ogbonna, 2020; Yang and Konrad, 2011). One study in the healthcare sector highlighted employers' efforts in developing specific EDI positions to manage and drive the EDI strategy efforts, especially in large organisations. These roles were often directly hired by the Board or CEO of the healthcare delivery organisation to lead EDI work in the organisation (Hogan et al., 2023). Another study focused on a US-based company, Proserv, highlighted that objective setting around diversity targets was an intrinsic part of the company's performance management system, and diversity training was mandatory for all senior managers. This embedded commitment to aspirational targets was cited by many managers as evidence that Proserv was serious about making progressive change (Noon and Ogbonna, 2020).

Workforce and skills needs

There are different scenarios in which workforce needs act as a driver of EDI engagement and development among employers (British Chamber of Commerce, 2024; Groundwork 2024). The first scenario relates to the 'war for talent', and the attraction and retention of highly skilled employees in competitive sectors. Employers in these sectors tend to use formalised EDI approaches to support the development of a diverse talent pipeline, with the aim of building competencies and skillsets in the workforce that align with future job growth (Hogan et al., 2023). In these instances, employers may hire EDI leads to oversee the development and transformation of existing programmes or create targeted talent development initiatives with the goal of building a foundation to support the organisation's future labour force needs (ibid). Evidence shows that this tends to be the case around the integration of specific groups, such as LGBTQ+ and disabled people, for strategic benefits (Hossain et al., 2019; Opall, 2021; van Berkel, 2021).

The second scenario relates to skills shortages in critical professions, for example healthcare, which have driven discussions about the workforce integration of ethnic minorities. This is the case across many high-income countries, with organisations like the Organisation for Economic Co-operation

and Development (OECD)[5] advocating for policies to maximise the benefits of migration and reduce its costs (Podsiadlowski and Reichel, 2013).

The third scenario argues that during periods of economic growth, shortages of lower-skilled labour prompt organisations to increasingly recruit from ethnic minority groups, particularly migrants (Ortlieb et al., 2014). In these cases, the motivations for hiring ethnic minorities may not be driven by a commitment to inclusion and equality, but rather by factors such as cost efficiency and perceived work ethic. Employers may engage ethnic minorities for roles characterised by unattractive and often precarious working conditions (low wages, limited career progression, and poor reputational standing), due to assumptions about their willingness to work under such terms (ibid). This approach is further facilitated by reduced social security obligations granted to migrants and their weaker bargaining power.

Innovation and creativity

Employers increasingly view EDI as a mechanism for enhancing organisational performance, driven by its capacity to spark innovation and improve operational efficiency. Employers value diversity as it broadens the range of skills, perspectives, and competencies within organisations, fostering creativity and enhancing performance (Hossain et al., 2019). Evidence highlights that employers, particularly in the private sector and in service industries, may recruit individuals from ethnic minorities for their unique cultural knowledge and language skills, which enable firms to better connect with diverse markets and customer bases (Ortlieb and Sieben, 2013). Similarly, gender diversity improves problem-solving and creativity, while gender-balanced teams may experience reduced conflict, and boost team performance (Sarter and Thomson, 2019).

Firms that prioritise innovation are more likely to adopt EDI policies because they see diversity as essential to driving creative solutions and organisational growth (Fodor et al., 2023). Likewise, introducing new hires with diverse perspectives can lead to the development of initiatives aimed at reaching wider audiences, as in the case of New to Nature, a UK-based programme aimed at diversifying the environmental sector. Employers taking part in this programme reported that trainees implemented new activities to help reach wider audiences. Following positive results from this innovation, employers were driven to maintain the activities and hire the trainees as full-time employees (Groundwork, 2024). The interplay between innovation and EDI is reciprocal, with innovative firms more likely to implement EDI initiatives, while

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[5] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, which includes the following member countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

EDI policies contribute to fostering creativity and adaptability within these firms (Hogan et al., 2023). Alongside this, the evidence highlights that smaller, more agile organisations are more likely to adopt EDI initiatives due to their willingness to experiment and take risks, while larger, more established firms may hesitate due to risk aversion and structural inertia (Fodor et al., 2023).

Organisational growth and productivity

Businesses are increasingly aware that greater diversity and inclusivity correlates to greater individual performance and ultimately, stronger business performance (Hossain et al., 2019). Evidence shows that the implementation of equal opportunity programmes and the representation of minority groups, particularly in management positions, are prevalent criteria in investment ratings, with a good diversity reputation positively affecting companies' financial performance (Roberson and Park, 2007 cited in Ortlieb and Sieben 2013). The implementation of EDI policies is consistently framed as a strategic resource, with employers viewing healthy and inclusive workplaces as essential to maintaining profitability, reducing turnover, and ensuring long-term growth (British Chamber of Commerce, 2024; Yang and Konrad, 2011).

This is demonstrated in workplaces where inclusive practices leverage the contributions of diverse employees to exceed standard productivity rates, such as the example of a cosmetics company, where an initiative focusing on improving the recruitment and retention of disabled workers resulted in disabled employees outperforming their peers (Hanson and Moore, 2023). Similarly, there is evidence showing that employers associate healthy employees and a healthy working environment with aspects such as a good corporate image, loyalty, improved retention, accessibility and safety as well as reduced costs, conflicts and other issues (Genrich et al., 2022).

These findings are echoed by evidence showing that employers with more diversity management practices in place experience lower levels of turnover (Yang and Konrad, 2011). Employers are also increasingly aware of the negative consequences of a lack of EDI practices (prejudice, discrimination, and intergroup conflict) which can lead to decreased productivity and long-term costs to the firm (ibid). Thus, diversity management practices interact positively with innovation strategies, resulting in higher productivity and better market performance.

In sum, operational drivers highlight the organisational needs around performance and growth which determine employer engagement with EDI practices. These include workforce needs driven either by efforts to diversify the talent pool particularly in highly skilled sectors or labour shortages in mid and low-skilled sectors. Linked to the aspect of talent diversification and innovation, employers increasingly view EDI as a mechanism for enhancing organisational performance. EDI can spark creativity, strengthen competitive advantage, and improve operational efficiency. Furthermore, growth and productivity are key drivers, with businesses increasingly framing EDI as a strategic resource and viewing inclusive workplaces as essential to maintaining profitability, reducing turnover, and ensuring long-term growth.

3. Organisation enablers

This chapter outlines findings on the enablers of employer engagement, attitudes and behaviours in relation to the development and implementation of EDI policies and practices. Enablers focus on the organisational factors that help to facilitate change and action.

From the evidence, core themes around organisational enablers emerged as follows: organisational culture, leadership participation and commitment, line management buy-in, participation and lived experience, HR structures, policies and processes, and learning, development and collaboration.

Visual summary of enablers to employer engagement

Organisational culture	Board engagement
	Diverse workforces
	Mission statements
Leadership	Confidence
	Complexity leadership
	Commitment and communication
Line management	Information sharing
	Role models
	Responsibility sharing
Participation and lived experience	Shared meaning
	Resource groups
	Exploration and utilisation
HR structures	Implementing organisational strategies
	HR team strategies
	Data collection
Learning, development and collaboration	Shared goal building
	Training

Organisational culture

Organisational culture(s) provide a significant platform to implement and facilitate changes in wider contexts within an organisation. The involvement and engagement of senior leaders and board members with EDI initiatives within the organisation is a critical enabler. Through board engagement,

strategic planning of EDI initiatives is discussed at the highest level and inputs regarding changes or variations in planning can be made through direct contact with organisational and EDI leaders (Sarter and Thomson, 2019).

Evidence also shows that participative strategy making (PSM) processes are useful when considering wider employee engagement. Having participative processes in place that consider multiple viewpoints when making organisational changes facilitates collaboration and socialisation across diverse employees and different levels of management, which in turn enables positive interactions and actions to take place (Orlando, Susan, and Chadwick, 2014). Evidence from creative firms in the UK shows that organisations with an already diverse workforce belonging to a range of social identities, may embrace inclusive organisational cultural norms more than those with a homogenous workforce (Fodor, Komorowski, and Turegeldinova, 2023).

Organisational commitments and mission statements outlining approaches and goals around widening EDI also help to facilitate wider participation from underrepresented groups, as seen in strategic plans to normalise disability in the workplace (Kersten et al., 2022). Aligning company values with employees' core values, for example care and respect for others, creates ethical resonance throughout the organisation. This serves as a catalyst for producing the conditions that create inclusive workplaces. Shared values between employers and employees encourages supportive planning and coordination, recognition and support of informal leadership, engaging in collective processes around creativity and organisational learning and championing ideas from lower levels (Hanson and Moore, 2023).

In LGBTQ+ inclusive working environments, a commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can indicate that a workplace has broader goals in mind when considering diversity as part of a larger move to create inclusive work environments for all employees (Opall, 2021). Through embracing workplace equality and valuing diversity and the challenges associated with it, organisations can generate a self-perpetuating culture resulting in workplaces where voices are heard and differences are recognised and valued (Workplace Equality Commission, 2024).

Leadership participation and commitment

The involvement and commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion from senior management is also a key enabler to facilitating changes in attitudes and behaviours. This includes senior leadership taking strong stances to challenging the status quo, delegating responsibility, and taking ownership of initiatives where necessary.

Strong organisational leaders choose to implement initiatives that embrace tensions between operational pressures and employee focused leadership. This leadership model is referred to as 'complexity leadership' (Hanson and Moore, 2023). It recognises that all front-line employees and mid-level

managers are at the heart of the organisation, acting as the focal point for implementation due to their organisational adaptivity in solving unique problems and finding new ways to operate when change is introduced. Complexity focused leaders encourage their employees and peers to seek outcomes respective to their workplace environments, allowing employee autonomy, and being less focused on workplace barriers such as rules, procedures and control measures. Instead, complexity leadership favours an approach centred around interconnectivity, interdependence, creativity and innovation that fosters inclusion (ibid).

Commitment from senior managers in attuning organisations towards support for inclusion can also signify leadership commitments to EDI (Kersten et al., 2022). Including senior leadership members in events that discuss EDI issues can help organisations ensure that ownership is being developed over the issue. Having a senior leader take this ownership indicates the level of importance and priority that the issue being discussed has to the organisation (BIT, 2021).

In evidence of health-related organisational interventions, it has been found that functioning and effective communication at both the organisational and team level were crucial in getting messages across through the organisations. These messages must be articulated by top management and be oriented towards the needs of the organisations and the current challenges being faced (Genrich et al., 2022).

Line management buy-in

Managers are a crucial resource that help enable employer engagement and behaviour change on EDI. They do this by information and responsibility sharing within organisations. Additionally, they act as a role model and are equipped to manage diverse employees.

The act of sharing information is a key role that line managers fulfil and can be performed in a variety of ways. For example, seeking support from other managers in how to address problems and lessons learned from organisational challenges, typically through ad-hoc councils (Hanson and Moore, 2023). Evidence from comparable health-related interventions found that these interventions should be embedded in coherent strategic approaches that are supported from upper management to bottom-line employees. Here, line-managers, and managers more generally were crucial for workplace health promotion, by acting as steering groups to coordinate the interventions. When organisations strategise in this way, managers act as role models in their respective departments, influencing wider culture change within the organisation and teams that they manage (Genrich et al., 2022).

Managers who possess a high level of 'diversity cognition' also strengthen diversity management processes, and with it, their own effectiveness (Vlas et al., 2022). This means managers can more effectively identify diverse employee needs and qualities, and increase their ability to match them with

organisational mentors who can meet their needs. Managers who possess high levels of confidence and are well trained on inclusion practices aid in implementing workplace equality and making a positive difference (British Chamber of Commerce, 2024; CMI, 2024).

Participation and lived experience

The participation and lived experiences of employees are another crucial factor in organisations adopting EDI initiatives. Generating shared meaning through forums like employee resource groups, and exploration or utilisation of knowledge from diverse employees' personal experience were prominent themes coming through the evidence reviewed.

The creation of shared meaning through interactions has been seen as the key to successful change. Shared meaning, particularly through having common identities, can aid in creating more inclusive work environments. EDI leaders in organisations have been found to help develop and support employee resource groups to enable their employees to have a voice (Hogan et al., 2023). Through creating different levels of interdependence within organisations, a reliance on others is developed that can be vital to collective achievement. The challenge is found to be in identifying what the correct 'level' of interdependence should be. If interdependence is too great, completing simple tasks is weighed down by bureaucratic structures of hierarchy or other constrains, if it is too low, partners involved in shared ventures may have less interest in completing them as they are focused on their own goals (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007, cited in Hanson and Moore, 2023). Employees report feeling supported and included at work when employee feedback forums, communication platforms and EDI committees exist that create a more positive and inclusive environment. This is found to be strongly correlated with organisations meeting their business objectives (CMI, 2024).

The participation of those with lived experience as a minority group is also seen as an opportunity for organisations to expand their own successes, facilitating lived experience as an enabler to change. Organisations may recognise the value of diversity as a driver of innovation, whilst simultaneously implementing policies and practices to ensure that diverse employees are included and that their contributions are maximised (Fodor et al., 2023).

HR structures, policies and processes

Organisation wide strategies and approaches, in some contexts, are another important enabler to facilitate the implementation of EDI engagement among employers. The introduction of non-discrimination policies that make specific mention of sexual orientation and gender identity, result in employees experiencing less discrimination, whilst also being more amenable to the organisations' values (Hossain et al., 2019).

In the US, an example of successful voluntary organisational strategy is that of diverse hiring committees when looking to hire new staff. This follows the US National Football League's (NFL) approach, titled the "*Rooney Rule*" whereby each employment committee making high stakes employment decisions must include at least one person from an ethnic minority background (Bowman Williams, 2018). This approach has gained support in other contexts outside of professional sport, with companies including Facebook, Microsoft and Amazon implementing the rule to encourage the promotion and hiring of ethnic minorities. This form of de-biasing strategy is viewed as "*nudging*" in behavioural economics and acts as a catalyst to subtly influence behavioural change (ibid).

HR can also address the introduction of potential bias in recruitment by observation of hiring interviews. In larger organisations with multiple teams, different organisational cultures begin to develop within teams and in turn feed into the selection processes each department takes to hiring new staff. Through observing interviews, HR act as a continual presence throughout the entire recruitment and selection process (Heidelberg, 2019).

Human Resource management practices that incorporate flexibility in the recruitment and placement of employees can also facilitate the hiring of diverse staff, e.g. those with disabilities. Existing vacancies are an important starting point for engagement with diverse jobseekers. HR plays a direct role in inclusive hiring practices through participation at job fairs, trial employment programmes and internship programmes (Kersten et al., 2022). Taking a candidate-centred approach, whereby vacancies are developed and catered to fit the candidate, can widen participation, and in turn improve employer engagement (van Berkel, 2021). Collaboration with external agencies such as vocational rehabilitation agencies or external recruitment agencies has been positively correlated to improved inclusion (Bezyak et al., 2020, cited in Kersten et al., 2022).

Employers have also reported that impactful workplace equity interventions must align with the needs of individuals, thus recognising that individual needs are likely to change and evolve over time through their working lives. In these circumstances having a flexible and supportive approach is essential (British Chamber of Commerce, 2024). This requires considering the organisation of work more broadly to meet the diverse needs of prospective new employees rather than requiring them to fit in with existing organisational structures or practices.

Another way in which HR acts as an enabler is through the collection and analysis of workforce data. Systematic collection of gender and ethnicity data provide evidence of organisational demographic profiles that help in making a business case to persuade higher management and leadership of the need for change. By monitoring diversity characteristics during recruitment, promotions and when employees leave, data can be used to benchmark with other organisations and feed into setting targets to promote representation and inclusivity. Additionally, in large organisations, heads of

departments can be held accountable for reaching inclusion goals, similar to that of leadership taking ownership of inclusion practices mentioned previously (Noon and Ogbonna, 2020).

Learning, development and collaboration

Learning through shared goal building where top leaders look to form partnerships with local agencies serving minority groups can also enable organisations to implement changes on EDI. External collaborations further knowledge of good inclusive practices and wider minority characteristics. Strategic alliances between organisations have generally been positively related to inclusion (Kersten et al., 2022). In a case study of an American supermarket chain, it was found that hiring disabled employees placed leaders in situations where they needed to share information and make decisions whilst quickly learning the intricacies of working with various disabilities. Such ad-hoc organisational learning took place between mid-level managers using informal working groups to inform and help each other (Hanson and Moore, 2023). Peer-to-peer learning between organisations of similar sizes or within the same sector also provide safe spaces for firms to discuss sensitive issues and learn best practice approaches from others (British Chamber of Commerce, 2024).

While EDI training is not a silver bullet, HR leaders report a positive correlation between targeted EDI training provided to all managers and the organisation meeting its business objectives (CMI, 2024). Organisations also appear to better communicate equality, diversity and inclusion strategies to employees if they have EDI-trained managers. Further, HR decision makers also reported better results around inclusive practices in the organisation when all managers are trained compared to those with only some managers trained (ibid).

In sum, organisational enablers include organisational culture, which plays a key role in enabling EDI initiatives through leadership commitment, participative strategies, and shared values within organisations. Effective organisational cultures foster board-level engagement, participative strategy-making, and alignment of core values with inclusive practices enabling collaboration across diverse staff. Leadership is crucial, with strong senior management commitment and "complexity leadership" models that prioritise adaptivity, creativity and employee autonomy. Line managers also play a key role, acting as role models and sharing responsibility for diversity management. Participation and lived experiences of employees, particularly through resource groups and feedback forums also enhance inclusivity and innovation. Additionally, HR structures facilitate inclusion through flexible practices, diverse hiring committees and systematic data collection to inform and benchmark progress. Learning and collaboration, both within and outside organisations, promote the sharing of best practices whilst targeted EDI training enhances outcomes by equipping managers with the tools to drive inclusive cultures.

4. Organisational barriers

This chapter outlines findings on the barriers faced by employers which may inhibit or otherwise prevent engagement and behaviour change in relation to EDI. The focus on barriers is included as meaningful discussion on what drives and facilitates engagement with EDI must be alert to the potential pitfalls which may impact effectiveness.

From the evidence reviewed, seven types of barriers were identified: resources and capacity, lack of knowledge, established norms, unconscious bias, lack of adequate HR structures and wider organisational structures, leadership gaps, and lack of employee buy-in.

Visual summary of barriers to employer engagement

Resources and capacity	Staffing
	Finances
	Time
Lack of information and understanding	Language and terminology
	Recruitment
	Collecting data
Established norms	Backlash from majority groups
	Fear of change and risk aversion
	Following the lead of authority figures
Unconscious bias	Lack of interaction with minority groups
	Opportunity assignment
Internal structures	Inconsistency between external branding and internal messaging
	Lack of understanding around monitoring diversity
	Top-down hierarchical structures
Leadership gaps	Not challenging prejudice
	Lack of engagement in implementation
	Values not followed by leadership
Lack of employee buy-in	Engagement with data collection tools is limited
	Manager agency to prioritise other areas
	Resistance from wider staff

Resource and capacity limitations

Limited resources are a barrier to employer engagement with EDI policies and practices in several ways. Resources can refer to financial, time, and staffing capacity limitations. For example, SMEs face limitations due to their

resources. In evidence looking into the impact of equality considerations on employer behaviour in Scotland, companies who indicated they were involved in public procurement revealed that adopting measures to promote gender equality was low on their list of priorities, even if they may have a better chance at obtaining public contracts because of implementing such measures (Sarter and Thomson, 2019). Coupled with the finding that free confidential advice might be helpful, it suggests that a limitation of resources, particularly financial feasibility is often a consideration for SMEs rather than a lack of willingness (ibid).

In evidence looking at implementation strategies to support organisational diversity, equality, inclusion and belonging, a central component of achieving organisational change was found to be the existence of an established team and a budget for implementation (Hogan et al., 2023). Having the necessary team and budget resourcing proved to be a challenge, with many leaders reporting that they required additional resourcing which requires substantial effort from organisations (ibid). In the face of these challenges around resources and commitment from organisations, often, priorities are changed to focus on profit and short-term gain over long-term sustainability (Fodor et al., 2023).

Research looking at the implementation of health and wellbeing schemes confirmed such barriers, including lack of capital, time or other resources. This was particularly the case amongst small UK SMEs with 10-19 employees, especially where senior teams must make decisions around investment in health and wellbeing (Burge et al., 2023). In mental health-related organisational interventions across international contexts, lack of organisational resources is cited by managers as a barrier, including lack of time, personnel, and financial constraints. Time constraints including working patterns and remote working add to increasing difficulty in communication, and challenges around workload (Genrich et al., 2022).

Small employee teams and low turnover, in addition to limited funds have also been identified as common barriers to widening diversity in workforces (Groundwork, 2024), alongside a lack of confidence and time to understand what is perceived to be complicated guidance for organisations (British Chamber of Commerce, 2024). The Workplace Equity Commission found that SMEs often do not have a dedicated set of resources, whether through accessible information or employee expertise, and resultingly become reluctant to pursue change (British Chamber of Commerce, 2024).

Lack of information and understanding

The biggest individual hurdle to achieving equity in the workplace for SMEs is that many find the subject itself to be daunting, and as a result become risk averse (British Chamber of Commerce, 2024). Employers face barriers due to a lack of sufficient understanding around official terminology related to EDI and latest practices. Language and terminology changing over time can

prove difficult for some to keep up to date with. Evidence from interviews with SMEs have revealed that 'equity' as a term can cause confusion and is generally poorly understood by both employers and the workforce (ibid).

Additionally, lack of or limited knowledge around certain areas of EDI such as on how to recruit inclusively has been highlighted (Groundwork, 2024). Some employers face challenges in knowing why and how to utilise and analyse diversity data of employees effectively. This barrier persists despite an acknowledgement, and in some circumstances, a feeling of obligation to collect such diversity data to help drive improvement (CMI, 2024).

Established norms

Management can often reinforce established norms due to the experience of most managers being centred around a traditional leadership model of control and efficiency. This often neglects employees' individual concerns and relationships (Hanson and Moore, 2023). The influence of leadership and management attitudes on employees can further be seen in contexts where workers have been shown to follow the lead of authority figures in organisations, irrespective of the types of behaviour deemed as permissible. This means that employees who see their organisations engaging in discriminatory behaviours may be more likely to also be discriminatory towards others (Brief et al., 2000; Petersen and Dietz, 2008; Umphresset et al., 2008; cited in Avery et al., 2012). This suggests that absence of leadership to challenge established cultural norms can impede the uptake of EDI behaviour change.

Minority groups can also be projected to not fit into the already prevalent cultures existing within organisations. In evidence looking at employer perceptions of ethnic minority women in the Scottish labour market, it was found that organisational, structural and cultural constraints were shaped by multiple factors including stereotypes of ethnic minority women and patriarchal attitudes (Kamenou et al., 2012). This study also found that employers fear backlash from white employees due to misconceptions around positive action practices and what these mean to those perceived to be in the majority. This in turn can generate resentment towards ethnic minority colleagues who are viewed as receiving preferential treatment.

This echoes findings on risk aversion by employers as a barrier to implementation of EDI policies due to fear of backlash from dominant groups who may feel threatened and believe that they are being unfairly disadvantaged (Dobbin and Kalev, 2018, cited in Fodor et al., 2023). Findings from investigating creative firms in Wales suggest that older and more established firms generally view issues around underrepresentation and discrimination as less problematic compared to younger firms, indicating that larger firms may be less willing, or less able to adopt innovative EDI practices (Fodor et al., 2023).

Consequently, pro-diversity messaging can have the opposite of its intended effect. It may cause underrepresented individuals to have lower perceptions of their self-competence, while incumbent majority groups may react negatively to the success of minority groups, perceiving themselves to be the subject of reverse discrimination (BIT, 2021).

Unconscious bias

This review highlights that employers may struggle with bias regarding expectations of the skillsets that employees should possess. A study looking at the Scottish labour market found that there may be additional and specific demands placed on ethnic minority women in terms of their culture, religion and communities which in turn can cause workers to become disengaged as they become discredited in their workplaces (Kamenou et al., 2012). This study noted stereotypical views around what someone from an ethnic minority background may want to do, with assumptions made about a shared universality of experience within minority groups. Additionally, a lack of awareness was expressed regarding the multi-faceted experiences of those with intersectional identities. Particularly pertinent were generalisations of ethnic minority women's experiences outside of work, for example perceptions of South Asian women's childcare commitments.

Recruitment and selection initiatives designed to bring underrepresented groups into the workforce needs to account for unconscious bias. Literature looking into inequalities in the museum workforce in the USA, found that internship programmes were mostly attracting candidates who were already familiar with museum careers and had familiarity with professional communication norms and values within the museum field (Heidelberg, 2019). The burden was then placed on those from underrepresented groups to compete, despite facing wider challenges in acquiring these skills due to barriers around access to opportunities for these demographics (ibid).

Evidence also points to the impact of unconscious bias from and on managers. A case study of the UK division of a large organisation examined the relationship between senior managers and their teams (Noon and Ogbonna, 2020). It found that whilst senior managers may not have direct influence on individual outcomes in the workplace, they retain a vital role in allocation of work opportunities and platforms for employees to perform. Interviews with senior managers in this case study revealed that ethnic minority employees were less likely to receive performance bonuses, highlighting the structural barriers that managers put in place to halt ethnic minority employees' progression.

On the other hand, managers who value diversity can ultimately become viewed as less competent by colleagues. However, this notably only occurred for female and ethnic minority managers and not with their white

counterparts (BIT, 2021) and does not account for the positive impacts these managers may have on other diverse staff.

Organisational and HR structures, policies and processes

HR and wider organisational structures, policies and processes can create barriers to adoption of EDI policies. This is demonstrated through inconsistency or contradictions between external branding and internal messaging and limited understanding of EDI issues and how and why to monitor them. Firm size is also an important factor. A study examining the marketing and diversity practices of four SME law firms found that there was a misalignment between the external branding which promoted messages of inclusion and internal messages that did not follow the outward communications within three of the firms, which led to an absence of a more structured HR approach towards EDI as practical applications of the messaging given to external communications were often not followed (Kele and Cassell, 2023). Whilst larger organisations may be subject to more scrutiny, the bureaucratic structures internally make it more challenging to implement and enforce diversity and inclusion policies (Jackson et al., 2003; Thomas, 2001, cited in Fodor et al., 2023).

Absence of effective HR attention can lead to a limited understanding of the nuances and challenges around EDI. The majority of organisations do not have sufficient diversity data on their workforce in order to monitor progress on diversity effectively, including many Financial Times Stock Exchange (FTSE) 100 companies (BIT, 2021). In particular, managers in SMEs felt unsure on how and when to monitor diversity. SMEs particularly struggle to consider different recommendations, initiatives and reporting requirements for the range of protected characteristics in the workplace, and these challenges are exacerbated when there are no in-house HR resources to lead on these activities (British Chamber of Commerce, 2024).

Further, there is limited understanding of what to do with diversity data once collected, and more specifically, how to analyse it effectively, especially from an intersectionality perspective. Many HR systems do not facilitate analysis of intersectional characteristics, which represents further challenges when organisations do try to follow suggested practices (BITC, 2024). Difficulties can also be present when trying to engage employees with data collection exercises, with some employees and job applicants feeling uncomfortable with disclosing personal data to their employers. This can be partly because of trust deterioration following global events, such as terror attacks, causing backlash against minority groups in the UK (Kamenou et al., 2012).

Often EDI initiatives are viewed as less necessary to achieving short-term goals (Fodor et al., 2023). Many organisations still follow the traditional model with a primary focus on low costs, efficiency and high production numbers. This task-centred model looks to achieve a uniform method of production

which in turn can suppress adaptivity and the ability to implement EDI initiatives around change (Moore and Hanson, 2023). In evidence from a large UK multi-national firm, senior executives and managers questioned the extent to which mandatory EDI targets and training were genuinely put into practice by employees, particularly when faced with operational priorities around targets to meet EDI goals (Noon and Ogbonna, 2020). Often mandatory EDI training aims to control behaviour with a short-term focus, while realigning attitudes needs a more drawn-out long-term approach rather than focusing on immediate business targets (ibid).

Diversity initiatives delivered under top-down hierarchical structures have also been found to be a barrier at times. Research with SMEs has shown that culture changes can only be achieved if responsibility for championing equality is shared regardless of the role and level, highlighting that top-down hierarchies do not work because there is no sense of ownership for all involved (British Chamber of Commerce, 2024). Successful efforts to make a change in EDI at companies like IBM show that it is important to integrate multiple organisational initiatives and activities such as through a diversity council of senior leaders, employee resource groups, targeted leadership development activities, and mandatory diversity training (Thomas, 2004 cited in Yang and Konrad, 2011). Failures typically occurred when diversity management practices were implemented in a disconnected manner away from other organisational activities and initiatives (Allison, 1999; Bierema, 2005; Linehan, 2001cited in Yang and Konrad, 2011).

Leadership gaps

Limited strategic engagement from leaders and the absence of a long-term strategic view on diversity and inclusion can limit the uptake or success of initiatives. In research with Scottish employers, some participants acknowledged the business case for recruiting ethnic minority women, however, many indicated a lack of long-term strategic planning, presenting arguments that population numbers of this group were too small to be considered a potential talent pool to hire from. The study noted that overall, there was little strategic engagement by leaders relating to the recruitment and promotion of ethnic minority women (Kamenou et al., 2012). In evidence with UK SMEs, initiatives with potential were found to have failed in some circumstances due to a lack of ongoing and visible leadership from senior managers, highlighting the importance of policies and initiatives having a sense of ownership from senior leaders (British Chamber of Commerce, 2024).

An underlying thread throughout the evidence has been around the conflict between EDI and wider business priorities. Evidence shows that leaders can further exacerbate these conflicts. In some UK law firms, quota-based processes were considered successful from a leadership perspective (Kele and Cassell, 2023) despite being limited in their impact in addressing deeper systemic challenges. For example, meeting goals such as hiring 10 percent of

employees from black and minority ethnic backgrounds or having a first female partner, were treated as a measure of success in reaching EDI targets and consequently achieving the business case goals of EDI (ibid). However, reaching these targets made employers and leaders feel reduced pressure to adhere to inclusion objectives, as the target had now been perceived to be achieved. Ongoing targets may be a potentially beneficial tool for continual engagement. Furthermore, although there was generally support for pursuing targets, some senior managers voiced disapproval of targets, feeling that they were difficult to achieve and undermined the ability of senior leaders to act in the best interests of their teams (Noon and Ogbonna, 2020). Examples were presented of managers seeking 'business case' rationales for undermining policies promoting diversity, for example, not considering women and ethnic minority groups when hiring due to working in highly technical teams.

Lack of employee buy-in

Data collection exercises to identify gaps in diversity targets can prove extremely useful, but challenges arise when employees do not engage with them. In evidence looking at museum EDI practices in the US, employees in administrative roles were provided with a secure document to provide reflections on a new initiative, and their own thoughts on the process of creating equity-based organisational changes. Despite being available to 41 individuals, just six routinely used the document and those who did access regularly were disproportionately ethnic minority individuals at lower organisational levels, indicating a lack of buy-in from both employees in majority groups, and at different levels (Heidelberg, 2019). The same study also noted that employees may at times actively resist change, for instance by questioning the validity of gender inclusivity in training (Heidelberg, 2019).

In evidence from the UK, employees who were considered to be top performers were granted flexibility to choose when to participate in training, resulting in many seeking to defer it for extended periods, undermining the initiative. Additionally, managers tended to exercise agency by choosing not to pursue or prioritise EDI objectives, but to instead focus on issues in their direct self-interests, including internal politics, short-term goals, convenience, working relationships and alliance building (Noon and Ogbonna, 2020). Evidence from law firms shows that employee lack of engagement can be caused through employees feeling unconcerned or indifferent to the usefulness of formal implementation of HR and diversity management, indicating that these strategies can be a way for employers to 'tick the boxes' around EDI (Kele and Cassell, 2023).

In evidence examining promotion of mental health in organisations, analysis has shown that managers express uncertainty in their understanding of what their role should be. Some felt they had a responsibility for communication about work stress to those they manage, whilst others were unsure whether

the employee themselves should initiate dialogue around the challenges they were experiencing (Genrich et al., 2022). In evidence around employees with disabilities, challenges were highlighted around the ability of supervisors and employees to provide what they perceived as support. Many felt they did not have either the skills or time to support employees with disabilities and were additionally afraid that providing this support would have a negative impact on their own performance. Hiring of disabled employees after staffing figures had been cut down was felt to be unfair by wider employees and in some cases also met with resistance (van Berkel, 2021).

In sum, organisational barriers for employers are multifaceted, involving limited resources, established norms, unconscious bias, and structural or process challenges. Resource constraints, particularly for SMEs include financial limitations, inadequate staffing and insufficient time, which deprioritise EDI initiatives in favour of short-term business gains. Knowledge deficits including unfamiliarity with EDI terminology and a lack of understanding of diversity data usage also further hinders progress. Structural barriers arise from inconsistent HR policies and misaligned organisational cultures, prioritising efficiency over inclusion. Additionally, unconscious bias and entrenched norms such as stereotypes and risk aversion obstruct change for minority groups. Leadership gaps and insufficient employee buy-in can exacerbate challenges. Leaders can fail to integrate EDI into strategic planning and employees may resist or disengage from initiatives. Effective implementation of EDI requires substantial resourcing, strategic alignment, and shared responsibility across organisational hierarchies to overcome prevalent barriers.

5. Change resulting from employer engagement

This chapter outlines findings on the changes resulting from employer engagement with, and adoption of EDI policies and practices. The domains which are covered include: recruitment, retention and progression, employee attitudes, inclusion, organisational performance, workplace bias and prejudice.

Given the limitations in the quality and range of the existing evidence, this section focuses on a discussion of emerging good practice, mostly covering evidence which does not robustly detect an impact on outcomes. Therefore, confidence in the replicability of these findings is limited. Though a range of studies in this review do not detect impact on outcomes, authors' suggestions based on the narrative and contextual evidence from the intervention still provide valuable insight. This is particularly relevant given that this field of study on what factors shape employer behaviour is currently under-researched, and this discussion can therefore open valuable avenues for future research.

Visual summary of changes

Recruitment	Equity through diversity in hiring practices
	Improved resources facilitate inclusive recruitment
Retention and progression	Effective EDI boosts retention
	Diversity in decision-making fosters fairer progression
Employee attitudes	Inclusive cultures support higher employee satisfaction, productivity, and team cohesion
Inclusion	Intentional and structured engagement drives measurable change
	Narrow initiatives and staff resistance hinder progress
Workplace bias and prejudice	Employee-focused approaches support organisational learning
	Diversity training can impact attitudes and behaviours related to bias
Organisational performance	Workplace diversity correlates with innovation and improved business performance

Recruitment

EDI practices, when meaningfully integrated, have the potential to foster more inclusive and equitable hiring processes. Evidence from a US-based experimental study using a virtual work committee, highlights that ethnically diverse hiring committees enhance critical thinking and recognition of bias, and can lead to hiring decisions favouring underrepresented minorities (Bowman Williams, 2018). The study found that white members of diverse committees were more inclined to adopt positive attitudes toward diversity and provide opportunities to minority candidates than their counterparts on homogeneous, all-white committees (ibid).

Evidence also highlights that improved recruitment practices are a major factor in effective leadership. 'Complexity leadership' encourages leaders to work in tight partnership with the front line, including external partners and agencies. This in turn opens them up to understanding that these actors may be important to their organisational pursuits around diversifying the workforce (Hanson and Moore, 2023). For example, programmes like the UK-based *New to Nature* engage targeted outreach and community partnerships to support recruitment of its funded traineeship programme to diversify recruitment in the environmental sector (Groundwork, 2024). In this programme, change resulted from increased capacity and resources provided by the funded traineeships. Employers who took part reported that the funded trainee placement allowed them to recruit where they would otherwise not have been able to, whilst providing a focus for how to improve their internal processes and support infrastructure, enabling them to be more inclusive in their approaches (ibid). A key result of participation on the programme was a change in employer attitudes, due to the positive impact trainees had on project work, which led them to start actively recruiting individuals without degrees and young people.

However, evidence also highlights ineffective practices which hinder change, especially when EDI policies are used as mere legal compliance tools rather than to effect substantive change. When organisations fail to integrate diversity commitments into their actual recruitment processes, prioritising an externally diverse image, they end up perpetuating internal inequalities (Kele and Cassell, 2023). For example, a study found that the recruitment processes in four high-profile US-based law firms revealed two distinct pathways: diversity was more apparent at entry-level positions, where standardised application processes were used, whereas senior roles were filled predominantly through informal networks, such as word-of-mouth referrals (ibid). This practice reinforced systemic inequalities by favouring those already privileged within the profession, typically middle-class white men.

Retention and progression

Alongside recruitment, effective adoption of EDI practices can have a notable influence on retention and progression. Evidence shows that employers who intentionally and proactively prioritise creating inclusive environments, have higher retention rates and job satisfaction (Opall, 2021). For example, many employees belonging to sexual minority groups in the US assess organisations' Corporate Equality Index (CEI) score, a national benchmarking tool on corporate policies and practices pertaining to LGBTQ+ employees, to evaluate their commitment to inclusion, with higher scores increasing the likelihood of staying employed with those employers (ibid). Similarly, a UK-based study found that organisations that prioritise EDI report significantly higher retention rates (60 percent or above), compared to those that do not prioritise EDI (below 50 percent) (CMI, 2024). These organisations also perform better in recognising and rewarding good work, positively influencing employee progression. Diverse decision-making bodies also promote fairer progression outcomes, as there is evidence showing that they are more likely to identify and address biases in promotion scenarios (Bowan Williams, 2018). These bodies are more likely to recommend minority candidates for promotion, compared with more homogenous ones. This is a result of increased accountability to a diverse group of people (ibid).

Employee attitudes

Effective EDI practices can also impact employee attitudes, fostering satisfaction, productivity, and workplace morale. Evidence shows that inclusive practices enable employees to feel more authentic and happier at work, with increased job satisfaction closely tied to an environment where individuals can bring their whole selves to work (Opall, 2021). A UK-based study highlights that employees in organisations with inclusive cultures report significantly higher satisfaction (81 per cent) compared to those in less inclusive environments (25 per cent) (CMI, 2024). Employees in inclusive environments are also less likely to witness discrimination and microaggressions, increasing their job satisfaction and ability to perform effectively (ibid). In particular, the study finds that employees whose managers have received formal EDI training are more likely to feel supported (87 per cent vs. 38 per cent whose managers did not receive training), fairly treated (90 per cent vs. 47 per cent), and able to be themselves at work (91 per cent vs. 55 per cent). Additionally, employees in organisations prioritising EDI report higher scores around feeling a sense of belonging and safety in the workplace (81 per cent) compared to those in less inclusive organisations (53 per cent) (ibid). A further key theme is that employees perceive leaders with strong diversity self-efficacy, who build and work with ethnically diverse teams, as more effective, with evidence showing a positive relationship between inclusive leadership behaviour and evaluations of leader effectiveness (Houston et al., 2023).

Inclusion

Intentional and structured engagement with EDI issues and diversity initiatives can lead to tangible improvements in workplace inclusion. For example, one study highlights that in the US companies that did not have a black director in the year preceding the murder of George Floyd, and who engaged with issues of equality and justice following the event, were more likely to appoint a black director (from approximately 2.0–4.3 per cent before the event to around 12–18 per cent in the two years following it). Similarly, in the UK, engagement with the New to Nature initiative led 92 per cent of participating employers to improve their organisation's practices around diversity and inclusion, with over two-thirds reporting that they were likely to amend their recruitment practice as a result of taking part in the programme (Groundwork, 2024). Aligned to these findings, research by the Workplace Equality Commission in the UK found that SMEs who engaged in a positive change in organisational culture through increased engagement with and adoption of EDI had seen an increase in the number of people disclosing disabilities, gender and sexual orientation (British Chamber of Commerce, 2024). This data had enabled SMEs to introduce relevant and targeted programmes that are impactful and beneficial, both to the employees and the business.

Conversely, several challenges undermine the potential of EDI practices. For instance, narrowly focused diversity initiatives can lead to unintended consequences. One study showed that migrant employees (first- and second-generation immigrants) in a sample of 500 German private sector companies across a wide range of industries were exclusively assigned to customer-contact roles, which limited their broader contributions (for example, in technical roles), and reinforced stereotypes (Ortlieb et al., 2014). Another significant challenge lies in the variability of managerial commitment to diversity initiatives. While some managers embrace change, others remain indifferent or resistant, resulting in uneven implementation and outcomes (Noon and Ogbonna, 2020). Even well-intentioned programmes can fall short of their transformative goals. For instance, although a Scottish museum leadership initiative, aimed at diversifying the ethnic and age composition of the workforce, successfully attracted diverse candidates, participants reported still feeling unwelcome within the organisation (Heidelberg, 2019). This resulted from the change not being embedded at all organisational levels and stages of the initiative, highlighting the need for broader cultural and structural reforms.

Workplace bias and prejudice

A further key positive outcome of effective adoption of EDI is the potential impact on reducing workplace bias and prejudice. For example, evidence from a US-based experimental study shows that participants on an ethnically diverse committee were more likely to support a range of business rationales

for diversity that relate to team and company performance – innovation, enhanced ability to serve clients, access to a broader range of viewpoints for decisions. On the other hand, participants on the all-white committee were more likely to endorse the idea that striving for diversity had "gone too far" (Bowan Williams, 2018).

Evidence also highlights that large organisations integrating a high number of employees (upwards of 100) from a marginalised group (e.g. disabled individuals) are more effective at changing into a less discriminatory and adaptive culture (Hanson and Moore, 2023). This is directly tied to the need for leaders to become more involved in the change effort, acknowledging and working with differences. When a significant number of marginalised employees are brought into the workforce, managers often lack the expertise to fully understand the unique perspectives or needs of each individual. As a result, they must adopt a more employee-focused approach, fostering a deeper connection with diverse perspectives. This involves developing organisational learning that promotes the growth of all employees, encourages consensus-building, enhances creative problem-solving, and strives to unite team members in the complex task of creating effective teams (ibid).

There is evidence that diversity training may show promise in altering attitudes and behaviours related to bias. One experimental field study of US-based and international employees in a global organisation showed that well-designed training programmes significantly improved dominant groups' attitudes toward women and ethnic minorities, as well as their acknowledgment of personal biases (Chang et al., 2019). Interestingly, these programmes not only impacted attitudes but also influenced behaviours, though to a lesser extent, such as increasing recognition of ethnic minorities and informal mentoring opportunities (ibid). The effectiveness of such training varied by subgroup and baseline attitudes, with greater behavioural changes observed in groups with initially supportive attitudes and more attitudinal changes in those with less supportive starting points.

However, evidence also shows that mandatory diversity training can lead to negative outcomes, with the risk of producing resistance and resentment among employees, particularly in large corporate settings (Noon and Ogbonna, 2020). Challenges include ensuring that training messages are internalised and translated into actionable behaviours, as resistance from managers, which can also manifest as passive compliance, can hinder change and entrench bias and discrimination (ibid). Another challenge is the dependence on the scale of integration for cultural transformation. While large-scale, transformative measures can act as powerful catalysts to drive cultural change, such approaches may not be feasible for smaller employers (Hanson and Moore, 2023). Furthermore, the transformative impact of EDI efforts can be uneven across different contexts in which an employer operates, and there may be various variables at play which are difficult to predict. A study conducted in a global organisation found that changes in attitudes varied significantly between USA and international employees, with

the latter showing greater attitudinal and behavioural change (Chang et al., 2019). However, these effects were particularly concentrated among international employees because their attitudes in the absence of intervention were less supportive than those of US employees to start with. Additionally, the evidence was gathered shortly after employees underwent training, and therefore observed changes may have been partially influenced by demand effects and social desirability.

Organisational performance

The integration of diversity into organisational practices also drives innovation, a key factor in business performance. Research has demonstrated that workplace diversity policies correlate positively with innovation, which in turn boosts performance metrics (Hossain et al., 2019). Evidence also shows that EDI practices positively impact competitive capabilities through structured 'diversity management routines'. These routines include: mentoring programmes and formal network groups which facilitate the integration of minorities at all decision-making levels; internship programmes which build a diverse workforce; and career succession programmes which support progression by ensuring minorities are represented across organisational hierarchies (Vlas et al., 2022). However, these efforts must be coupled with 'diversity cognition routines', those that increase managerial attention to diversity and develop skills for leveraging it, including training and performance appraisals, to maximise their potential. Without these cognitive frameworks, employers may fail to capitalise fully on the value of their diversity initiatives (ibid).

The financial benefits of EDI are also evident in multiple contexts. Ethnically homogeneous management and gender homogeneous groups are shown to experience weaker business performance, while those which deploy effective inclusion practices experience superior performance (Orlando et al., 2014). This finding is corroborated by evidence from a study of a large US-based retailer, showing that ethnic representativeness in management and employee teams correlates with enhanced productivity and customer satisfaction (Avery et al., 2012). When customer demographics align with employee diversity, this relationship intensifies, emphasising the importance of representation in improving consumer relations and economic outcomes (ibid). Similarly, UK evidence on SMEs shows that organisations with a critical focus on EDI consistently meet their objectives (75 per cent vs 47 per cent for organisations where EDI is not seen as critical), and outperform those without such a focus in metrics like talent (80 per cent vs 52 per cent among HR decision-makers), upskilling employees (80 per cent vs 54 per cent) and creating a positive and inclusive work environment (85 per cent vs 60 per cent). This cultural emphasis on inclusivity fosters innovation and improvement, reinforcing the connection between diversity and competitive advantage (CMI, 2024).

In sum, the integration of meaningful EDI practices can transform recruitment, retention, employee attitudes, inclusion and organisational performance. Inclusive hiring processes, supported by diverse committees and targeted initiatives, foster equitable pipelines and challenge systemic biases. Prioritising EDI enhances retention and progression, by creating fairer promotions and inclusive environments that increase employee satisfaction and engagement. Such practices also reduce workplace bias, with well-designed diversity training improving attitudes and behaviours, though uneven implementation and resistance remain challenges. Moreover, EDI practices drive innovation and business success, with diverse teams delivering superior outcomes in talent management, customer satisfaction, and financial performance. However, superficial commitments and inconsistent leadership hinder progress, underscoring the need for comprehensive and sustained efforts to achieve substantive cultural and structural transformation.

6. Implications for action

Several new developments have shaped the social, political and economic landscape while conducting this rapid evidence review. A new Labour government has come to power in the UK, and Donald Trump has returned to the White House in the US. Many global companies are following the Trump administration in rolling back diversity, equality, and inclusion programmes and targets (Murray and Bohannon, 2025). The UK witnessed social unrest and anti-immigrant protests and riots in August 2024. British employers now must pay higher National Insurance contributions, on account of raised tax rates and reduced salary thresholds, thereby increasing their cost of labour at lower income levels.

Within this challenging and polarised climate, this section discusses the potential direction of travel for Youth Futures Foundation, for employers, and for employer-facing bodies in promoting workplace inclusion of young people, especially from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Visual summary of key recommendations

Implications for Youth Futures	Invest more in building a robust evidence base on what works
	Senior leadership commitment and championing is key
	Evidence is needed across organisation size, sectors, locations
	Keep intersectionality in mind
Implications for employers	Tailor the message for employers based on drivers that appeal
	Future workforce trends present an imperative on EDI
	Build good quality data and analysis
	Identify anchor or cornerstone employers
Implications for employer-facing bodies	Continue to invest in designing and trailing intervention evaluations
	Develop examples of international best practice, sector insights
	Engage key decision makers through innovative approaches
	Disseminate the existing evidence base

Implications for Youth Futures Foundation

As the What Works Centre for youth employment, Youth Futures Foundation is committed to 'put evidence into action with policymakers and employers who can make direct impactful change for young people'.[6] It seeks to

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[6] About Youth Futures Foundation

identify and publish the best evidence on how employers can increase the recruitment, retention and progression of young people in the labour market. Thus, it aims to narrow the employment gap by identifying what works and why, investing in evidence generation and innovation, and igniting a movement for change. With this mission in mind, the current REA has several key implications for Youth Futures to take action.

First, the scoping exercise undertaken at the start of this evidence review points toward limited high-quality evidence on what works to engage and promote employer behaviour change in relation to EDI. Most of the studies reviewed in this REA use qualitative and/ or case study methods instead of robust impact evaluations at a NESTA level 3. Neither did the review identify any relevant studies from the behavioural insights' literature. This limits the extent to which robust causal inferences can be drawn on the impact and effectiveness of specific EDI interventions, as well as to which conclusions can be drawn on what works to engage employers to act. This suggests there is a need to build an evidence base on what does (or does not) work in getting employers to take action on workplace inclusion and tackling prejudice and discrimination at work.

Second, this REA demonstrates that there is insufficient evidence on what drives employer behaviour change on EDI, especially regarding the inclusion of young people from ethnic minority groups like black or Asian, particularly Pakistani and Bangladeshi. The scoping phase found a paucity of relevant studies focusing on the inclusion of young people underscoring the need to generate more robust evidence. As part of its focus on increasing the evidence base on interventions that work to promote recruitment and retention of minority youth, Youth Futures is investing in a number of randomised controlled trials with employers– for example, of blind recruitment and salary transparency initiatives. This REA emphasises the need to continue to focus on funding well-designed trials of interventions that motivate and promote employer action.

Third, to build this evidence base we need interventions with employers that can be tested. The review points to several organisational enablers that can form the basis of such intervention design. For example, senior leadership commitment and championing, both at an executive and operational line management level, emerged as a key factor. Studies submitted to our Call for Evidence note that well-trained managers make a positive difference to workplace inclusion (CMI, 2024). This is a challenging task to achieve, given that it needs engaging the heart and minds of leaders, developing trust and empathy. Recognising the importance of leadership behaviours, Youth Futures is delivering a CEO immersion programme in collaboration with Business in the Community which can be a starting point to shift mindsets by exposing senior leaders to the challenges of minority groups. However, to be able to trial the role and effectiveness of inclusive leadership as a driver of employer behaviour change, a tightly specified intervention design is necessary to understand the conditions for its effectiveness (e.g. organisational resources, line manager training, etc.). This would require

incubating an intervention design (using theory of change, or the template for intervention description and replication (TIDieR) checklist) via impact and process evaluation trials.

Fourth, a critical condition for the success of intervention trials is strong leadership commitment and involvement of employers for the intervention to have the best chance of success. The REA identifies the absence of such leadership commitment to be a critical barrier to progress of EDI initiatives. The building of a robust evidence base of what works on employers taking action, will require artfully engaging employers which is discussed in the next section. This is also critical to explore robust evidence of long-term impacts and the scalability of positive changes.

Fifth, the evidence reviewed in this report highlights case studies in specific geographies or industries. A greater emphasis needs to be placed on organisational size, sector-specific nuances (e.g., differences between SMEs and large corporations) and cross-sectoral comparisons. Practical evidence on successful implementation or lived experience in under-researched contexts like smaller firms or not-for-profit sectors could provide a richer understanding of what works to engage different employers. For instance, the operational driver of innovation was found to be impactful, highlighting how diverse teams can directly influence creativity and problem-solving capabilities in unexpected ways. This could be an important foundation for further exploration of these drivers (and of organisational barriers) across different industries and sectors.

Sixth, consultations with wider stakeholders during this research revealed the need to keep intersectionality in mind while designing interventions and making recommendations. For example, the experience of young women in organisations is strongly mediated by their line managers, who play a crucial role as organisational gatekeepers. The experiences of young people are especially mediated through other social identity markers such as gender identity, sex, health conditions, sexual orientation, caring responsibilities, or migration status to name a few. Since large scale data would be needed to find subgroup differences in trials, it might be fruitful to begin with piloting smaller interventions and looking to scale them up over time.

Finally, the current evidence emphasises government regulation and equality legislation to be an important environmental driver. However, the effectiveness of specific legislative measures remains unknown. This raises questions on the extent to which the Equality Act, 2010 continues to remain fit for purpose. Another example could be to test how effective levers such as Section 106 of the Procurement Act are in bringing about change or to ask how far demonstrating social value as a requirement to receive funding offers an effective way forward. Youth Futures could fund or develop partnerships to trial such legislative measures to develop evidence that can inform policy design.

Overall, the main implication for Youth Futures Foundation is to continue to invest in building the evidence base on what works to engage employers by demonstrating which approaches drive employer behaviour change on EDI most effectively. Identifying, designing, and testing these interventions is key. This discussion has pointed to some starting points on where this investment might be most profitable. However, there is a need to sharpen this focus in consultation with employers and other stakeholders like employer facing bodies, which may have leverage to encourage corporate involvement, sponsorship and participation in such trials.

Implications for employers

The message for employers from this review is the need to hasten their rate of change in adopting EDI initiatives to keep pace with societal shifts and future workforce trends. Despite the disappointing rollback of EDI investments by some employers discussed earlier, there are others who have stood their ground by affirming the benefits of greater diversity to their workforce and business performance. Youth Futures can support this process by engaging employers more widely to a) use existing evidence and guidance more effectively, and b) to participate actively in building better evidence on which approaches are the most effective. Some implications for employer engagement are as follows:

First, a key observation from this review is that there are a wide range of drivers that motivate employer behaviour on EDI. For example, external factors that drive employers range from market and competition pressures to client needs, demands for growth, brand and reputation, and talent acquisition considerations. Whatever their individual motivations may be, employers can become more involved with Youth Futures in building an evidence base on what works. This would both add to their reputation as an engaged employer as well as deliver value to employers on what approaches are effective in shifting the needle on supporting young people.

Second, a big driver for employers to act on EDI will be the composition of the future workforce. Demographic trends of population growth by ethnicity noted in the 2021 Census point to an increase in employees from diverse ethnic backgrounds (Youth Futures, 2024). This demographic trend, along with the geographic concentration of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds in specific geographic locations in the UK, will continue to shape the future workforce. This review notes that investment in EDI initiatives for inclusion of minority groups can both address short-term skill shortages and create long-term competitive advantage. It can create new talent pipelines, and better connection with customers and the communities that organisations serve and operate in. This reinforces the need for evidence-based change for employers to promote inclusion in access to employment, recruitment, retention, and in-work progression.

Third, senior leadership engagement and commitment to EDI is critical to workplace inclusion. However, this review has underscored a gap in senior leadership buy-in. Influencing these leaders as agents of change within organisations is crucial. While HR leaders usually hold the mandate formally, there is a need to go beyond 'preaching to the converted'. While organisations often tend to be reactive in their attention to and drive to implement EDI initiatives, the 'business case' for diversity continues to be a powerful argument for taking action, alongside the need to manage perceptions of clients, stakeholders, and so on. This study offers a range of important levers (the drivers and enabling factors) that can be used by Youth Futures in its employer engagement and by internal EDI champions to build a case in favour of adopting workplace inclusion policies and initiatives for the recruitment, retention and progression of minority ethnic young people.

Fourth, Youth Futures can support employers to take action by emphasising the need for good quality data. The studies in this review emphasise the importance of investing in collecting and updating employee demographic data and analysing this carefully to draw meaningful insights on the needs of the workforce and to drive accountability. There is a need not only for improved data collection but improved understanding of how to use, analyse and interpret that data effectively. This becomes especially important when employers must introspect on why discrimination continues in the workplace and how they can change, and challenge their established patterns of recruitment and retention practices to make them more amenable to including ethnic minority young people. Youth Futures' focus on evidence-based approaches can shine a light for employers on how they can harness the power of data and evidence in their organisations.

Fifth, Youth Futures can identify cornerstone or anchor employers who see the reputational benefits of getting involved in robust impact evaluation studies. This is, of course, mediated by organisational characteristics such as size and sector. Participating in good quality research and gaining visibility through named employer case studies can promise market as well as internal brand benefits to employers. The lack of sufficient evidence on employer engagement in this review underscores the importance of developing creative ways to access hard-to-reach employers and engage a variety of employers to generate robust evidence.

Finally, while identifying anchor employers it is necessary to be cautious of performative pressures on employers. Lack of genuine intent and commitment or poorly designed EDI policies and processes merely as a tick box exercise, can potentially cause more harm by reducing employee buy-in, breaking down trust, and even generating active resistance in some instances. This can have knock-on adverse consequences for overall organisational performance and sustainability. Identifying the unique drivers behind employer action will enable Youth Futures to avoid appealing to the wrong motivations with employers. Furthermore, the business case argument alone may not suffice always, especially in a difficult business climate described at the start of this section. In such a scenario, it is likely that

resource allocation (be it employee time or budgets) toward EDI agendas come under pressure. However, the tendency to juxtapose EDI priorities with other business imperatives can be damaging, in view of the long-term benefits of having a diverse and inclusive workforce and culture.

Employers continue to face difficult questions on how EDI can get the priority it deserves and how can they accelerate change in today's challenging economic and political times. Anti-EDI narratives are gaining a voice in the media, not only through right-wing populism but also in some progressive quarters who criticise traditional EDI approaches for not going far enough. However, it is imperative to balance these arguments by strengthening the evidence base on what works. The studies in this review find a fear of doing or saying the 'wrong' thing to be high among employers which acts as a significant barrier to taking action. It is important to avoid the tendency to let current political trends or debates over language and terminology sway the focus on EDI. Youth Futures can work with employers to remain true to the foundational values of workplace inclusion and generate the necessary evidence-base.

Implications for employer-facing bodies

The wide variety and range of drivers motivating employer action for EDI, as noted in this review, suggests that no one size approach fits all. There is no silver bullet on what works for all employers, as different organisations will tap into different motivations at various points in time. This implies that employer-facing bodies, whether independent research organisations or sectoral and industry-specific federations, must adopt a nuanced and tailored approach to meet employers where they are on their inclusion journeys.

First, employer-facing bodies should continue to invest in studies on designing and trialling intervention evaluations that demonstrate what works in concrete ways. This would require them to engage employers to agree to involvement. Stakeholder consultations conducted during this review raised the concern that there already existed a plethora of toolkits and guidance which appear to be insufficiently utilised by employers. However, this review has demonstrated a lack of sufficient robust evidence on what works to influence and change employer behaviour. Developing examples of international best practice in countries with similar contexts to the UK could be another area for future research, as would developing sectoral, industry-level, and organisational case studies that demonstrate positive impact.

Second, the studies in this review did not conclusively show a link between organisational size and the effectiveness of interventions, or the likelihood of certain employer actions. However, there is evidence to suggest that larger organisations may have better resourced teams and dedicated EDI leaders or champions, while smaller organisations can be nimble footed and more engaged when tackling culture change. Employer-facing bodies can work

with Youth Futures to identify employers ranging across size and sector to participate in intervention trials.

Third, the evidence from the studies and stakeholder engagement highlights the importance of identifying ways to engage with key decision makers through innovative approaches, such as the CEO immersion programme being delivered by Business in the Community and Youth Futures. Those in positions of authority and with the power to effect decision-making in favour of advancing inclusive practices, tend to still belong to majority groups lacking the lived experience and personal commitment to driving a change agenda. Despite information on the importance of the moral and the business case for change on EDI, organisations continue to be locked into old ways of thinking and doing things.

Finally, stakeholders across the board can lead on disseminating the existing evidence base as well as funding future projects that set benchmarks or demonstrate effectively what works.

The overarching message is that there is a need to invest in building a more robust evidence base on what is successful in driving employer behaviour change to implement EDI initiatives to support ethnic minority young people. Youth Futures can lead on funding and trialling well-designed interventions around some of the key drivers and organisational enablers identified in this review. It can also engage anchor employers to participate in such trials and demonstrate success. And finally, it can collaborate with other employer-facing bodies to amplify the message of the range of critical drivers, enablers, and barriers to employer behaviour and support high quality studies that test their effectiveness. Future areas for research include sector-specific challenges or under-researched contexts like non-profits and SMEs, expanding on how EDI initiatives succeed or fail across different cultural or geographical settings.

Methodology

The research was developed by the IES research team, with key input from Youth Futures and an Advisory Group of external experts[7] who were appointed to guide the study approach and sense-check emerging findings. The research was conducted in four stages:

Scoping and mapping

During this stage, the research team undertook a scoping of the available literature to assess the strength of the existing evidence, and to address each research sub-question. Scoping was undertaken to assess whether any evidence existed that met Level 3 in NESTA Standards of Evidence, that is evaluation using robust methods, through the use of a control group or other well justified method, that isolate the impact of the product or service. The scoping exercise also aimed to answer if an independent review of Behavioural Insights literature was merited. Outcomes of interest were defined for each research question and a scoping framework created to map relevant studies. At this stage, studies were selected based on a review of the title and abstract and assessed for pertinence based on the preliminary criteria. Full details of the scoping and mapping process, research questions, and outcomes of interest are included in Appendix A.

Protocol development

The REA protocol development drew on the findings from the scoping and mapping stage, and included the development of the final search strategy, inclusion criteria, and databases for the review. The inclusion criteria for the review were modified based on the scoping findings, which highlighted a lack of sufficient Level 3 evidence, to include high quality peer-reviewed qualitative and grey literature studies. At this stage, the research team led engagement with Youth Futures and the Advisory Group members to ensure their input was included in the development of the final research approach. Full details of the protocol development are included in Appendix B.

Conducting the REA

The research team conducted database searches and screening of studies (title and abstract and full text review). Additionally, a Call for Evidence was issued in order to tap into grey literature sources and independently commissioned research that would not be available through academic and other databases. Overall, 30 studies met the inclusion criteria and are included in this review. The researchers then developed an analytical framework for thematic extraction and proceeded to extract evidence. The findings were then analysed thematically and presented in narrative form.

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[7] Members of the advisory group: Business In The Community (BITC), Chartered Institute for Professional Development (CIPD), and Action for Race Equality

Details of the process for study inclusion as well as details of each study are included in Appendix C.

Wider stakeholder engagement

Alongside the review, the research team led engagements with the Advisory Group, during the research to present the scoping report, interim findings, and final analysis. Following extraction and full analysis, a further consultation with a wider set of stakeholders was organised to represent voices of employers, employer facing bodies, and other research organisations working on issues of youth employment and EDI[8]. These engagements were conducted with the aim of inviting inputs to shape the research development, sense-check findings, and develop proposals for future engagement and research for Youth Futures.

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[8] Stakeholders who participated in the engagement: Business In The Community (BITC), Chartered Institute for Professional Development (CIPD), Action for Race Equality, Young Women's Trust, Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), Greater London Authority, Chartered Institute of Management (CMI), British Chambers of Commerce, and West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

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Appendix A – Scoping and mapping

This appendix reports on the findings from initial evidence scoping and mapping, which took place before the development of the Research Protocol and ahead of the review.

The research was divided into two strands of enquiry:

- **Strand 1** – What works to engage employers to take action on EDI, especially to support ethnic minority youth recruitment, retention and progression, and to tackle discrimination and prejudice?
- **Strand 2** – What evidence does behavioural insights literature offer on effective approaches to promote employer action and behaviour change in relation to EDI?

Research questions and outcomes of interest

The research questions and outcomes of interest are mapped against these two strands in Table 1.

Table 1: Research questions and outcomes of interest

Strand	Research question	Outcomes of interest
1	RQ1 - What works to engage employers to implement equality, diversity, and inclusion initiatives on recruitment, retention, and progression?	Recruitment Retention Progression/development Organisational enablers such as culture, leadership, line management, lived experience Organisational barriers such as resources, norms, unconscious bias Impact on workplace prejudice/discrimination Systemic changes
1	RQ2 - What works to engage employers to take action to support people from ethnic minorities in recruitment, retention and progression?	
1	RQ3 - What works to engage employers to take action to tackle workplace prejudice and discrimination, particularly racial discrimination against young people?	

1	RQ4 - What can be learned from what works to promote employer action and behaviour change in other areas - e.g. employee wellbeing?	Inclusion Transferable learning Employee attitudes/ feelings about how they're included and valued at work Narratives around EDI
2	RQ 5 - What would behavioural insights literature suggest about promising/effective approaches for promoting employer action and behaviour change on equality, diversity and inclusion?	Insights on behaviour change Motivations Implementation Organisational impact Cultural change Behavioural change Systemic change

Search strategy

Based on the research questions and outcomes of interest, the research team developed a comprehensive search string for each Strand:

Strand 1

(Employer* OR Employ* OR Business* OR Compan* OR Firm* OR Organisation* OR Organisation* OR Enterpris* OR Workplace* OR Work* OR HR OR Manag* OR Supervis* OR Profession*) AND (Equal* OR Equity OR Divers* OR Inclus* OR EDI OR DEI OR Corporate social responsibility OR CSR) AND (Minorit* OR Ethnic* OR Black OR Asian OR Pakistan* OR Bangladesh* OR BAME OR BIPOC OR People of color OR People of colour OR POC OR Underrepresent* OR Marginali* OR Disadvantage* OR Multicultural OR Multi-cultural OR Non-white OR Immigrant* OR Migrant* OR Racism OR Racial OR Race) AND (Recruitment OR Retention OR Progression OR Development OR Culture OR Leadership OR Line management OR Lived experience OR Resource* OR Norm* OR Unconscious bias OR Prejudice OR Discrimination) AND (Initiative* OR Program* OR Support OR Strateg* OR Practic* OR Intervention* OR

Scheme* OR What works OR Best practice) AND (evaluation OR assessment OR analysis OR case study OR effective* OR impact)

Strand 2

(Behavior* OR Behaviour* OR Attitude OR Cognitive OR Nudg* OR behavioral economics OR behavioural economics OR behavioral science OR behavioural science OR behavioural insight* OR behavioral insight* OR decision-making OR cognitive bias OR behavior change OR behaviour change OR change management) AND (Employer* OR Business* OR Compan* OR Firm* OR Organisation* OR Organisation* OR Enterprise* OR Workplace* OR HR OR Manager* OR Supervisor*) AND (Equalit* OR Equal opportunit* OR Equity OR Diversit* OR Inclusion OR Inclusive OR EDI OR DEI OR Corporate social responsibility OR CSR) AND (Minorit* OR Ethnic* OR Black OR Asian OR Pakistan* OR Bangladesh* OR BAME OR BIPOC OR People of color OR People of colour OR POC OR Underrepresent* OR Marginali* OR Disadvantage* OR Multicultural OR Multi-cultural OR Non-white OR Immigrant* OR Migrant* OR Racism OR Racial OR Race) AND (Recruitment OR Retention OR Progression OR Development OR Culture OR Leadership OR Line management OR Lived experience OR Resource* OR Norm* OR Unconscious bias OR Prejudice OR Discrimination)

These search strings were adopted as they were the most likely to generate the highest number of results pertinent to employers, EDI practices, and behavioural insights. The databases which were reviewed for RQ1-RQ3 included: Scopus, PubMed, Google Scholar, Science Direct, Search Oxford Libraries Online (SOLO)[9], Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR), UK Department for Work and Pensions, Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse (PWEC), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and European Commission Find-eR.

For efficiency purposes, for RQ4 and RQ5 only the top three databases which had yielded relevant results in the RQ1-RQ3 searches were reviewed, based on the assumption that these would yield the most relevant results. These included: SOLO, Google Scholar, and Science Direct.

An iterative approach was adopted in the search process, starting with running searches using the full string, then combinations of each section of the search string, and testing different parameters for the search. For example, multiple searches of each combination were run to include relevant terms in 'any field' and relevant terms in 'title and abstract only'. The detailed process and results of this process for all RQs are outlined in the Appendices.

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[9] The SOLO database includes the specific journals we outlined in the Inception report - Equality, Diversity, Inclusion: An International Journal; Journal of Diversity Management; Journal of Business Diversity; Harvard Business Review

Review of results, extraction and coding

The search results were ordered by relevance and manually reviewed by two researchers based on title and abstract. Relevant results were identified and sifted based on the inclusion criteria outlined in the scoping extraction and coding framework (see Table 2). The same scoping framework was used for both strands of the research.

The cut-off point for the review of results was the point where the last 50 results reviewed included no relevant studies – so for example, if search results 100 to 150 included no relevant studies, results from that point onwards would not be reviewed. Studies that met the criteria were extracted into the framework using the information in the title and abstract.

Table 2: Scoping extraction and coding framework

Extraction area	Description
Paper	Title of the paper
Authors	Authors of the paper
Year	Year of publication (2010 onwards)
Source	Database where the study was sourced from
Population	Is the target group one or more of: young people, ethnic minority, other marginalised groups?
Intervention	Is the study specifically about employer or workplace behaviour or practices (specifically, recruitment, retention, progression)?
Context	If known, specify the country/context where the study was conducted.

Outcomes	Is the study focused on the outcomes of interest to this review?
Study design	Is the study: Quantitative-counterfactual-(RCT/QED), Quantitative-non-randomised (pre/post, comparative without a matching design) Quantitative-descriptive, Mixed methods, Qualitative (using Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool)*
Research question	Which research question(s) is this study related to? (coded by reviewer)
Study abstract	Copy and paste the abstract from the study here
Pertinence	How pertinent is the study to the research questions and outcomes of interest?

*We propose using a combination of quality assessment tools such as the MMAT, NESTA Standards of evidence and CEBMs critical appraisal sheets for different studies at the time of full-text review, as it is not possible to conduct a critical quality assessment of the literature at the scoping stage using only title and abstract screening.

Findings of the scoping phase

The research team manually reviewed 4,523 studies for Strand 1 and 600 studies for Strand 2. Overall, 65 studies met the inclusion criteria across both strands of the scoping and were included in the extraction framework.

The tables discussed below show the spread of the evidence according to research questions, geography, target population, study design, and overall judgment of pertinence.

Pertinence

Table 3 shows the overall assessment of pertinence among the 65 papers as coded by the reviewers. This was divided into High (27), Medium (24), and Low (14). This breakdown indicates that 51 papers are identified of high or medium relevance to the study.

Pertinence	Count of Papers
High	27
Medium	24
Low	14
Grand Total	65

Research questions

Table 4 presents the total number of papers identified for each of the five research questions along their level of pertinence to show where the evidence may be especially thin. Some papers were mapped to more than one research question.

The maximum number of papers were identified for RQ1, followed by RQ2 and then RQ4. These research questions respectively deal with what promotes employer action in relation to EDI generally, for ethnic minority groups specifically, and what can be learnt from other areas.

The amount of evidence for RQ5 relating to the behavioural insights' literature is very small. The lower number of studies for Strand 2 was due the lack of relevant results - relevance quickly dropped off, often after the first 50 results. This could suggest that REA search and screening may need to be widened beyond the three databases used for Strand 2 (SOLO, Google Scholar, and Science Direct) to include gov.uk website or Google more generically.

Table 4: Spread of papers across the five research questions

Research Question	Count of Papers	High	Medium	Low
RQ1 – Strand 1	50	23	19	8
RQ2 – Strand 1	17	10	5	2

	6	4	2	0
RQ3 – Strand 1				
RQ4 – Strand 1	10	3	4	3
RQ5 – Strand 2	5	1	1	3

Target population

The spread of population groups of interest in the identified papers is shown in Table 5. Most papers (19) examined diversity outcomes more generically, followed by ethnic minority and disability. A granular assessment of the focus of the general diversity studies will only be possible during full text review. Intersecting focus on ethnic minorities and gender or women is noted in six papers.

Table 5: Spread of target population in the papers

Target Population	High	Low	Medium	Total
General diversity	13	3	3	19
Ethnic minority	7	2	5	14
Disability/Chronic conditions	1	3	6	10
Population group not identifiable	1	4	1	6
Ethnic minority, women	3	0	3	6

Gender		2	2	4
LGBTQIA+	1		3	4
Vulnerable workers			1	1
Mental health sector	1			1
Grand Total	27	14	24	65

Study design

The Mixed Methods Appraisal tool (MMAT) guide was used to assess the study design and quality of papers. Table 6 provides a spread of papers against each study design type: qualitative, quantitative descriptive, quantitative-non-randomised, quantitative-counterfactual, and mixed methods.

Table 7 maps the different research methods used within these broad study design categories. None of the papers were identified as randomised control trials (RCT). The quantitative-non RCT studies mostly used surveys with one using a discrete choice experiment design. Most of the qualitative papers utilised interviews and case study methods.

The exact study design details are not identifiable from 18 abstracts and will need closer scrutiny during full-text review. There is one systematic review and three evidence reviews on the research questions of interest. Almost all papers were peer-reviewed journal articles with only two government reports.

Table 6: Spread across different types of study design

Pertinence	Qualitative	Mixed methods	Quantitative non-RCT	Quantitative descriptive
High	19	2	4	2

Medium	16	4	3	1
Low	8	3	2	1
Grand Total	43	9	9	4

Table 7: Breakdown by different research methods used

Research Method used	Count of Papers
Action research	3
Case study	8
Content analysis	1
Delphi expert consensus study	1
Discrete Choice Experiment, Interviews	1
Evidence review	2
Evidence review, Survey, Interviews	1
Split sample survey experiment	1
Focus groups	1

Interviews	9
Interviews, online questionnaires	1
Literature review, Case study	1
Multi-level modelling	1
Observational analysis	1
Scoping review	3
Survey	7
Systematic review	1
Theoretical	3
Theoretical, interviews	1
Not identified	18
Grand Total	65

Geographical context

The spread of countries from which evidence emerged is shown in Table 8, with most papers deriving from the USA, followed closely by the UK. A few are from Australia and other high-income countries, which might be close to the UK in terms of employer and workplace context. Geography could not be ascertained from the review of the title and abstract of ten papers.

Table 8: Spread of geographical contexts

Country Context	High	Low	Medium	Grand Total
Australia	1	2	1	4
Bangladesh		1		1
Canada	1			1
Cross-country		1	1	2
Greece		1		1
Hungary		1		1
Netherlands			1	1
Unknown	5	2	3	10
Romania			1	1
UK	5	3	6	14
USA	14	2	11	27
USA/Canada		1		1
Wales	1			1
Grand Total	27	14	24	65

Appendix B – Research protocol

This appendix reports on the process for the development of the Research Protocol, which took place ahead of the review.

Purpose of the Rapid Evidence Assessment

The purpose of completing this REA is to develop an understanding of factors that drive employer action and behaviour change for inclusion, with a specific focus on supporting people from ethnic minorities around recruitment, retention, and progression. Specific focus is placed on factors that drive employer attention on recruitment, retention and progression in relation to EDI; factors that drive sustained engagement, action and positive practices among employer-firms; understanding and measuring effects of intervening factors on EDI in the employment experience; and assessing the evidence quality and evidence gaps in the literature.

The REA covers five research questions and corresponding outcomes of interest. The research questions and outcomes of interest were developed in the scoping stage of the research. During this stage the research team undertook a scoping of the available literature to assess the strength of the available evidence for addressing the REA research objectives.

The research team will complete a single REA that covers all five research questions, given the interconnected nature of the questions. Completing a single review will allow links to be made between each of the research questions, which will strengthen the overall presentation of the evidence and the clarity of the findings that emerge.

Search strategy and selection criteria

While the REA will cover all five research questions through a single review, we will adopt two separate search strategies, Strand 1 and Strand 2, to address them. The rationale for this is that research questions one through to four relate to evidence on what works across a range of literature (Strand 1), while questions five pertains to evidence specifically around behavioural insights (BI) literature and requires a specialised focus on BI terminology (Strand 2).

Search strategy and inclusion criteria

For both Strand 1 and 2, during the scoping stage of the research no evidence emerged which met the research questions and Youth Futures' requirement for NESTA Level 3 evaluation evidence. Additionally, much of the evidence was from peer-reviewed academic papers, with only one non-academic source included for review. Therefore, we anticipate that the REA will draw heavily on academic literature sources. Our search strategy and inclusion criteria (Table 1) cannot, therefore, be too restrictive in terms of study design to allow us to identify a sufficient number of relevant papers. We will prioritise studies which use quantitative counter-factual methodology (RCT, QED) but will also include peer-reviewed quantitative-non-randomised

(pre/post, comparative without a matching design), quantitative-descriptive, mixed methods, and qualitative studies where relevant to the research question(s) and outcome(s). We will only include grey literature studies that satisfy the inclusion criteria for the REA.

Additionally, the scoping stage of the research highlighted a lack of studies specifically focused on ethnic minority youth. Therefore, the search strategy has been expanded to include all-age populations. To ensure the findings of this REA are relevant to a UK context, we will only include evidence from high-income countries. OECD members will be used as a proxy for a high-income country in our screening criteria. Studies conducted in the UK will be prioritised for inclusion. This is due to the wide variations in institutional contexts across countries which notably impact the development of equality and EDI policies. The research will only include studies dating from 2010 onwards, taking the introduction of the Equality Act 2010 as a pivotal moment for the development of EDI policies and practices in the UK.

Table 1: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion	Exclusion
Studies that focus on what drives employers to implement EDI initiatives on recruitment, retention, and progression	Studies that do not focus on what drives employer actions to implement EDI initiatives on recruitment, retention, and progression (e.g. EDI best practice toolkit)
Studies that focus on employer engagement and action to support people from minority or disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly ethnic minority backgrounds, in recruitment, retention and progression	Studies that do not focus on employer engagement and action to support people from minority or disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly ethnic minority backgrounds, in recruitment, retention and progression (e.g. views of or impact on employees)
Studies that explore what works to engage employers to take action around workplace prejudice and discrimination	Studies that do not explore what works to engage employers to take action around workplace prejudice and discrimination (e.g. how to prevent prejudice and discrimination)

Studies that focus on what works to promote employer action and behaviour change in workplace health and wellbeing	Studies that do not focus on what works to promote employer action and behaviour change in workplace health and wellbeing (e.g. health and wellbeing best practice toolkit)
Studies that focus on behavioural insights evidence on effective approaches for promoting employer action and behaviour change on EDI	Studies that do not focus on behavioural insights evidence on effective approaches for promoting employer action and behaviour change on EDI (e.g. BI-informed best practice toolkit)
Studies that focus on at least one of the outcomes of interest	Studies that do not focus on any of the outcomes of interest
Studies which use one of the following methodologies: Quantitative-counterfactual (RCT/QED), Quantitative-non-randomised (pre/post, comparative without a matching design), Quantitative-descriptive, Mixed methods, Qualitative	Study methodologies which are not: Quantitative-counterfactual (RCT/QED), Quantitative-non-randomised (pre/post, comparative without a matching design), Quantitative-descriptive, Mixed methods, Qualitative
Studies conducted in the UK and OECD countries	Studies not conducted in the UK and OECD countries
Studies published in English	Studies not in English
Studies published from 2010 onwards	Studies published before 2010

Final search strings

Based on the research questions and outcomes of interest, and in accordance with the proposed approach in the search strategy and inclusion criteria and scoping phase, the following search strings were adopted:

Strand 1: (Employer* OR Employ* OR Business* OR Compan* OR Firm* OR Organisation* OR Organisation* OR Enterpris* OR Workplace* OR Work* OR HR OR Manag* OR Supervis* OR Profession*) AND (Equal* OR Equity OR Divers* OR Inclus* OR EDI OR DEI OR Corporate social responsibility OR CSR OR Affirmative action OR Positive action) AND (Minorit* OR Ethnic* OR Black OR Asian OR Pakistan* OR Bangladesh* OR BAME OR BIPOC OR People of color OR People of colour OR POC OR Underrepresent* OR Marginali* OR Disadvantage* OR Multicultural OR Multi-cultural OR Non-white OR Immigrant* OR Migrant* OR Racism OR Racial OR Race)[10] AND (Recruitment OR Retention OR Progression OR Development OR Culture OR Leadership OR Line management OR Lived experience OR Resource* OR Norm* OR Unconscious bias OR Prejudice OR Discrimination) AND (Initiative* OR Program* OR Support OR Strateg* OR Practic* OR Intervention* OR Scheme* OR What works OR Best practice) AND (evaluation OR assessment OR analysis OR case study OR effective* OR impact)

Strand 2: (Behavior* OR Behaviour* OR Attitude OR Cognitive OR Nudg* OR behavioral economics OR behavioural economics OR behavioral science OR behavioural science OR behavioural insight* OR behavioral insight* OR decision-making OR cognitive bias OR behavior change OR behaviour change OR change management) AND (Employer* OR Business* OR Compan* OR Firm* OR Organisation* OR Organisation* OR Enterprise* OR Workplace* OR HR OR Manager* OR Supervisor*) AND (Equalit* OR Equal opportunit* OR Equity OR Diversit* OR Inclusion OR Inclusive OR EDI OR DEI OR Corporate social responsibility OR CSR) AND (Minorit* OR Ethnic* OR Black OR Asian OR Pakistan* OR Bangladesh* OR BAME OR BIPOC OR People of color OR People of colour OR POC OR Underrepresent* OR Marginali* OR Disadvantage* OR Multicultural OR Multi-cultural OR Non-white OR Immigrant* OR Migrant* OR Racism OR Racial OR Race) AND (Recruitment OR Retention OR Progression OR Development OR Culture OR Leadership OR Line management OR Lived experience OR Resource* OR Norm* OR Unconscious bias OR Prejudice OR Discrimination)

These search strings have been tested during the piloting and scoping stages of the research and are most likely to generate the highest number of results pertinent to employers, EDI practices, and behavioural insights. To assess the validity and robustness of the strings, an iterative approach was adopted during piloting and scoping, starting with running searches using the full string, then combinations of each section of the search string, and testing different parameters for the search.

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[10] A variation of the search string was adopted to run searches relating to research question 4 specifically, which substituted terms relating to health and wellbeing in place of terms relating to race and ethnicity: *(Health* OR well-being OR wellbeing OR wellness OR mental health OR MH OR Psychological OR Emotional OR physical OR physiological OR fitness OR bodily OR emotional OR chronic condition* OR neurodive*)*

Databases

Our searches will focus on national and international sources of academic and non-academic literature. We will search the following electronic databases to identify studies for inclusion in the review:

- Academic databases: Scopus, PubMed, Google Scholar, Ingenta Connect, Science Direct, SOLO, University of Oxford

- Wider databases: Google, Google Scholar, gov.uk, OECD Library, European Commission Find-Er, The Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse, Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research

Given the extensive searches performed as part of the piloting and scoping stages, we will prioritise databases which yield relevant results to run additional searches at this stage. This means that where databases yield no relevant results after the first or second search, they will not be used to run different combinations of the search string and search parameters across each Strand.

Wider sources of literature

We will identify relevant studies that are not captured through our database searches by pearling the reference lists of included studies. We will put a call for evidence on drivers of employer engagement in EDI practices, through IES networks, Youth Futures networks, and the Advisory Group, to identify soon to be published material and source additional recommendations for our long list of evidence to sift and review.

Data extraction, quality assessment and reporting

Following the searches, we will screen results based on key terms included in the title and abstract of each study. The data screening software Covidence will be used to support this process. Following title and abstract screening, shortlisted papers will undergo a full text review using the inclusion criteria.

We will assess the confidence in all studies included for data extraction, by using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT).[11] This tool is designed to critically appraise quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods studies included in systematic mixed-studies reviews. With a specific focus on mixed-methods studies, the tool outlines a set of criteria and screening questions to provide an overall quality score. Each study will be given an overall rating of high, medium or low quality based on how comprehensively the study addresses these principles in practice. Studies that provide high quality evidence will be prioritised for inclusion in this review.

Data from the included papers will be extracted using a standardised pro-forma to ensure consistency of data extraction. We will pilot extraction with the pro-forma as well as holding team meetings to build consensus about what to extract and how. A code book will then be developed to guide our

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[11] Mixed Method Appraisal Toolkit

extraction of studies (in Excel). We will pilot coding and hold team reviews to ensure there is sufficiency in the detail coded to support later analysis. The codes will be revised on an inductive basis as further themes emerge from the review of the literature.

For included studies, data will be extracted by a single reviewer (with a peer reviewer process to check accuracy) into the code book. Once the study has passed the full-text review, one reviewer will extract the necessary information, and another reviewer will check the accuracy and relevance of the extracted information. Points of contention around the extraction, including when extracting datapoints that are subjective, will be discussed with the wider review team in our weekly meetings to reach a consensus verdict.

We will report our findings in an interim and final report. The template and structure for the report will be agreed with Youth Futures before reporting commences. Drafts of each output will be submitted to Youth Futures for feedback and comment, after which edited and finalised outputs will be submitted.

Appendix C – Studies included in the REA

In total, 5,123 studies were reviewed as part of the database searches, during the scoping and piloting stage of the research. Of these, 114 met the criteria for title and abstract screening. Following title and abstract screening, 57 papers were included for full text review, of which 17 were included for extraction. Papers were excluded at each stage of the screening process where they did not meet the inclusion criteria outlined in the Protocol. The references list of papers included for extraction were then reviewed, through the pearling process, and 27 further studies were initially included for title and abstract screening. Of these, eight were included for extraction.

Alongside pearling, the call for evidence resulted in 12 additional studies. While all studies provided important insight, only five met the stringent inclusion criteria for the research and were included in the review. The studies were received from the following organisations:

1. Action for Race Equality
2. British Chambers of Commerce
3. Business in the Community
4. Chartered Management Institute
5. Durham University Business School
6. Greater London Authority
7. Groundwork UK
8. Institute of Directors
9. London Borough of Lambeth
10. Manchester Metropolitan University Business School
11. West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Table 1 outlines the number of studies included at each stage of the screening process and Figure 1 outlines the PRISMA Flow diagram for the study, illustrating the flow of information through the different phases of the REA.

Table 1: Studies included for each stage of screening

Screening approach	n =
Studies reviewed through database screening	5,123

Studies included after title and abstract screening	57
Studies included after full-text screening	17
Studies reviewed through call for evidence	12
Studies included through call for evidence	5
Studies screened through pearling	27
Studies included through pearling	8

Figure 1: PRISMA flow diagram
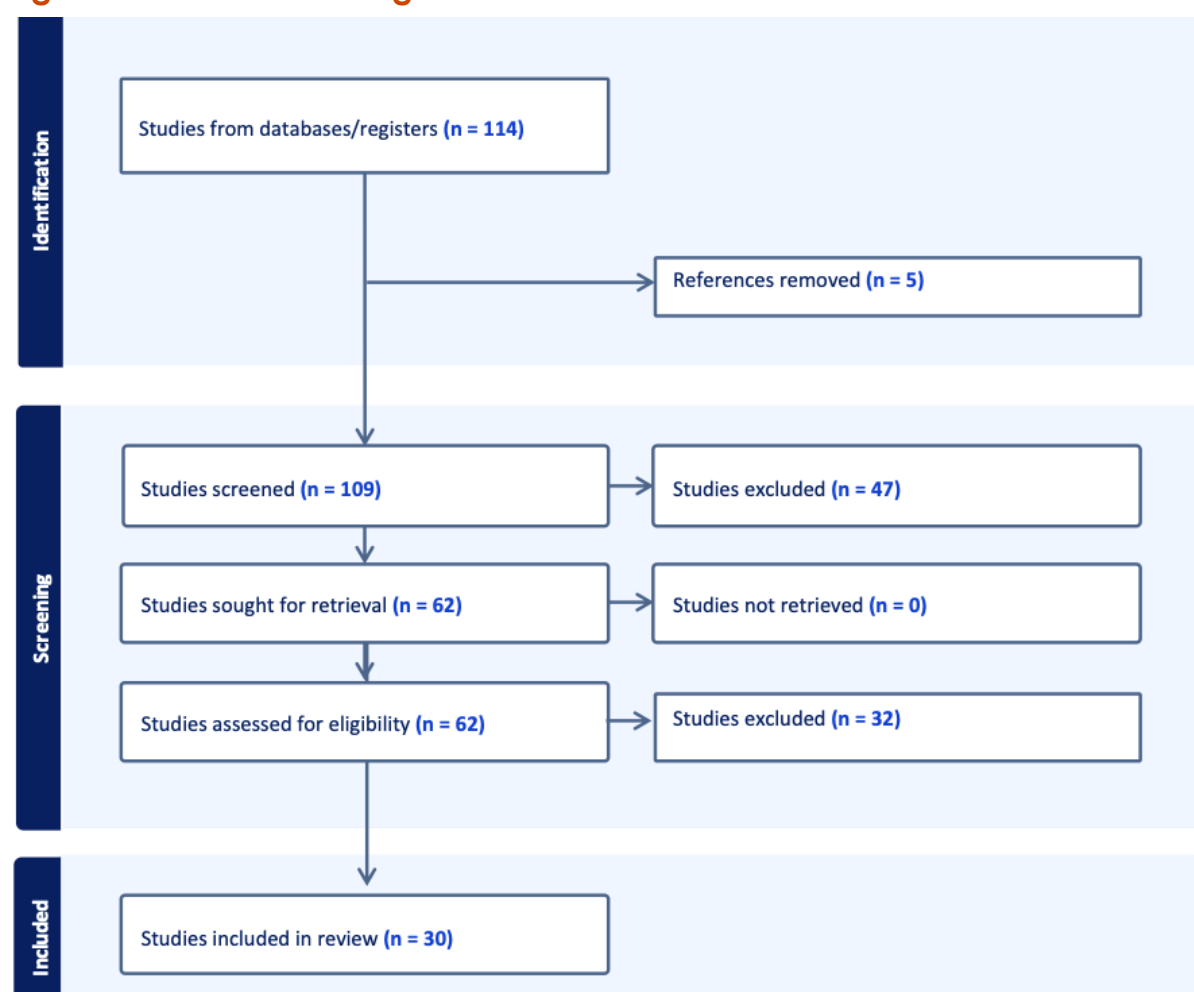
Given the limitations in the existing evidence pertaining to the research questions, the studies included in the REA varied widely in terms of methods, scope and themes of focus. The majority of the studies were academic (80 per cent), with a minority of grey literature reports (20 per cent). The research questions which had most coverage were RQ1 (60 per cent of studies) and RQ2 (36 per cent). In terms of methods, the majority of the studies used qualitative primary methods (33 per cent) or mixed methods (23 per cent). Table 2 provides an overview of each study and method used while Table 3 provides a visual summary.
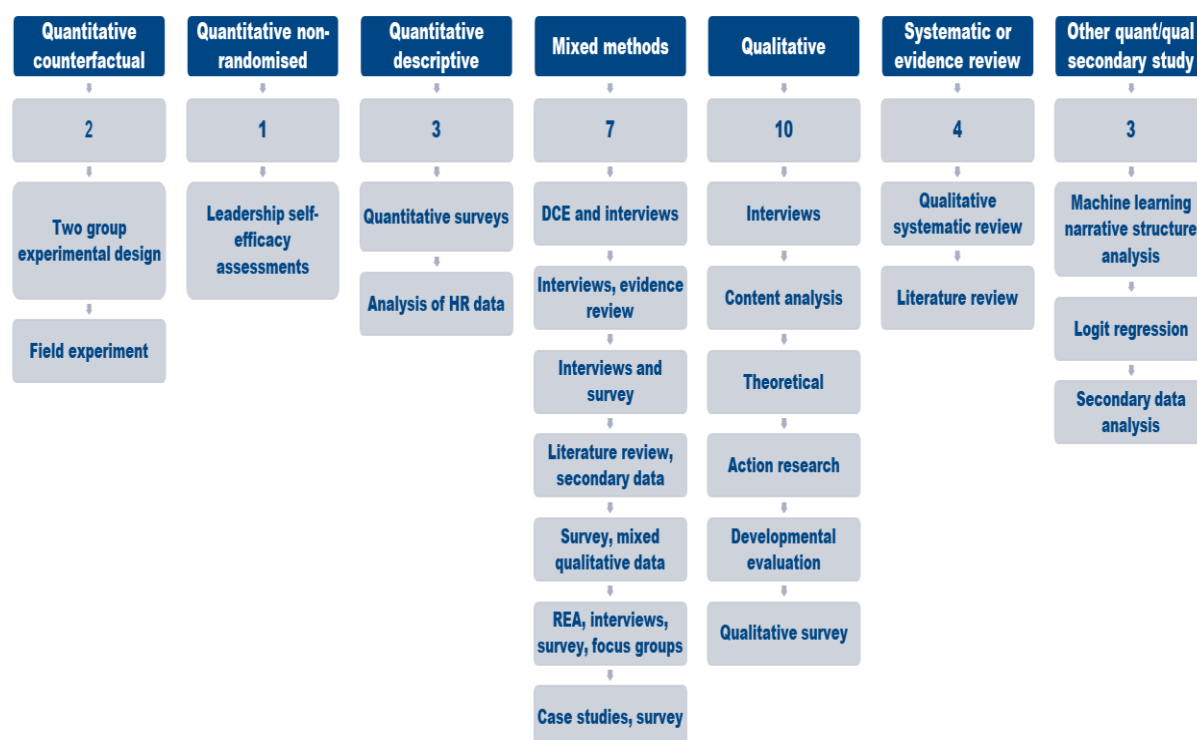
Table 2: Overview of studies included in the REA

Title	RQ(s)	Study type	Study method
Accountability as a De-biasing Strategy: Testing the Effect of Racial Diversity in Employment Committees	RQ1, RQ2, RQ3	Journal paper	Quantitative-counterfactual (RCT/QED)
Diversity Strategies and Business Logic: Why Do Companies Employ Ethnic Minorities?	RQ1, RQ2	Journal paper	Qualitative primary study
The Motivation to Be Inclusive: Understanding How Diversity Self-Efficacy Impacts Leader Effectiveness in Racially Diverse Workgroups	RQ1, RQ2	Journal paper	Quantitative-non-randomised (pre/post, comparative without a matching design)
The Face of the Firm: The Impact of Employer Branding on Diversity	RQ1	Journal paper	Qualitative primary study
Racial Diversity Exposure and Firm Responses Following the Murder of George Floyd	RQ2	Journal paper	Quantitative secondary study
Ethnic Minority Women in the Scottish Labour Market: Employers' Perceptions	RQ2, RQ3	Journal paper	Qualitative primary study

Action Programs for Ethnic Minorities: A Question of Corporate Social Responsibility?	RQ2	Journal paper	Quantitative secondary study
Fulfilling its promise? Strategic public procurement and the impact of equality considerations on employers' behaviour in Scotland	RQ1	Journal paper	Quantitative-non-randomised (pre/post, comparative without a matching design)
Top-level leaders and implementation strategies to support organisational diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) interventions: a qualitative study of top-level DEIB leaders in healthcare organisations	RQ2, RQ3	Journal paper	Qualitative primary study
The Relationship between Firm Attributes and Attitudes towards Diversity	RQ1	Journal paper	Quantitative-non-randomised (pre/post, comparative without a matching design)
Conditions, Processes and Pressures Promoting Inclusive Organisations	RQ1	Journal paper	Qualitative primary study
Evaluating Equity: Assessing Diversity Efforts Through a Social Justice Lens	RQ2	Journal paper	Qualitative primary study
Controlling management to deliver diversity and inclusion: Prospects and limits	RQ1	Journal paper	Qualitative primary study

Organisational Policies and Practices for the Inclusion of Vulnerable Workers: A Scoping Review of the Employer's Perspective	RQ1, RQ2	Journal paper	Qualitative secondary study
Motives in creating an LGBTQ inclusive work environment: a case study	RQ4	Journal paper	Qualitative primary study
Incentivising SME uptake of health and wellbeing support schemes	RQ4	Report	Mixed methods
Using behavioural insights to increase the employment of young Black men in London	RQ2, RQ5	Report	Mixed methods
Managers' Action-Guiding Mental Models towards Mental Health-Related Organisational Interventions- A Systematic Review of Qualitative Studies	RQ4	Journal paper	Systematic review
Employer participation in promoting the labour-market participation of jobseekers with disabilities: An employer perspective.	RQ1, RQ4, RQ5	Journal paper	Mixed methods
Do LGBT workplace diversity policies create value for firms	RQ3, RQ4	Journal paper	Quantitative secondary study
Dynamic capabilities for managing racially diverse workforces: Effects on competitive action variety and firm performance	RQ1	Journal paper	Mixed methods
Assigning migrants to customer contact jobs: a context specific exploration of the business case for diversity	RQ1, RQ2	Journal paper	Qualitative primary study

Boosting Opportunity and Realising Potential: Equality in the workforce report	RQ1, RQ3	Report	Mixed methods
New to Nature: Final impact report	RQ1	Report	Mixed methods
Walking the Walk: Managers, Inclusivity and Organisational Success	RQ1	Report	Qualitative primary study
Opening Doors: What Works Reducing Intersectional Bias In Recruitment	RQ1, RQ3	Report	Mixed methods
Understanding Diversity Management Practices: Implications of Institutional Theory and Resource-Based Theory	RQ1	Paper	Qualitative secondary study
Is There Method To The Madness? Examining How Racioethnic Matching Influences Retail Store Productivity	RQ2	Journal paper	Quantitative-non-randomised (pre/post, comparative without a matching design)
The Impact of racial and gender diversity in management on financial performance: how participative strategy making features can unleash a diversity advantage.	RQ1	Journal paper	Quantitative-non-randomised (pre/post, comparative without a matching design)
The mixed effects of online diversity training	RQ3	Journal paper	Quantitative-counterfactual (RCT/QED)

Table 3: Visual summary of study methods included in the REA

Quantitative counterfactual	Quantitative non-randomised	Quantitative descriptive	Mixed methods	Qualitative	Systematic or evidence review	Other quant/qual secondary study
2	1	3	7	10	4	3
Two group experimental design	Leadership self-efficacy assessments	Quantitative surveys	DCE and interviews	Interviews	Qualitative systematic review	Machine learning narrative structure analysis
Field experiment		Analysis of HR data	Interviews, evidence review	Content analysis	Literature review	Logit regression
			Interviews and survey	Theoretical		Secondary data analysis
			Literature review, secondary data	Action research		
			Survey, mixed qualitative data	Developmental evaluation		
			REA, interviews, survey, focus groups	Qualitative survey		
			Case studies, survey			

Acknowledgements

Glossary of Terms

- **ALMP:** Active Labour Market Policies are government or organisation-led initiatives designed to improve employment opportunities and workforce participation. These policies aim to enhance individuals' employability, reduce unemployment, and address skill mismatches.

- **BAME:** A term commonly used in the UK to refer collectively to those from Black, Asian, and other Minority Ethnic backgrounds. It is a term primarily used in discussions of equality, diversity, and inclusion to highlight issues affecting underrepresented ethnic groups.

- **CSR:** Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to the ethical and sustainable practices that businesses voluntarily adopt to contribute to economic development, social well-being, and environmental protection. CSR emphasises the accountability of organisations to all stakeholders, including employees and the general public.

- **Diversity:** Recognition, appreciation, and the valuing of differences, including race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and socioeconomic background.

- **EDI:** EDI refers to the principles and practices aimed at promoting fairness, equal opportunity, and respect for individuals regardless of their characteristics, identities, or backgrounds. The term is comprised of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, each is covered in the glossary.

- **Equality:** The focus on ensuring everyone has access to the same opportunities and resources.

- **Ethnic Minority:** A group of people who share a distinct cultural, racial, linguistic, or national heritage and constitute a smaller proportion of the population within a larger society or country. The term is often used to describe groups who are underrepresented or hold less power within societal structures.

- **Inclusion:** The creation of an environment where all individuals feel valued, respected, and empowered.

- **LGBTQ+:** An inclusive acronym that represents a diverse spectrum of sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions. It stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual individuals. The + acknowledges the inclusion of additional identities beyond those explicitly listed.

- **NEET:** An acronym used to describe individuals, typically aged 16–24, who are not currently engaged in any formal education, employment, or vocational training. It is a measured indicator used to monitor youth engagement and social exclusion.

- **REA:** A Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) is a systematic, time-efficient method to review and synthesise existing research and evidence on a specific topic or question. It provides a structured and transparent approach to gathering, assessing, and summarising available evidence within a limited timeframe.

About the Author(s)

Dr. Meenakshi Krishnan, Principal Research Fellow, IES.

Meenakshi leads IES' work on EDI with a focus on supporting accessible and inclusive workplaces. She brings 22 years of experience in HR consulting and research, working with corporate and not-for-profit employers to design HR practice, talent development and career progression. Her projects span issues of tackling workplace inequalities in the Health and Adult Social Care sector, evaluating the age-friendly employer pledge, identifying what entails effective evaluations of DEI interventions, policies, and programmes, inclusive leadership development and building inclusive organisations. In this REA, Meenakshi oversaw management of the project, research methodology, final reporting, and led Advisory Group and stakeholder consultations.

Cristiana Orlando, Principal Associate, IES

Cristiana brings expertise in employment systems and has experience of leading robust qualitative reviews. She has led a three-year policy project at IES for the Health Foundation on improving access to good work for disadvantaged young people, which included research with employers on improving EDI practices to support improved recruitment and retention of young people. In this project, Cristiana led the REA searches and screening and extraction protocols, alongside final reporting and Advisory Group presentation contributions.

Joseph Cook, Research Fellow, IES

During their time at IES, Joe has worked across a wide range of projects, including the Youth Futures Foundation's Youth Employment Toolkit around Wage Subsidies in 2023 and its second edition which commenced in 2024. Their research interests include the marketisation of higher education, workplace wellbeing and support initiatives, and the implementation and evaluation of EDI policies, with a particular focus on widening class participation. In this project, Joe contributed to the REA searches, extractions, final reporting and Advisory Group presentations.