**Podcast Transcript**

**Series 2, Episode 3: Gen Z, Diversity and Inclusion**

**Opening credit** Talking inclusion with Stephanie Hirst.

**Stephanie** Welcome to this month's episode of ‘Talking Inclusion with’ from Inclusive Employers. I'm Stephanie Hirst and today we're going to be talking about age in the workplace, and in particular, the expectations of entry level employees. And second jobbers with regards to inclusion and diversity. Does your workplace have barriers that are stopping people from Gen Z, which are those born between 1996 and 2012 from joining you? And if so, how will that impact on the success of your organisation.

As always, our guests are going to share their experiences and will offer advice to employers on how they can ensure everyone is welcome in their organisations. Now before I introduce our guests, the podcast is brought to you by Inclusive Employers. We challenge and support organisations to be more inclusive, making workplaces a safe space for people to contribute their skills and experiences fully to their organisation. Now these podcasts are for anyone who has an interest in inclusion and diversity. In our podcasts we'll share life stories and experiences, learn about best practice, and hear practical advice for employers from our guests, as well as Inclusive Employers own inclusion and diversity experts.

Now today's fantastic guests are Natasha Fowler-Ekar, outgoing equality and liberation officer at Leeds University Union and starting a career in non- profits. Hi, Natasha.

**Natasha** Hello.

**Stephanie** And we have Rosh Sathiakeerthy, a future voices group member who is about to embark on a career in law. Hi Rosh

**Rosh** Hi.. Hi Everyone - Thanks for having me.

**Stephanie** You're welcome. Welcome aboard. And also joining us from Inclusive Employers is I&D consultant, Courtney Wright . Hi, Courtney.

**Courtney** Hi Steph, Hi, everybody.

**Stephanie** Now, with people working later in life, we now have five generations of employees all working together. So we have traditionalists, those born before 1945, Baby Boomers born between 1946 and 1964, Gen X born between 65 and 80, Millennials born between 1981 and 1995, and of course Gen Z - Those born between 1996 and 2012.

Now today, we're going to focus on Gen Z, as Gen Z is the most diverse generation yet, with the most inclusive views and expectations. Inclusion, and diversity matters, of course, with 56% saying they would hesitate to work in an organisation that doesn't have diverse leadership.

This group, are also looking for employers who have similar views and values to themselves, with 49% of Gen Z is making work related choices, based on their personal ethics. So Courtney, let's let's start with you. Why is it so important for employers to think about Gen Z, and their expectations around inclusive workplaces?

**Courtney** I think there's been a real cultural spotlight on inclusion over the past few years, there's been a lot more conversation around different aspects of identity too. Say, for example, there was a survey that found Gen Z were more likely to be out as LGBTQ than any of the generations. I think a lot of this has to do with increased access to information, increased awareness around diversity, and confidence in talking about these topics too. People aren't as willing to hide who they are anymore, which is fantastic.

**Stephanie** It is right you know, people are people shouldn't be afraid to be who they truly are, and in the workplace, if you are your your true, authentic self, you're you obviously are better at your work, because you know that that part of your brain is not being taken up by holding yourself back, is it?

**Courtney** Yeah, absolutely, and I think Gen Z expect to see that societal shift and attitude reflected in our organisations too, and then are viewing it as something that employers should do rather than something that's just nice to do. It's essential to the workplace. And I think when we're thinking about the recruitment landscape, at the moment, we've we're seeing what's the great resignation. So it's all about people saying actually, I'm not going to work for an organisation anymore, that's not meeting my needs and isn't prioritising people. And when employers are trying to recruit those roles, Gen Z are applying to them, but they're coming with ideas already of what they expect from those organisations and from those employers. It's almost like the switch has been flipped. It's now what are you going to do for me? How are you going to help me progress in your organisation.

**Stephanie** There’s a huge massive shift on this and I can see our other guests, Rosh and Natasha, both nodding their heads to this Natasha, what's your thoughts on that?

**Natasha** I think just I guess anecdotally that most of the people in my life with similar age to me and everything, have purposely gone down careers and routes that they feel like align with their moral values. And even if there's always that running joke, as in if I go into corporate, I'm gonna look, I'm just not gonna have a good time, it’s not gonna be fun? But, but it's also even in a corporate environment is like having that that space of like having a social life also having like staff networks and things like that. And then I have a lot of discussions in my day to day about how we can be more attractive to diverse groups of people. And that is a massive one for Gen Z, I think for young people, yeah

**Stephanie** And Rosh, of course, I saw you nodding your head in agreement with this as well, what's your views on this?

**Rosh** So I definitely agree with everything that has been said so far. So it's funny that you're speaking about corporate Natasha, I'm actually going into corporate law myself, and I think one of the things that I always got told is that there was a specific type of person going into commercial law, there's a specific type of person who's a barrister, or a solicitor, and to be honest, I personally don't think I fit those stereotypes. I’m an ethnic minority, and visually impaired, didn't grow up in the best parts of London when I was younger, and I almost felt like a lot of these careers were not accessible to me.

So when I was applying to law firms, I sort of made sure that I found mentors who looked like me, I'm also visually impaired, and I was mentored by a fantastic associate at Clifford Chance, I am going to plug the firm because they're amazing.

So I feel that Gen Z are far more aware of diversity, and they feel that, you know, it's, it's not a thing where we have to kill our personalities, have to kill identities to thrive in the workplace, and why should we, as well? Why can't we be our authentic selves and still have accessibility to these great, amazing careers that traditionally white straight males have had? So that's my take.

**Stephanie** And you mentioned mentors there as well. That's something we've touched on before in the podcasts, they are vital, aren't they into opening doors, especially for next generations coming

through?

**Rosh** No, I completely agree. I think seeing someone who looks like you, or has the same accent as you or went to the same university, or just same socio economic background can do wonders for your self confidence, because for me, having a mentor completely changed my perception of a certain type of career. And as a result, I've been able to access similar opportunities. And I think if I didn't have that, mentor, I'm not sure if I'd be pursuing the career that I'm going into. So I think representation matters massively.

**Stephanie** In a BBC survey, other generations, as we mentioned, traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Gen X and millennials thought that Gen Z's priorities would be getting famous and being on TV. Now, this is a huge misconception. However, the same survey identified that the group's most important priority was actually getting a job that they love. Natasha, why do you think that there's such misconceptions about Gen Z? And how do you think that affects their opportunities in the workplace?

**Natasha** I think a great example is working with some people, and they were like, “Oh, you're gonna have to make a tik-tok about this”. A lot of people are laughing about it. And it's like, oh, well, yes, maybe if you're gonna get people to see it. But also think is that misconception that everyone else is running for, like, reality TV shows, and things like that, and we all have a bit of Love Island.

But also at the end of the day, I think, how we have like Gen Z is or young people, we view our jobs, I think you've seen your parents, I guess, and your grandparents, like, just have jobs that they hate, and their slogging through it, and they're slogging through it. And it's emotionally exhausting. It's mentally exhausting to watch. And you don't want to be just mentally exhausted, you want a job that at the very, at the very least, you like, or at the very minimum, you're able to give you a good work life balance, and you're able to do things that you like, I think that's, that's the difference of, of, of the generations is I know massively that a lot of people but then also there are a lot of people that are just like, Man, I love my career that's gonna go delve right into it. But I think it's the big work life balance, or at least having a career that you really love. And you don't mind sitting behind the computer for hours on end to do.

**Stephanie** A friend of mine said to me a few years ago, never worked for anyone you don't like or respect. And that that has really stuck in my head that because it was like, you've got to be happy in your work, haven't you? Why should you go to work for 8, 9, 10, 12 hours a day or whatever, and just be unhappy? That's a huge part of your life that you spending quite miserable, isn't it?

**Natasha** Massively. And I think even I think, I think maybe just because I'm getting a bit older, and so all my friends are like, maybe like, oh, maybe I wouldn't be able to get that dream job by at least one a job that I have to be literally only at work from nine to five or it's a four day work week. Oh my god, the four day workweek, that's that's the dream.

**Stephanie** [Laughs] Tell me About it

**Natasha** A four day work week. You could like, do something that you want to do on the weekends and just have that balance a little bit so that you can just feel at the very least if you hate your job, you're most of your weeks not devoted to it. So yeah, and it might hinder people I would hate to work Somewhere where it heads to someone willing to have a full, complete experience. Because I think that's also like the diversity of thought and the diversity of a person will add to any business. And I've seen it so very clearly in my own my own organisation, but in just my friends as well, just having like those fresh ideas is massive to help him

**Stephanie** And Rosh, why do you think that organization's values are so important to Gen Z?

**Rosh** I guess more than other generations, I would say that it's rooted in a number of factors, I would say, firstly, the rise in sort of political movements. So Black Lives Matter we all saw, you know, that tragedy we we've seen the me to movement, and I think our generation in general, all sorts of just generally sick of the idea that we can't be ourselves within the workplace. So I think those sorts of organisational values surrounding inclusion and diversity are really important, because we don't want to live two separate lives, between work and home, and almost have to lie to our work colleagues, or hide or conceal parts of our identity, because of fear of judgement.

And I think a lot of the research points to the fact that when when you are yourself in the workplace, you perform far better and far more effectively as well. So it's a benefit to employers as well. So I think there are a number of factors, which are sort of related to why Gen Z are so sad about it.

**Stephanie** And Courtney, why do you think there's a divide between the generational groups in the workplace?

**Courtney** This is a really good question. Because divide feels like such a strong and negative word doesn't it?

**Stephanie** Yeah.

**Courtney** But if we think about the friends that we have, in our personal life, they're probably similar ages to us, probably because of school or education. But in the workplace, you don't really have that as much, you're probably more exposed to different generations ideas, you're more likely to build relationships with people from different generations. So actually, in the workplace, you're interacting with different generations more than you probably would in different areas of your life.

So I think if we're increasing age diversity, we have to appreciate that with an increase in diversity, that comes differences between people, and that should be celebrated, and it's something that's good, it's not a bad thing. I think naturally, there'll be differences in motivators, expectations around work life balance, perhaps communication styles, or methods of work, but if you think about the landscape of society and work over the past 60 or 70 years, it's changed a huge amount. Even if we just think about technology we use in our day jobs, we think about the legislation that protects us at work, even the terminology that we use in the D&I landscape, it changes all the time.

So you've got five generations of people working together, you've had a very different experience, probably of their first job. So of course, there's going to be divide. And there might be some conflicts when it comes to things like change management, but it's not necessarily a bad thing. And I think we can also thank the media for that divide to so we see lots of stereotypes played out in the news and TV, references to millennial snowflakes or Gen Z being glued to their phones, or old people not being able to use technology. And is it really true? Probably not. But it's really reinforcing their stereotypes. And that's probably what's creating the divide between people.

**Stephanie** So now let's talk about experiences. Courtney, Natasha, and Rosh are all Gen Z, but what have their experiences been like of the workplace? And let's also explore their expectations from employers.

Natasha, can you tell us about your role, because as we mentioned at the start, you're the outgoing equality and liberation officer at Leeds University Union, but you're also starting a career in non-profits. And how have you approached finding the right role and employer for you?

**Natasha** I guess how the equality liberation officer works, is you're part of the student exec part of those that anyone's ever been on a university campus around March there's people that put up posters to get you to vote for them. And I was one of these people, but in the middle of a pandemic, it was all online.

**Stephanie** That was completely different. How do you get those votes in from people during a pandemic?

**Natasha** I had a very fun, it was fun but embarrassing video that I can't watch anymore about me me running around in the field and I changed some lyrics or one of my favourite songs.

**Stephanie** What was the song?

**Natasha** Vote for Tash - Best Friend by Rex Orange County

**Stephanie** Tune

big up.. but I.. it was instead of what was the line.. Instead of ‘you're gonna want to be my best friend.. It was like ‘You're gonna really want to vote for TASH’ like not saying where are you find it, that is going to be the death of me, but yeah, I got the votes in did very well in the elections and then was finishing, but kind of did it on a complete whim, oh because I was like, Oh COVID I got a job lined up let's go with complete whim and then spent the last like nine months to a year I just like learning so much about student unions and charity governance and how equality and liberation or equality and diversity has completely changed and needs to change with the times and things like that. And that's how I met Courtney, back in back in September.

But it's been such an incredible experience. It's something that I really had a tough time adjusting to like, why, because I was working in a Bars K itchen before that. So I'm very used to hospitality, and also working as a personal care assistant. So I was very used to those part time, till roles and stuff. And then, for some reason, I'm now part of a trustee and head of a 11 million pound charity, which is insane to think. And I've just been able to learn so much.

And because of that, I know I want to say in either with working with young people, either in student unions, or in which all nonprofits but or in like another smaller charity, and just like because like when you work in smaller spaces, you get like kinda more responsibility and all of that type of stuff. And I think that's what I that's how I'm approaching like moving on to the next step, as I'm living on charity jobs right now. Like kind of, because I'm done on the 30th of June. So I kind of want a job to like, straight up. So if anyone wants to employ me, hit me up.

But also, it's kind of like always researching the company research and where you want to be because I want to move back down from Leeds back down to my hometown, and, like really work in a space that like even if it is for like a short period of time or a long period of time, I'm not too fast. As long as I feel like I'm doing something that's going to help people out, I'm doing something I'm doing quite varied work.

That's been the best thing about this job is that one day I'll be sitting in a meeting advocating for students the next day, I'll be out protesting with students and the next day, I'll be organising a club night, and the next day, I'll be doing something else, so it's so varied. I think that for me, that's been the best thing about this job, but how there it is.

And that's how I'm going to really approach finding a new job. It's like a multitasker type role and going for a company who will value, who values young voices, I think that's a big one. And you can see that just do like I think, do like their social media presences and like their LinkedIn stuff, and you can find that figure out quite easily which ones will value you and which ones just gonna make you a coffee.

**Stephanie** Yeah, I think it's important in the workplace, you know, not to be pigeonholed that you just do one thing, and that's it for the rest of your working life. You know, as human beings, we're incredible. We're capable of so much and it's been given those opportunities, and also pushing for those opportunities as well as to to to let us shine.

**Natasha** Honestly, to me, having one job for the rest of my affliction, sounds like hell, my idea of.. my idea of pandemonium, but it's always about that changing this and this, it is also another thing about how Gen Z Gen Z people are more likely to leave jobs like every two, three years, whereas our parents were more likely to stay in a job not even our parents, but like our grandparents are more likely to stay in a job for like 40, 50 years and then get rewarded with a pin at the end of 50 years of service.

**Stephanie** Or a Carriage Clock

**Natasha** So yeah, something like that. So I think that's also another thing too, like that people are so willing to like, leave jobs and I had these different experiences and also because we're being encouraged by online, a lot of like, tik-toky.. I live on Tik-Tok.. a lot of tick tock like, influencers, whatever you want to call them that talk about like job hopping and be financially free and securing self and having like career sabbaticals. I think that's what like, I think people want they want to be able to at least advance advance at a decent rate as a cost of living is going up, making sure that you that you're keeping that aligned with their values as well. And advancing in their career. I think that's the biggest thing for a lot of people, and me as well.

**Stephanie** So Rosh, nodding along to a lot of what you were saying there Natasha as well. And you've studied law haven’t you Rosh at UCL, but you also do a lot of volunteering. Can you tell us about why you got involved in in Youth Futures foundations?

**Rosh** Yeah, so the future voices group, essentially a group of 11 young people from diverse backgrounds, and we saw serving me every week to speak on our unique experiences, of being from a marginalised background, but to sort of advise the board and the youth teachers group and the British Youth Council on how they can help young people from marginalised backgrounds. I think one of the reasons why I got involved is, as I mentioned, I'm visually impaired, and there's a really, really high rate of unemployment amongst blind people. I'm not blind myself, but I felt that it's really unjustifiable that you know, often I always say that it's not my disability that stops me from succeeding in life, but rather people's reaction to it, and society's reaction to it. Your… it's only a disability if the way things are structured or made dis-enable you, in my opinion, and I feel that employees can do so much more to help people who are blind or visually impaired. I remember at high school, when I told my teachers I wanted to pursue a legal career, it was often are but you've gone an eye issue, how are you going to do all the reading? Well, there's actually technology now, that literally reads things for me.

So I think it's more just about those personal values, which I think is important to me also, around a diversity standpoint. So you mentioned that I was at UCL. I've actually left UCL now I'm at Cambridge, and Oxbridge in general hasn't had the best sort of reputation for diversity well deserved, in my opinion, based on my experiences, and I think it's not just race, I think it's class. I think there's just so many factors involved in the lack of diversity at Cambridge, in my experience, and that's something I'm really passionate about and changing.

**Stephanie** And you mentioned that your background being from an area in London, where, you know, the chance to go to Cambridge wasn't necessarily open to you was that?

**Rosh** Oh, no, definitely not. You know, I started life as probably one of the worst state schools in the country. I think at school, I wasn't necessarily the most academic or seen as like, a typical Cambridge candidate. And I really had to fight to get here. All throughout the process. I've told people I've been told, you know, we'll never get to training contract, you'll never get into Cambridge. But I almost had to like, fight through a lot of barriers to get here. And I think a lot of ethnic minority children face that unfortunately, especially black men and black women, from a lot of the research I've done, and it's a real shame, and also a Bangladeshi and Pakistani men, and also Sri Lankan Tamils as well, who just are really poorly represented. And I think it's a lot about, you know, people around you putting you in a box, and telling you, this is what you are capable of, based on your race, or your gender, or whatever. And it's constantly having to fight against the grain to get the same opportunities as the traditional individuals who enter these spaces.

**Stephanie** Gosh, that's incredibly powerful. And I love the fact that, you know, you had a dream, and you went for it. I mean, I've got a thing that I and a lot of my business and my public speaking, is built around my business, which is believed achieve, and you're a believe achiever. Y ou believed it and you achieved it. You went for it, and nothing was gonna stand in your way was it?

**Rosh** Thank you, I, I've always been someone I don't know if it's the right good thing or a bad thing, b ut I'm very negatively motivated. So if someone tells me I can't do something, so to make it my mission to prove them wrong, kind of used to people telling me I can't do something. So yeah, that's, that's where I'm going with that

**Stephanie** Truly inspirational. I'm very much the same. Someone says to me, you can't do it.. “Really”. And I think we all need a bit of that in our lives, and we all need to hear from people, and see people in the workplace who may be, you know, have come from underprivileged backgrounds, and I've worked and that that opens the door that kicks the door open for so many other people doesn’t it?

**Rosh** No, I completely agree. I think it's all about as we discussed previously, and as Tasha and Courtney have quite rightly said, I think representation matters. I think, using people like these, this podcast, for example, using our voices, to inspire people who are listening to this podcast thinking, you know, Will I make it? Can I see the same opportunities? My answer is yes, you absolutely can.

**Stephanie** You also mentioned ethics and values earlier, do you agree that the ethics of an organisation are important to you, and now how did you address that when looking for a role?

**Rosh** Yes. So completely agree, ethics matter massively to me. So when I applied for my training contract at a law firm, so I was at Cambridge at the time, I still am. And when I got here, and I barely saw any ethnic faces, despite lots of media reports about diversity increasing, I sort of looked around and was like, right, okay, I can't continue this in my future. And in my career, I can't do this anymore. So when I looked at law firms, I made sure I applied to firms where they weren't just saying, you know, we're interested in diversity, it was actually represented within the numbers and the people that I was seeing on their website.

Also, just in general, like, for example, for me, I'm going to Clifford Chance, and I believe they were one of the first city law firms to have a mentoring scheme specifically for visually impaired people. I think sometimes when corporations I can only speak from corporate law perspective, speak about disability, it's not nuanced. For example, someone who's, you know, has one type of disability they face different challenges to someone like myself, and I really wanted to work at a firm that I understood that nuance and I felt like I found that within the firm that I'm going to

**Stephanie** And Natasha, are the values and I'm sure they are of your employer important to you as well.

**Natasha** Yeah, massively because I have ADHD, neurodiversity, and I feel like, I feel like I wouldn't want to go to a place that has like, no understanding, I'm actually very, I'm very aware that I'm probably gonna have to, I think, to, like, teach a lot of how to work with me and how to how best to, to work with people who are neuro diversity, anywhere I go, or kind of come to terms with, but I actually want people that are really like, open to that willing to listen, willing to have those conversations, and I think that's the, the issues that I had before in the past is just people just weren't like, no, no, no, you have to do it this way, we have to do it this way.

And I really want some a place that values, that values diversity and values that space because that's what I've been where I've been working in the last year, I'm literally the quality liberation officer. So I kind of forced to value that diversity and stuff. But um, but I definitely wouldn't go to a new place. If I didn't think if I didn't at least trust you know, a little bit that they had a good, good values and values that are aligned with myself and a good approach to people who are different than me that also it doesn't necessarily have to be the most diverse place. But if they have an approach, ever, if they're really welcoming, and really listening, all that type of stuff. That's not what I look for, because sometimes I'm like, Oh, I'd love to work in an all black place. But probably what I'm probably gonna happen anytime soon. Yeah, yeah.

**Stephanie** And Courtney, what did you look for in an employer, how important was the diversity or the organisation.

**Courtney** So for me, it was really important because I did my degree in HR at undergrad. And I'd known that I wanted to work in the inclusion and diversity sector. So I was really lucky that I had quite a clear vision throughout that.

So I literally chose my modules and my dissertation topic based around it. So it was right at the forefront of my mind when I was looking, I really wanted somewhere that had inclusion as one of its core values. But I also wanted somewhere that would help with my learning and development around it. And I think that's where the diversity of an organisation comes in. Because, obviously, you learn so much from your own lived experience, but there's so much more that you can learn from others, and if you're in that diverse organisation, you're picking up that lived experience, you're learning from them, and you see in more perspectives on things, and that was so important to me.

I also think that for me with university, I didn't really feel like I belonged at uni, I was the first one in my family to go, no one else has been. And I think that really influenced my experience there, and I think that sense of not belonging made me realise that actually, I want to work somewhere where I feel like my unique perspective is valued. And that I can be authentically me and that I don't have to, like, minimise any aspects of who I am, and you'll be pleased to know that obviously Inclusive Employers is exactly that kind of place, and the team that I work with, they're fantastic. It's such a fantastic organisation, and every single day you do something that's making an impact for different people, and I think that's the thing that's really important.

So not only the diversity of the organisation, but actually the mission of it, what is it doing? Yeah, I think I'm really lucky to work here. And that hugely recommend it. If anyone's looking for a job.

**Stephanie** Yeah. And something nice that then as well, you don't want to minimise any part of your personality, you when you come to work, you want to be your true and I mentioned this earlier for, you know, fear of repeating myself, but you just don't want to, you don't want to minimise any part of your personality, because you want to bring your whole true self to work.

**Courtney** Yeah, absolutely, and I think it's just little things about talking about yourself and your experiences, and I think in some workplaces, you feel like you have to hold back on talking about that. You feel like you have to say, Oh, you sort of you don't change yourself, but you do change perhaps your mannerisms or the way you talk or perhaps quite how much you disclose about your experiences, I think - I think it makes a huge difference being able to work so that way you can openly talk about all aspects of your life.

**Stephanie** So now we're going to think about how employers should approach attracting and retaining people from Gen Z in their workplaces.

Natasha, how can employers attract people from from Gen Z

Natasha The biggest thing is being proactive. Sometimes you know those old school like brochures and stuff where they pull out the only like black and brown and like [disabled] person and put them on the front page. Don't do that. Good. I think that's always the token ID that always makes me or you can tell straight away when when they're just practising but only people of colour around. But I'd always say be proactive in the sense of like what work you do sort of See, like, so I'm really pushing for our humans to be anti ables,t to be anti Amis union and to start doing that work, because we've done a lot of incredible work on anti racist, but that was all very reactive to, to the global situation at the time and 2020 with BLM, and one of the best ways that you can show genuine, authentic diversity and inclusion practices is to listen to your staff members and reflect that in your values and in your strategies and in your missions.

And I think just being just as being as authentic as possible, I think that's the best way we think as as people of colour as minorities as working class, low income people, you can sniff out someone who does it. He's doing it authentically and as someone who's doing it, just to just to get those numbers in. And you'll also have be able to have like those experiences.

Also, when is it offboarding or onboarding when someone leaves the place? Sitting down? Ask him what not saying why he left, but I was like, What can we do better? What can you do? Because I think there's not necessarily that approach of like “Oh, we're we're still learning, we're still trying to progress with it”. It's more like we have a business, we the organisation, you should fit in with us, and the people that you have your teams are the biggest credits, and the biggest champions of diversity and the biggest allies. So you should be leaning on them. And just being authentic and honest, that's probably quite difficult. But genuinely committing to diversity and inclusion, and maybe hiring inclusive employees. I don't know.

**Stephanie** Yeah, exactly. Rosh, how do you think people can attract people from Generation Z?

**Rosh** Yeah, I completely echo everything that Natasha said, in terms of being authentic in your DNI strategy. I will never forget when I went to the diversity and inclusion event, and every single panel member was white, and there was no diversity in terms of race. And I was quite confused, because I was like, they were speaking about how they should, you know, get people from diverse backgrounds, and I was like, your panel is not representative of the issues that you're speaking about. So I think issues like that definitely is important.

I also think actual work policies, for example. So if you have a disability, what are your policies in place to support those individuals? I think sometimes it can come across quite performative. When employers say, you know, yes, we're looking to recruit X amount of people, we really want this to be an inclusive workplace, but what are you actually doing in terms of your policy is to make it an inclusive space. So I know for me, for I know, with some law firms, they provide rest breaks, if you've got a visual impairment, or if you've got some form of disability while you're working. And that's something that I looked up in terms of sort of workplace benefits. So I think it's, as Natasha was saying, it's not just about inauthentic or performative DNI, but actually getting to the root cause of helping the people that you want within your organisation.

**Stephanie** And what would put you off from joining a particular organisation.

**Rosh** So I think something that puts me off in organisation, and it will continue to do so is lack of diversity in terms of race. I just do not buy this whole ethnic minorities are not applying to us. That's why there's no diversity, if that's the case, while other employers have got diverse, you know, employees. So if people are not applying, Surely there must be something that you are doing wrong to make this not a welcoming place. So I, I literally have no sympathy. When it comes to those sorts of issues, it completely puts me off, and I wouldn't work for a firm where I felt like I wasn't represented, particularly at junior and senior levels, I understand the whole concept of the trickle down effect and how, you know, it takes time for people to reach senior positions. And I account for that. But at the junior level, if there's no diversity for me, that's a big red flag.

**Stephanie** I can see Natasha in agreement there as well.

**Natasha** Yeah, I think for me, maybe I approach it different because I've always grown up in a very white space, so being from Hertfordshire to very used to be the only person of colour in a room. So I actually it doesn't faze me too much. Maybe should faze me more. Maybe it should impact me more. But I'm more I guess I'm more looking at. I want as much as Rosh was saying about policies and stuff like that. And the space to like go no, I'm not going to do all the diversity work for you. I think that's also another thing when when you're the only person of colour in a room is like, “Oh, you get to get shoved to do all the diversity work”, and I guess I am because I'm the College Liberation Officer. That is my job, but like in another job where that wasn't specifically part of my remit . But I also want to have that want to have, I'm also very much more than happy to have those discussions as long as they're being listened to. It's very much in the headspace of I have a natural, I have a natural distrust of all white people, I'm gonna say natural distrust about white people. But I also but I also am very aware of people that are really willing to listen. So I'm hoping in interviews and stuff like that, that you'll get to a point where you have people around but just really want to listen. But I also completely agree with Rosh is very much in the headspace of, of like if there's not many people in colour, there’s probably a reason, but I'm just very used I'm very used to it.

**Stephanie** No.. we’ve got to listen, we've all got to learn from each other. We've got to ask questions. And you know, knowledge is power isn't it?

**Natasha** Massively, massively. I think that's also listening to even just like in work, regardless of your race, I think listening to the people that you already have, as well, because there was a reason those people apply to you. There's a reason why people took the job and stayed for however long they stayed. So listen to to them, like hearing what their voices are in the situation. Again, as I said before, biggest asset?

**Stephanie** And Courtney, what's Inclusive Employers advice on this? If organisations don't address this, will they then have a shortfall of employees in the future. What should employers I guess, be doing to ensure that Gen Z want to actually work for them?

**Courtney** Yeah. So I think when we're thinking about attraction, it's really key that it's obvious what your values and priorities are. So what comes up when those recruits are trying to Google your organisation? Is it easy for them to find what you stand for?

It’s great to spruce up those recruitment pages but If they dig further, what are they going to find on your socials? What are they going to find on your website? What is that online presence like? And it's not just about inclusion values, it's, it's wider than that, I think transparency is a really big one. So I'm sure we've all looked for jobs, and there's been no salary range put on that job advert, it just says, salaries to be confirmed. If you're Gen Z, it's probably one of your first jobs, you don't have those skills to negotiate a salary yet, you don't even know if you can afford to live on the potential salary that they're offering. So even little things like that, really do play into whether people are going to believe in your organisation and are going to trust that you're going to treat them right. So it's right from that job advert. Really, you've got to be thinking “Am I being as inclusive as possible here”, “Am I really showcasing what we're about as an organisation”

**Stephanie** And finally, Courtney, what can employers do to have a successful intergenerational workforce? Because this is this is a key thing, isn't it? The intergenerational workforce?

**Courtney** Yeah, absolutely. And I think as with all aspects of inclusion, it's about valuing those differences, understanding your workforce and being open to learn from each other. So analyse your demographic data and make sure you've really got a good understanding of what your work who's in your workforce, how your workforce is made up. And I think we have to recognise the benefits of intergenerational workplaces. So there's that knowledge sharing, can you use mentoring schemes or reverse mentoring schemes, your longest serving employees have got a wealth of knowledge to pass on, it might be around their organisation or industry knowledge, and they can pass that on to younger generations, younger generations can bring in all those new skills and ideas and methods and share those with their teams. So it's really about engaging people with each other.

I think it's also important that we understand the needs of the individual and avoid making assumptions based on generations, so you can't assume, for example, that everyone from Gen Z is going to know how to use technology. So when we went to working from home, it was also an assumption, like, everyone knows how to use teams, or zoom or whatever, if they're from a certain generation. And actually, that assumption means it's probably people that are scared to ask for help, because you've just assumed that everyone's a genius when it comes to tech, just based on their age, which isn't necessarily true, so it's really about treating people as individuals understanding what their needs are, understanding what their styles are working now, their communication methods, and really listening to those people that you've got within your organisation.

**Stephanie** And mentoring as the, you know, learning from previous generations, you know, there's a wealth of knowledge that, you know, I do fear myself that working in the broadcast industry, you know, there's lots of little things that I think are disappearing, that that shouldn't be disappearing, you know, lots of little tech things. And I think some of that generational stuff is not being passed on to the to the current generation to Gen Z and beyond, which I think is really important. So we can't lose that, all of that fantastic, incredible knowledge that previous generations have learned. We need that passed on, don't we?

**Courtney** Yeah, absolutely. And I think it's really about building those relationships between your colleagues and I think there's so much that you can learn from each other. And part of it is storytelling as well, isn't it and I think storytelling really helps us empathise with people. And if we're hearing their stories, we're more likely to listen to what they've got to say we're more likely to learn from them. So yeah, I think really building those relationships, your mentoring is a really good start.

**Stephanie** A big thank you to Courtney, Natasha, and Rosh today. Thank you so much for taking time to be part of our podcast. I wish you all continued success in your careers as well and hope to get to speak to you all again in the future.

**Guests** Thank you. Thank you.

**Stephanie** If you'd like support on this topic, speak to your Inclusive Employers account manager or get in touch via the website, and on the next podcast. We're going to be discussing disability at work. How are you supporting disabled colleagues? Are there any barriers to stop disabled people joining your organisation and also what can we do to ensure everyone has the opportunity to be successful at work?

**Closing credits** You've been listening to talking inclusion with Stephanie Hirst. If you've enjoyed listening to this podcast then please subscribe and leave a review from wherever you get your podcasts.

**‘Talking inclusion with…’ is a podcast series brought to you by Inclusive Employers.**