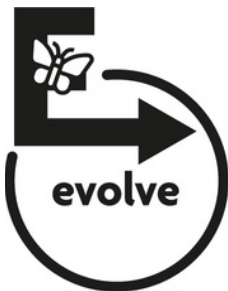


Evolve Pillar **Inclusive Employers Standard**

The Inclusive Employers Standard is built upon six pillars of inclusion, which serve as its framework. These pillars—Engage, Equip, Empower, Embed, Evaluate, and Evolve, determine the success and impact of inclusion efforts within the workplace.

In 2024, we kicked off an event series in which we met and focused on one pillar at a time. In our fourth event, we examined the evolve pillar. Here are the outcomes from the event.



The evolve pillar explores how you develop inclusion understanding beyond the walls of your organisation, by engaging and learning from others, to become a role model and thought leader for your industry.

Working as an internal inclusion lead can often feel lonely at times, which is why connecting with and learning from others is a vitally important part of evolving your inclusion approach.

Who should I be learning from?

The easy answer is anyone and everyone. There is so much we can learn from others regardless of where they are in their inclusion journey. Connect with people within and outside of your industry with the view to bringing that learning back into your organisation to adapt it to your context.

How can I connect with others?

Horizon scanning can look very different depending on the challenges of your organisation or industry. Budget can often be the biggest challenge. Whilst you might wish you could attend international inclusion conferences or visit organisations around the globe to understand how they apply inclusion to different cultural contexts, this might be impossible for you. However, with the internet networking and horizon scanning does not have to cost a penny. There is so much information, communities and events online for free to connect with new people and learn.

There are no universally accepted approaches for horizon scanning and seeking inclusion learning but below are some suggestions:

- **Inter-organisation inclusion networks**

LinkedIn is a great place to look for a wide range of inclusion focused networking opportunities. Joining virtual networks can help you connect to people outside of your industry and gain innovative insights.

- **Industry specific networks**

Many industries have industry specific inclusion networks, where I&D professionals connect and collaborate on different projects. Explore if your industry has a network like this, and if not, why not start one.

- **Memberships and subscriptions**

You may already have a membership to Inclusive Employers, if not, why not? Memberships and subscriptions to inclusion support can be a great way to gain insight and support on topics you may not be confident with. It can however add up, so be purposeful in the partnerships you decide to invest in and make sure you are getting the most out of them.

- **Conferences and events**

Attending virtual or in person events and conferences can be a good way to expand your support network and hear new ideas. Again this can get pricey so consider what are the most important events to help you with the challenges you are facing. Alternatively, seek out free events, or put on your own to bring people together.

- **Academic or industry research**

Often once we leave school we never want to read academic literature again, but there is still so much we can learn from research and grey literature around inclusion. Using Google Scholar or other academic search engines can be an easy way to find new research on inclusion topics.

- **One to one support**

Don't forget you can learn a lot from talking to people you know. They may be in a similar role to you or they may be in a totally different industry. Look at how you can support or mentor each other to expand your knowledge and bring new ideas into both your organisations.

How do I become a thought leader and role model to my industry?

Contrary to popular belief, you do not need to be getting everything right to be a role model. People can learn just as much from mistakes as they can from successes. By publicly sharing your insights both good and bad you can support others to develop on their inclusion journey. You could:

- Speak at or host an event for other I&D professionals
- Publish blogs or articles sharing your insights externally
- Invest in or contribute to academic research to explore challenges in your industry
- Campaign for change if you feel there is a practice or procedure in your industry that needs to change

Holding your industry to account can seem like a terrifying thing to do, but it doesn't have to be. Change can only happen when we question the way things are done and suggest alternative solutions. By openly sharing alternative solutions that have worked for you, others in your industry can start to make a change too.

It's also important to keep a track of the impact of all these activities to understand if and how you are shaping your industry for the better. It's really positive to celebrate these achievements

Progressing Inclusion through Knowledge Sharing

Even before achieving the highest level of Gold on the Inclusive Employers Standard, Volkswagen Group UK have been sharing their learnings within and beyond their industry. By sharing their learnings they have been able to have a meaningful impact on many other organisations.

Many of their senior leaders are actively involved in speaking at local, national and international events to share their insights and learnings around inclusion, for example at events hosted by the Automotive 30% Club, Women Automotive Network, and Milton Keynes Pride.

In May 2023, Alex Smith, Managing Director of Volkswagen Group UK, was approached to speak at the Automotive 30% Club conference, which was attended by 166 leaders across the automotive industry, on the topic of using data to drive diversity decisions.



Guest Speaker

Aman Sidhu
Diversity, Equality and
Inclusion Business Partner
Volkswagen Group UK

Helpful Resources

- [National Inclusion Week](#)
- [Inclusioners Conference](#)

The talk explored the Group's approach to data management, identifying pay gaps, examining leaver rates and then constructing action plans to counteract any issues. What was eye opening for many was that within Volkswagen Group UK they don't have 'commercial data' and then 'D&I data' as such. This means inclusion has a clear strategic importance and is treated with the significance it warrants. 72% of attendees identified Alex as the most interesting industry speaker. A video of Alex's talk is available [here](#).

Commenting on Volkswagen Group's approach to sharing best practice, DE&I Business Partner, Aman Sidhu, said: 'It's essential for Volkswagen Group UK and the broader industry to share DE&I learnings because it creates a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. By openly discussing challenges and successes, we can accelerate progress toward a more inclusive workplace and industry, benefiting not only our employees but also our customers and society as a whole. Opportunities to exchange knowledge ensure that we're all moving forward together, reinforcing that diversity, equity and inclusion are essential for a thriving, future-ready business.'

“The support and constructive feedback Inclusive Employers have given us since we achieved the Silver Standard three years ago has helped to shape our activities, driven our focus on DE&I, and accelerated our journey.”