



## **Training Attention Case Study**

### **Using Diversity Training as a method of Organisational Change**

#### **What did the Client want to have happen?**

Bexley Care Trust wanted to improve their accessibility for people with diverse backgrounds. They were interested in appealing to a multi-cultural community.

#### **What did we do?**

Before embarking on the project we asked the senior leaders about their own diversity. How different were their values? Their working styles? Their team roles? How did *they* negotiate across personal boundaries to become inclusive as a group?

We then issued a pre training questionnaire to find out about how the rest of the staff were thinking about diversity. They described their experience of diversity in broad, impersonal terms. The following terms were used:

Race 32%	Sexual orientation 2%	Culture 11%
Disability 4%	Individuals/others 2%	Age 4%
Gender 7%	Beliefs 4%	

Comments were made such as “diversity doesn’t affect us”, “I don’t have prejudices”, “people should just be treated the same”. Our interpretation was that staff in the PCT did not have a personal understanding of how diversity issues could affect the way in which they worked, even between people of similar ethnic origin or age. They had been taught how to use the politically correct language and set up a system where stereotypes and prejudice were not allowed to be discussed or explored.

Given that stereotyping is a typical and necessary human trait, and that we all have prejudices of one sort or another, the first session aimed to provide an understanding of the ways in which we subconsciously delete, distort and generalise information to fit our stereotypes about the world. Analysis of the evaluation forms after this first session revealed that participants were starting to shift their conceptions about what diversity meant. They used the following terms when discussing diversity:

Individuals/others 50%	Religions 1%
Cultures 11%	Race 1%



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## What they said:

“I was surprised to realise how quickly and strongly I form first impressions. I’m aware of my unconscious thinking that leads to my discrimination”.

“I understand now, that my colleague [who I don’t get along with] must work and think very differently from me – it’s not that she’s trying to wind me up”.

“The diversity questions were really useful – I learnt a little bit more about different customs. It made me realise that I hardly take time to enquire anymore”.

“When you’re little you’re always asking questions, you aren’t scared of looking silly. We should just ask questions”.

## What happened next?

We ran a second session to invite participants to think about their own practice and how they worked in difference with each other. In the evaluation forms after the second session, the following ‘categories’ were used when referring to diversity issues:

Clients 10%	Individuals/others 35%	Community 2%
Organisations 10%	Team 4%	Home 3%
Colleagues 17%	Culture/race/ethnicity 10%	

The use of the above terms demonstrates that participants had moved from an understanding that diversity was something that only happened in terms of legislative categories to something that affected all people and the way we live and work. Participants had a personal experience of their own diversity.

The following comments indicate how they were planning to take their learning back into their work:

“I’m going to ask direct questions of new mothers – what their expectations are in how they’ll feed their child – rather than assume they’ll automatically do what I would do”.

“I find racism quite prominent in my personal life – I’m going to ask friends direct questions about their racist views”.

“I have a member of my staff with very set views on how to practise. I’m going to use these kind of questions to find out what she wants to achieve – let her know what I



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want her to do and be clear that she'll need to fit her way of working into my way of running the team".

"There's a member of my team I just about get on with. I realised that unlike rest of team I don't know her kids' names or her partner's name or where they last went on holiday. As a result of training when we are next on shift together, at lunchtime I'm going to ask her and see what happens for me".

"Well, that person that none of the office get along with, I'm gonna ask her the next time I make tea for everyone if she wants a cuppa too. I've never done that before".

We think these comments show a dramatic transformation in the way participants are now thinking about their colleagues and clients. They sound curious and collaborative, are holding back from making assumptions and therefore less likely to pre-judge. Changes like these don't just affect a company's attitude to people of a different ethnic origin but also the culture in which they work.

For more information on our training programmes please contact Nancy on [nancy@trainingattention.co.uk](mailto:nancy@trainingattention.co.uk).