WALSALL WORKPLACE DIVERSITY: PERSPECTIVES AND INSIGHTS REPORT

EXPLORING THE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION PRACTICES OF WORKPLACES AND BUSINESSES IN WALSALL

JUNE 2021

walsallworkplacediversity.co.uk

Presented by

Black Country
Chamber of
Commerce

In Partnership With:

UNIVERSITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON

Commissioned By:

WALSALL
FOR ALL

Department
for Work &
Pensions

Contents

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WALSALL WORKPLACE DIVERSITY

Introduction

This report is the summary of an eight-month research study commissioned by Walsall for All and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), designed to provide a snapshot into the Diversity and Inclusion practices amongst businesses in the Walsall area.

The study examines strategic human resource management activities and practices of surveyed business including their positions on monitoring and planning and their approaches to recruitment, reward and retention towards generally underrepresented groups (women, ethnic minority communities, those aged 50+, individuals with disabilities and those individuals identifying as LGBT). The study was undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic and further provides a glimpse of how one of the most significant economic and health challenges for generations has impacted local business responses to Diversity and Inclusion.
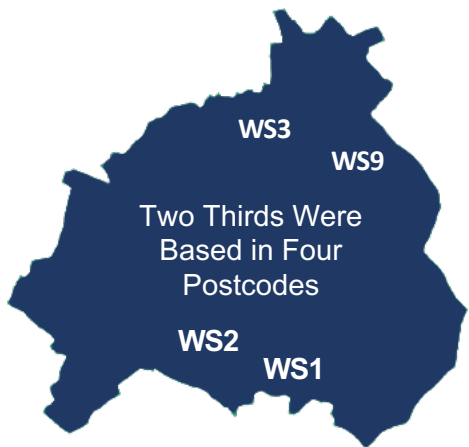
By presenting an overview of current employment practices of 64 surveyed businesses and the view of 59 employees from the Walsall Metropolitan Borough area, the report summarises approaches to employing and developing those from underrepresented groups and considered the lived experiences and perspectives of individuals from these groups. The study contributes to the work of the commissioners and is part of on-going commitment by many in the local business community to make Walsall a great place to live and work.

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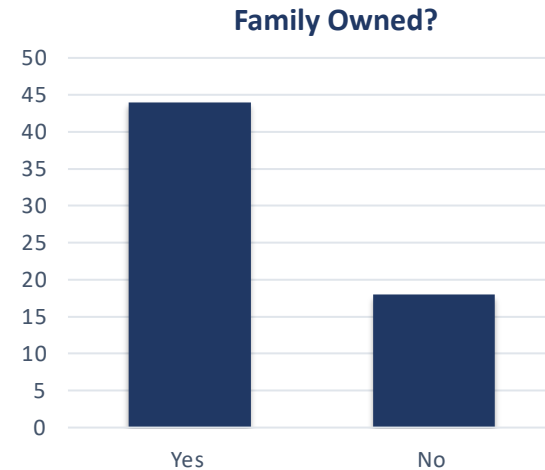Commerce

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BUSINESS PERSPECTIVES

About the Surveyed Businesses

WS3
WS9

Two Thirds Were Based in Four Postcodes

WS2
WS1

48% were Manufacturers

55%

Had been established for 30 years or longer

Family Owned?

The majority were family businesses

How Many Employees?

Most respondents were SMEs
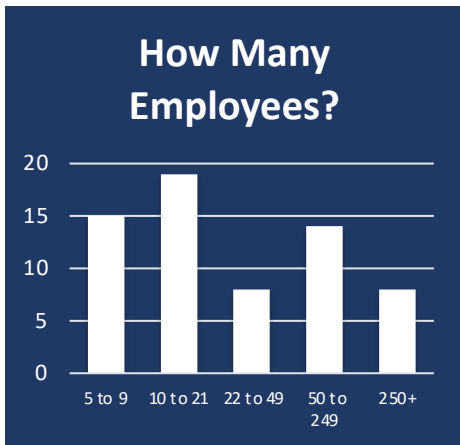
64

Responses were received from businesses

HR Director **HR** CEO
MD **Manager**
Director Owner

Those with responsibility for setting or delivering Equality, Diversity and Inclusion completed the surveys

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Monitoring and Retention

- A majority of businesses surveyed (71%) collect employee demographic data to comply with regulatory requirements

- Only one in three businesses utilised this demographic data in order to inform or make decisions about future workplace planning

- 5 businesses used this data to inform strategic decisions and analysed trends around redundancy, promotion, rewards and renumeration of underrepresented groups

Recruitment and Selection

- 53% of businesses attempted to anonymise the demographic information of applicants during the selection process

- 62% of businesses attempted to always have a diverse selection and interview panel

- Businesses used a combination of both traditional and newer, digital methods to advertise vacancies although opportunities existed to use more specialist media or platforms likely to be viewed by underrepresented groups

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Workforce Diversity

Out of 57 respondents, the following numbers advised the proportion of their workforce demographics as follows:

	0-9%	10-19%	20-39%	40-59%	60-79%	80%+
Women	7	14	14	13	2	2
BAME	25	10	8	6	0	1
Aged 50+	10	16	11	7	3	3
LGBT	22	1	1	0	0	0
Individuals with a Disability	38	7	0	0	1	0

Accountability

- Half of businesses stated that diversity and inclusion was part of their organisational values

- 23 businesses had incentives and / or penalties in place for their leaders in terms of meeting diversity and inclusion goals

- 7 businesses assigned specific responsibility for diversity and inclusion to a senior leader

- One third of businesses indicated that the progression of its managers was linked with their performance on diversity and inclusion goals

- Only 5 businesses indicated that they had begun to address diversity and inclusion practices strategically within their HR approaches (including recruitment and selection; leadership pipeline; training and development; etc.)

- 2 businesses stated that diversity and inclusion was only considered at the executive level due to resource constraints

Training Provision

- Less than 30% of businesses provided regular, compulsory diversity and inclusion training for all

- In almost half of businesses, managers received regular diversity and inclusion training

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Equal Opportunities and Access (Recruitment, Retention, Reward):

Businesses were asked what activities they had in place to support or focus on underrepresented groups.

A small number of respondents stated that they had practices in place to support groups across recruitment, retention and reward or had specific training, development and mentoring programmes in place. Most respondents (47 - 52) stated that no specific activities took place to support underrepresented groups attain equal access to opportunities.

Specific Activities Exist In Surveyed Businesses For Underrepresented Groups:

	Women	BAME	Aged 50+	LGBT+	Individuals with Disabilities
Recruitment & Selection	5	5	3	3	3
Pipeline of Leaders	1	2	0	0	0
Training & Development	1	1	1	1	1
Mentoring & Coaching Programmes	0	0	0	0	0

WALSALL WORKPLACE DIVERSITY

Business Diversity and Inclusion Practices During the COVID-19 Pandemic
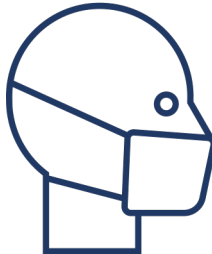
Most businesses claimed no discrimination existed amongst those groups more likely to be impacted by COVID-19 when recruiting new employees

One in ten businesses, used sick leave data during COVID-19 in order to inform any downsizing decisions during this period
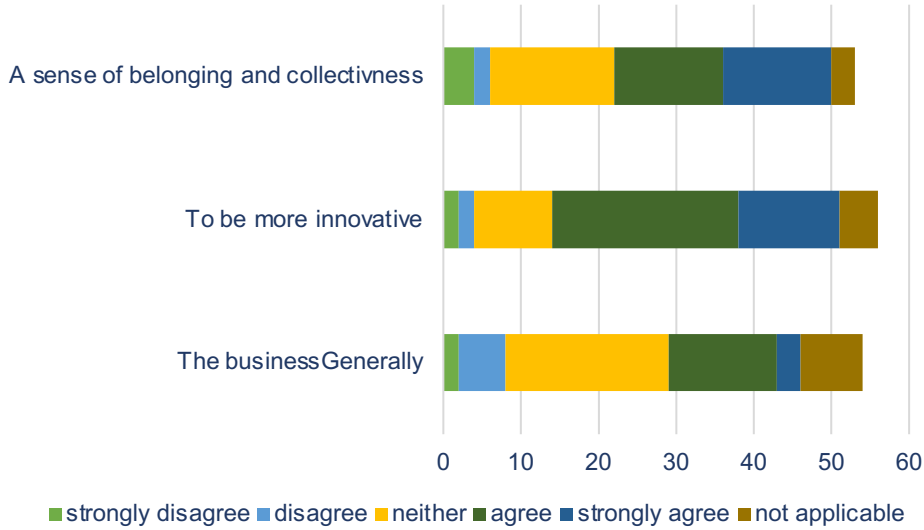
Whilst the majority of businesses listed the mental and physical wellbeing of their employees as a priority, one in three stated that diversity and inclusivity practices were put on the back burner during the COVID-19 pandemic

21 businesses encouraged line managers to actively monitor employees working from home whom they considered more likely to get distracted due to care commitments - without realising this was poor practice, discriminatory and could result in potential litigation

During the pandemic, 48% of businesses said their productivity was better than the industry average and 40% said that financial performance was in line with industry averages

44% of businesses furloughed staff during the pandemic and 14% reduced working hours to cope with reduced demand

During the pandemic, our diversity and inclusion practices helped

Horizontal stacked bar chart with categories:
- A sense of belonging and collectivness
- To be more innovative
- The businessGenerally

Legend: strongly disagree, disagree, neither, agree, strongly agree, not applicable

X-axis: 0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60

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Business Leadership & Diversity

The study, defined business leadership as the group of individuals responsible for the strategic direction of a business and its corporate governance and sought to discover more about the group in surveyed businesses accountable for achieving this. Chairperson is further defined as the individual leading the board (who hold management to account either legally or as a group of experts) and the CEO / MD as the head of the organisation supported by a Management team.
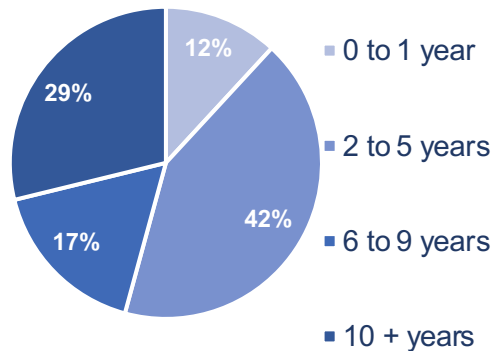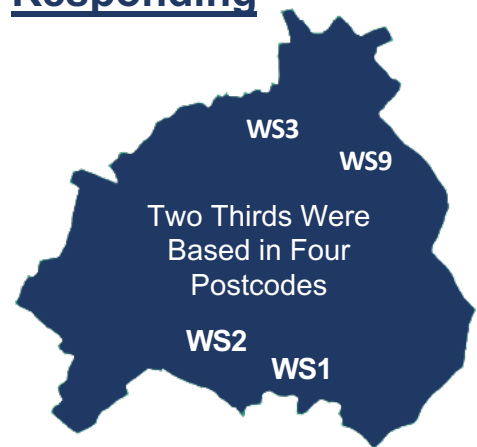
- Typically, board members are white, male and aged 50 or older with white board members constituting 80% of the board in 61% of all businesses
- In one in four businesses, the ratio of women on the board is above 40%
- BAME and other ethnic groups constitute only 9% and 3% on boards respectively
- 3 boards in surveyed businesses have members from the LGBT+ community
- On 5 boards, at least one members has a disability
- On 2 boards there is a 40% representation of younger people aged 16 – 24
- The Chairperson of boards remains typically male (85%) , white (73%), over 50 years of age (67%)
- In businesses surveyed, 56% of Chairpersons are a member of the family who own the business
- One in four CEOs is from an ethnic minority group
- Management teams are still dominated by older (54%) white (78%) males
- 5% of CEOs who were a woman or had a disability
- One business had a CEO who identified as LGBT+
- Women are included on most senior management teams
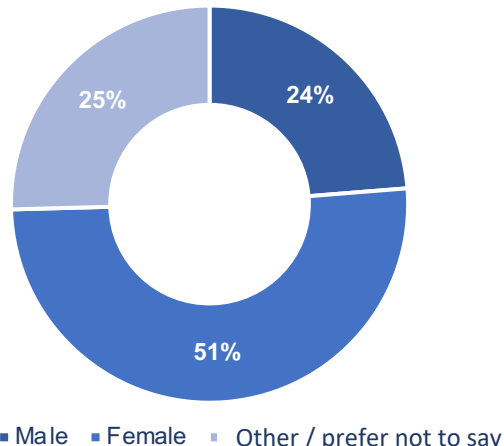- Only 2 management teams in surveyed businesses are 80% BAME

WALSALL WORKPLACE DIVERSITY

EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVES

About the Individuals Working for Walsall Businesses Responding

Two Thirds Were Based in Four Postcodes

WS3
WS9
WS2
WS1

Years worked for current employer

- 0 to 1 year — 12%
- 2 to 5 years — 42%
- 6 to 9 years — 17%
- 10 + years — 29%

A majority had worked for the current employer 2 – 5 years and 77% were on permanent, full-time contracts

Age of Respondents

- 65+
- 55-65 — 18.18%
- 50-54 — 13.64%
- 40-49 — 36.36%
- 25-39 — 25.00%
- 16-24 — 6.82%

Ethnicity

- Bangladeshi — 2%
- Indian — 7%
- Black — 2%
- White - British — 77%
- Other White Background — 7%
- Prefer not to answer — 5%

(2% shown at top)

Gender

- Male — 24%
- Female — 51%
- Other / prefer not to say — 25%
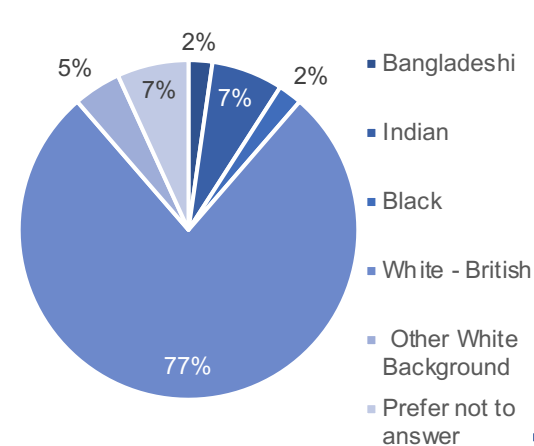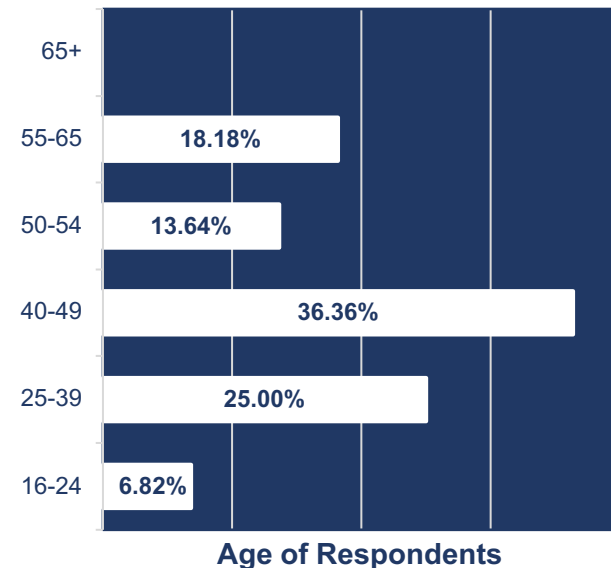
7%
Stated they had a disability

27% worked for manufacturers

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Summary of Attiudes to Workplaces and Their Employer's Diversity and Inclusion Practices

- Over 80% indicated that were generally happy with their jobs and felt a sense of belonging to their workplace
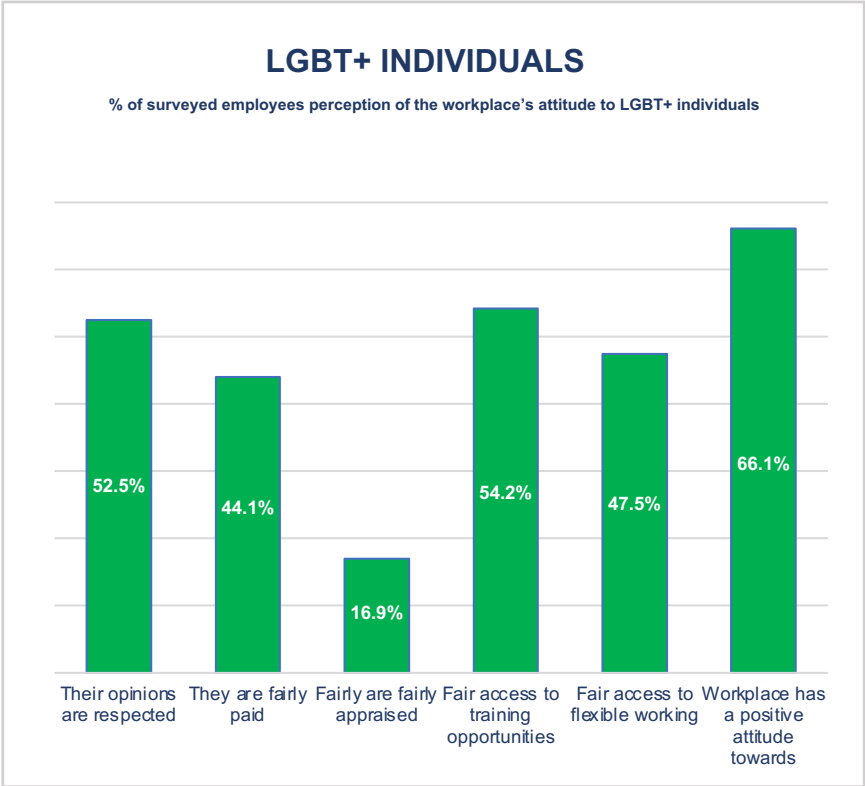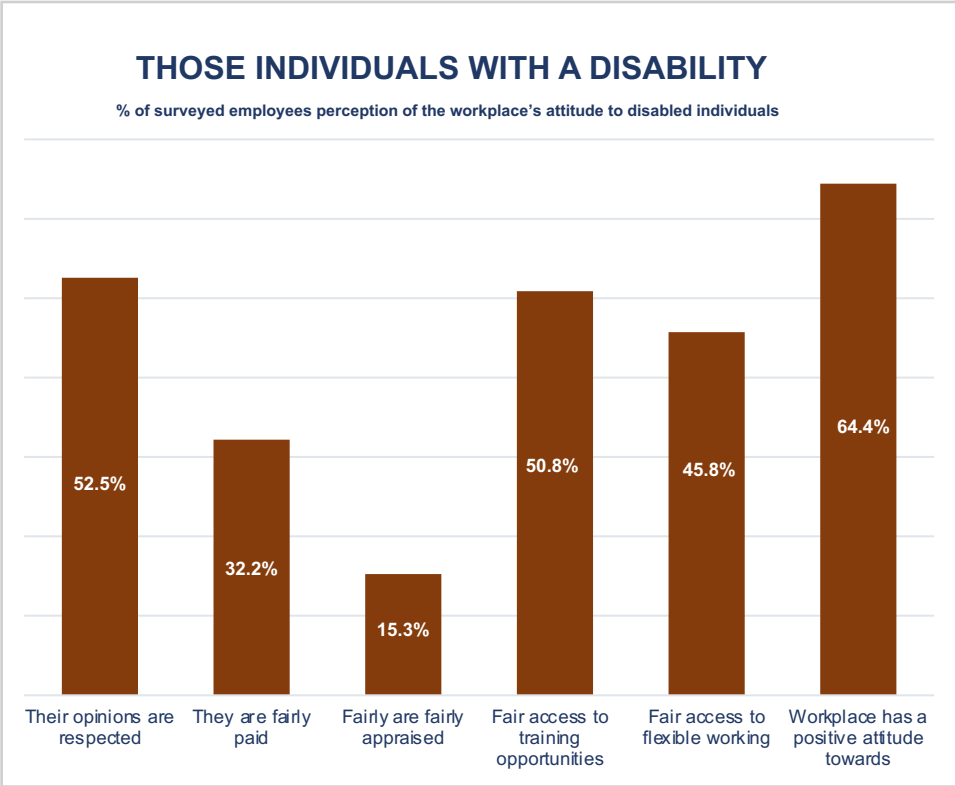- A majority felt that they were trusted to be competent and reliable in their work
- Over half felt that employers were considerate and understanding when emergency leave was needed and made a good effort to ensure cover was arranged for any colleagues requiring emergency leave
- Over half felt that their workplaces had a good attitude to workers over 50 years with 72% stating that ageing and the challenges associated with ageing were openly talked about. 96% disagreed that older workers were likely to be viewed as 'deadwood' by their employer
- A significant majority (80%) felt welcomed during their interview, that interview questions were clear and relevant and 63% said that their interview panel members were diverse
- 70% felt that their opinion was respected at work regardless of their gender, ethnicity or age
- Over half felt that colleagues who had disabilities or identified as LGBT+ were valued and their views and opinions respected
- Less than half stated that it was their belief that pay parity existed or equal opportunities to flexible working were available to those colleagues who were BAME, aged over 50, LGBT+ or disabled compared to other groups
- A fifth indicated that their employers had strategies around recruitment and mentoring which actively supported underrepresented groups
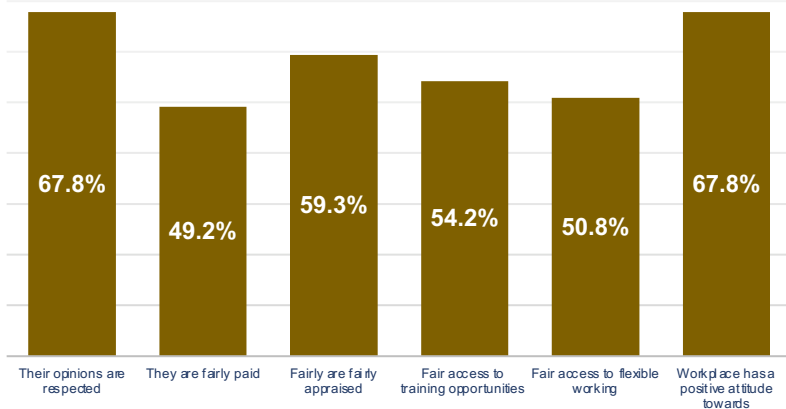
WALSALL WORKPLACE DIVERSITY

The survey asked employees to asses the work of their employer in respect of attitude and reward practices targeting underrepresented groups:

THOSE INDIVIDUALS WITH A DISABILITY

% of surveyed employees perception of the workplace's attitude to disabled individuals

Their opinions are respected	They are fairly paid	Fairly are fairly appraised	Fair access to training opportunities	Fair access to flexible working	Workplace has a positive attitude towards
52.5%	32.2%	15.3%	50.8%	45.8%	64.4%

LGBT+ INDIVIDUALS

% of surveyed employees perception of the workplace's attitude to LGBT+ individuals

Their opinions are respected	They are fairly paid	Fairly are fairly appraised	Fair access to training opportunities	Fair access to flexible working	Workplace has a positive attitude towards
52.5%	44.1%	16.9%	54.2%	47.5%	66.1%

WALSALL WORKPLACE DIVERSITY

The survey asked employees to asses the work of their employer in respect of attitude and reward practices targeting underrepresented groups:
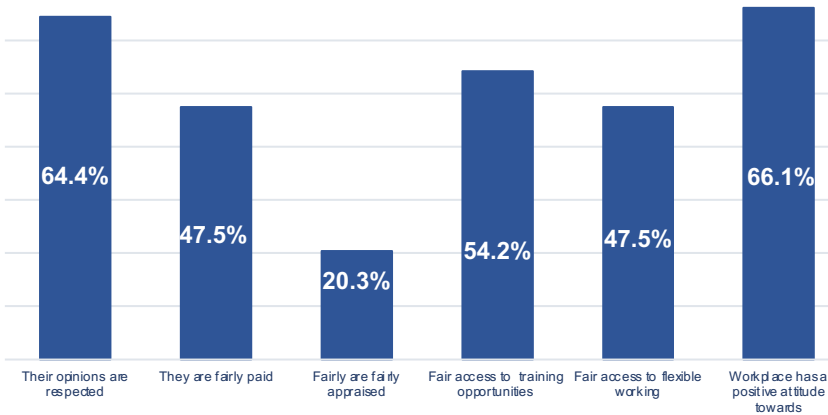
WOMEN

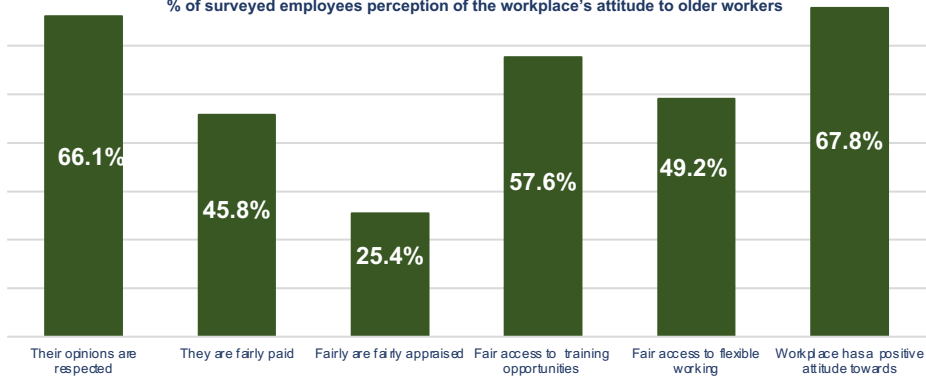**% of surveyed employees perception of the workplace's attitude to women workers**

Their opinions are respected	They are fairly paid	Fairly are fairly appraised	Fair access to training opportunities	Fair access to flexible working	Workplace has a positive attitude towards
67.8%	49.2%	59.3%	54.2%	50.8%	67.8%

BAME

% of surveyed employees perception of the workplace's attitude to BAME workers

Their opinions are respected	They are fairly paid	Fairly are fairly appraised	Fair access to training opportunities	Fair access to flexible working	Workplace has a positive attitude towards
64.4%	47.5%	20.3%	54.2%	47.5%	66.1%

THOSE AGED 50+

% of surveyed employees perception of the workplace's attitude to older workers

Their opinions are respected	They are fairly paid	Fairly are fairly appraised	Fair access to training opportunities	Fair access to flexible working	Workplace has a positive attitude towards
66.1%	45.8%	25.4%	57.6%	49.2%	67.8%

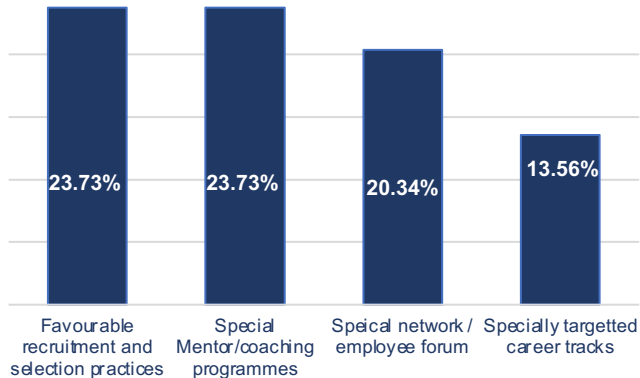**WALSALL WORKPLACE DIVERSITY**

The survey asked employees to assess their employers practice to attract and support underrepresented groups:

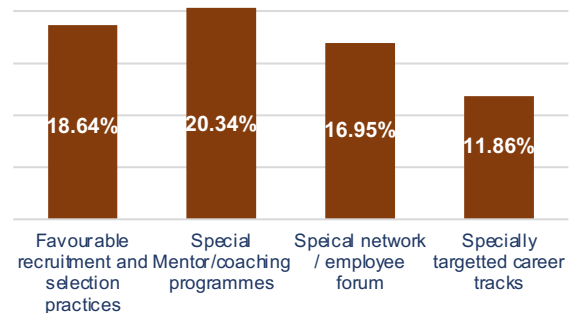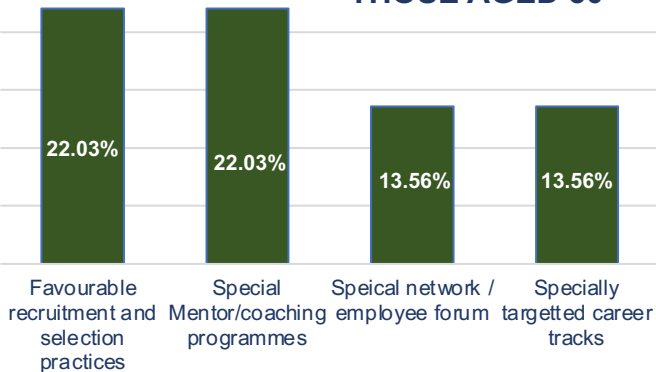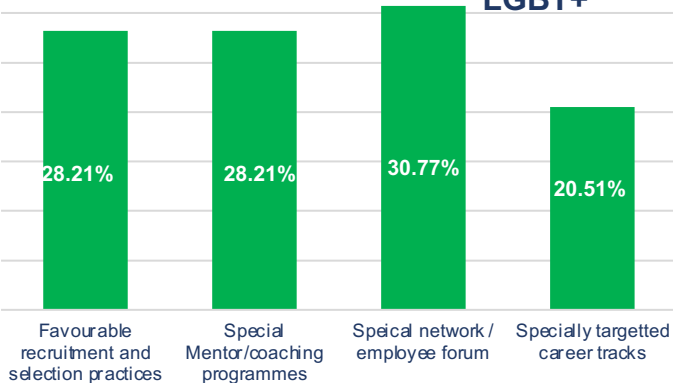**% of surveyed employees perception of their employer's response to:**

WOMEN

Category	%
Favourable recruitment and selection practices	27.12%
Special Mentor/coaching programmes	25.42%
Speical network / employee forum	15.25%
Specially targetted career tracks	15.25%

BAME

Category	%
Favourable recruitment and selection practices	23.73%
Special Mentor/coaching programmes	23.73%
Speical network / employee forum	20.34%
Specially targetted career tracks	13.56%

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Category	%
Favourable recruitment and selection practices	18.64%
Special Mentor/coaching programmes	20.34%
Speical network / employee forum	16.95%
Specially targetted career tracks	11.86%

THOSE AGED 50+

Category	%
Favourable recruitment and selection practices	22.03%
Special Mentor/coaching programmes	22.03%
Speical network / employee forum	13.56%
Specially targetted career tracks	13.56%

LGBT+

| Category	%
Favourable recruitment and selection practices	28.21%
Special Mentor/coaching programmes	28.21%
Speical network / employee forum	30.77%
Specially targetted career tracks	20.51%

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Employee Experiences During COVD-19

- Approximately one third stated that they experienced no change to their employment during the pandemic
- 17% were furloughed (which was higher than the West Midlands region average of 11.3%)
- 17% also advising that workloads had increased
- 12% experienced reduced working hours
- 7% had changed employer

When predicting their employment status in the next 6 months:

- 46% believed that there would be no change
- 17% said they expected to change employer
- 17% believed their workload would continue to increase
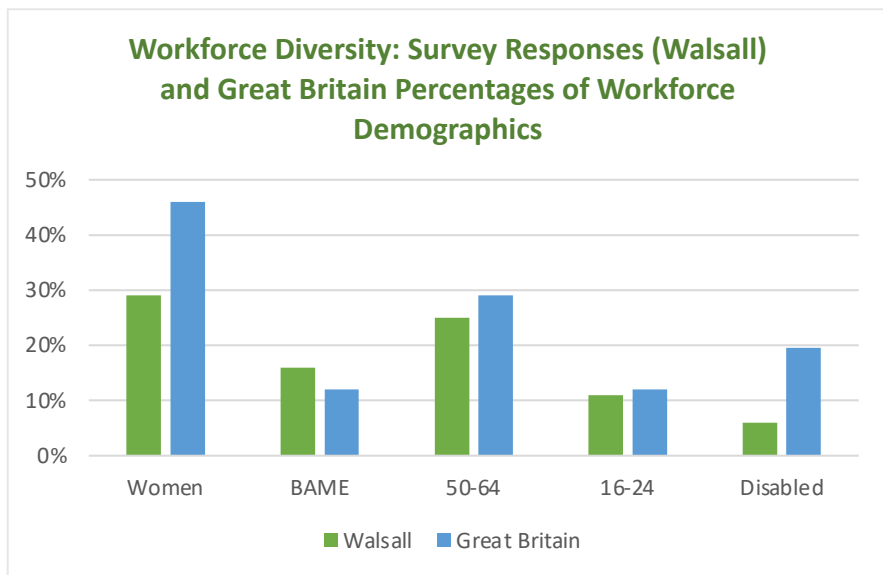- 2% expected to be made redundant
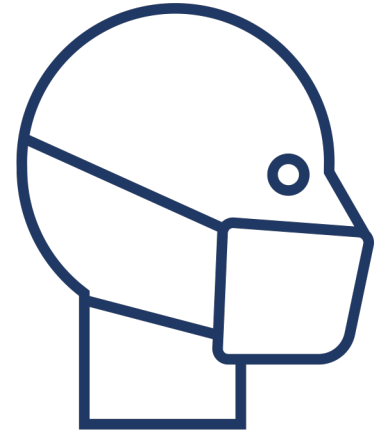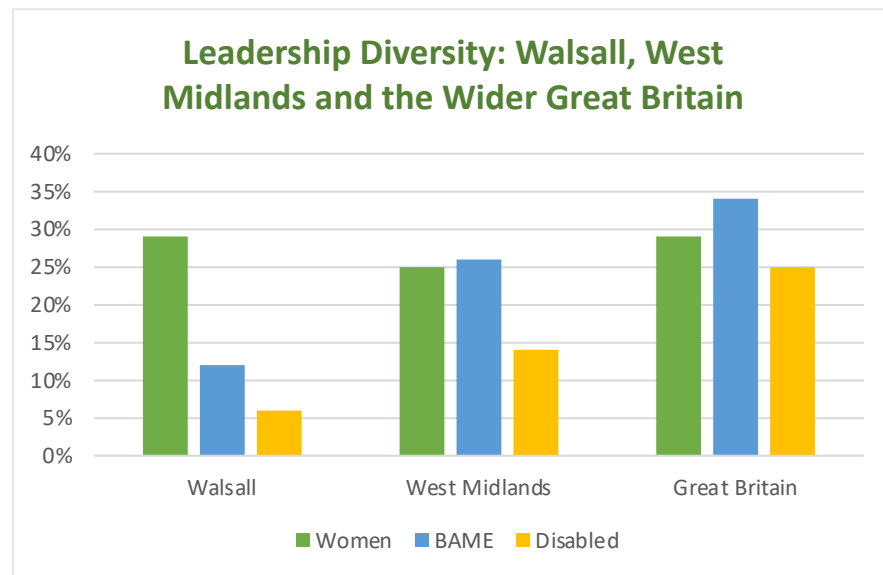
REGIONAL AND NATIONAL COMPARISONS

How Diversity & Inclusion in Workplaces Compares

Access to comprehensive comparative data makes local and regional comparisons limited. Comparing the 2019 Annual Population Survey and 2021 NOMIS information:

- Walsall has a lower-than-average number of women in the workplaces
- In surveyed businesses, 6% of individuals stated they had a disability compared to a 20% national average


Workforce Diversity: Survey Responses (Walsall) and Great Britain Percentages of Workforce Demographics

Source: Walsall data based on our survey (2020-2021); GB data based on 2019 Annual Population Survey (https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/work-pay-and-benefits/employment/employment/latest#by-ethnicity-and-area)

Leadership Diversity: Walsall, West Midlands and the Wider Great Britain

Source: Walsall data based on our survey (2020-2021)
Other databased on Labour Force Survey (2016) by Hoque and Adam (2018)

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STRIVING FOR BEST PRACTICE
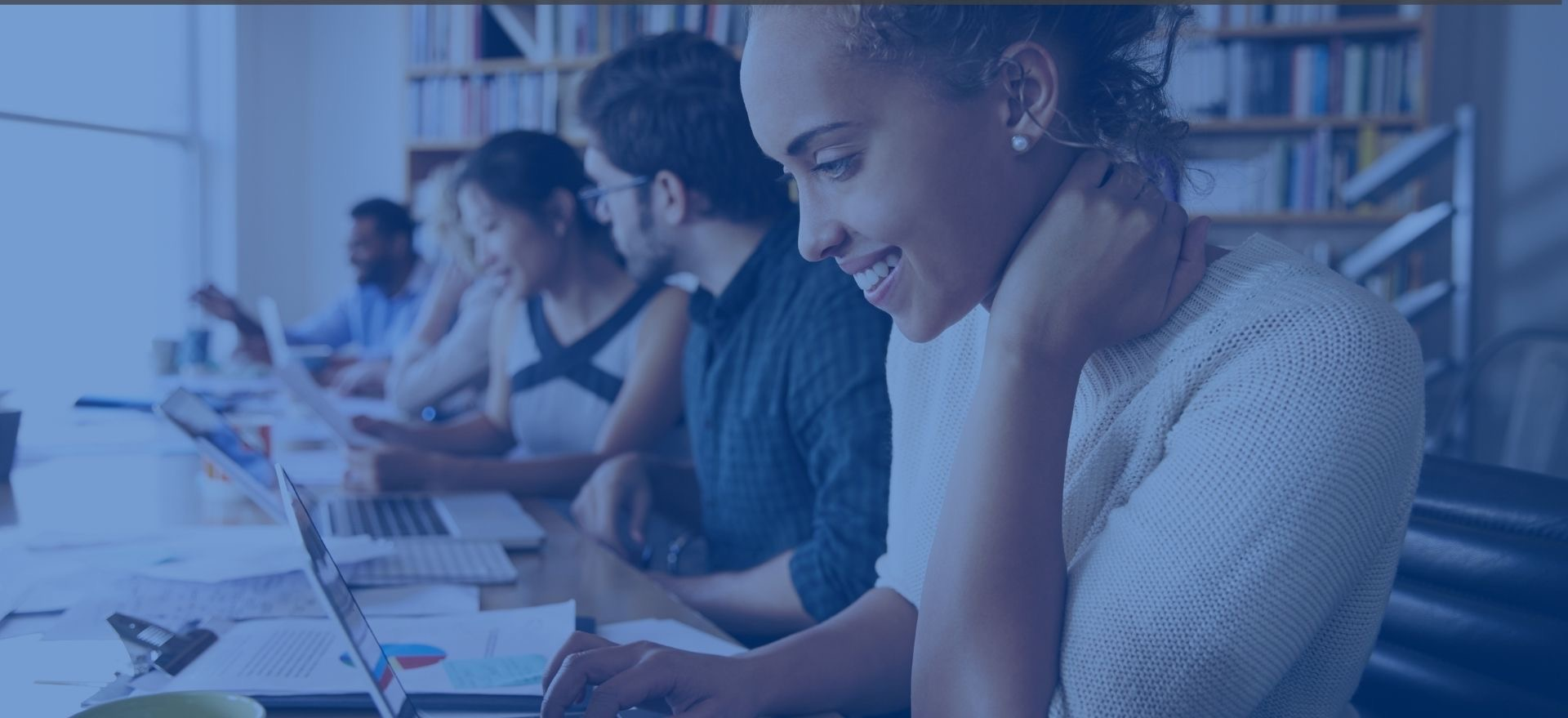
Recommendations and Guides:

Opportunities exist in the for businesses to make changes to their recruitment, retention and reward practices in order to support their Diversity and Inclusion work. Following on from the research study and an interactive group discussion, in this section you will find details giving an overview into some of the more common activities businesses are investigating or adopting:

- Clear job descriptions and person specifications
- Anonymised recruitment selection
- Diverse interview panels
- Retention and rewards strategy
- Employee voice
- Personal pronouns
- Leadership pipeline
- Exit interviews
- Performance monitoring

'Clearer Job Descriptions' can help inform prospective candidates understand more about what is specifically involved within their role but also provides a means for a business to convey and share details about its culture, mission and values and what behaviours it expects from all of its employees.

'Anonymised Recruitment' is a practice which removes personal information from those shortlisting applicants. It removes personal information such as names, dates of birth and other information which could provide signifiers to an applicant's gender, age or ethnicity or other characteristics.

The practice ensures that each shortlisted applicant is done so based upon their merits and strengths of their application and how it aligns to the needs of the role and the job description or personal specification and could remove any unconscious bias from the process.

Techniques include a HR manager or individual not included in the hiring process removing or blocking out personal information on CV's and covering letters or capturing all personal detail on the front page of an application form (online or physical) which is then removed before being presented for the shortlisting process.

'Diverse Interview Panels' are increasingly seen as a way of both ensuring that every candidate, irrespective of background, is made to feel welcome during the interview process but also a way of demonstrating that a business is diverse and reflects its customers or community it operates in. Where possible, panels should strive to be both gender and ethnically diverse and there are opportunities to include partners, stakeholders or business support representatives who can additionally bring different perspectives to the interview process.

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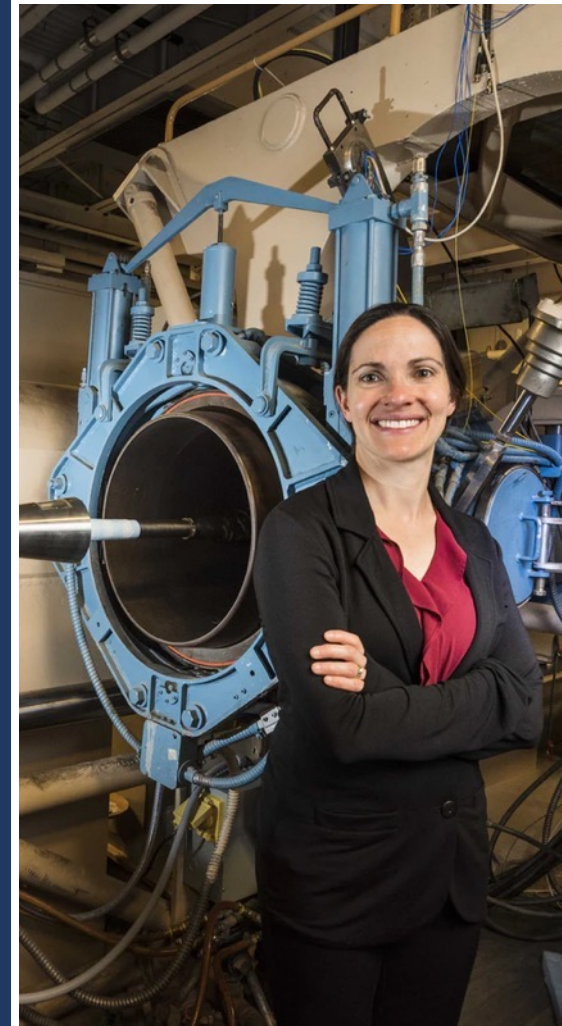
'Parity - Retention & Rewards' the right retention strategies are crucial for reducing turnover, driving satisfaction and ensuring that businesses get the most out of its best talent. These include ensuring that compensation is fair and equal for individuals doing similar roles at a similar level and rewards are also both fair and competitive – i.e. are tied to performance and targets, inline with industry standards, not influenced by gender, race, disability or other diversity markets and that any provisions around flexible working practices are also fair and do not discriminate.

'Employee Voice' networks or forums contribute to the concept of 'employee voice' and enable individuals who share similar goals, challenges or interests to work together and also help their employer respond to unique issues or barriers those from underrepresented groups might be facing.

'Personal Pronouns' the use of personal pronouns within business create affirming workplaces for trans and non-binary employees and provide a means for honouring and recognising someone's gender identity which can be included in email signatures, virtual meetings and also name badges at events.

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'Leadership & Progression' regular appraisals tied to targets are a fair way of ensuring progression is equal as is the process of encouraging employees with the right skills to apply for roles before being advertised publicly. Defined and well communication information relating to career progression paths which highlight the prerequisite skills and experiences applicants need to be successful in a role are also considered helpful. Specific work can then be carried out to attract or nurture talent from underrepresented groups or ensure that at all levels throughout an organisation, that a primed and prepared pipeline of individuals who can add value through their different perspectives.

'Exit Interviews' provide a means to understand the motivations and reasons behind an individual who is leaving and is an opportunity for the employer to reflect on what is being disclosed and respond to any issues.

'Monitoring and Development' effective monitoring systems which evaluate a business' progress and potential are key to improving Diversity and Inclusion.

For more information or details about practices, please contact policy@blackcountrychamber.co.uk

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RESOURCES

There are a range of freely available resources available to businesses which can help shape their Diversity and Inclusion practices. The below lists a number of approaches and guides provided by third parties in order to provide the reader additional information in how to develop practices within their organisation.

ACAS is an independent body which works with millions of employees and employers to improve workplace relations.

This guide provides details on how to make workplaces inclusive, dealing with unconscious bias and how to respond if employees do not feel included [**click here**]
This article provide information of what an employer can do to prevent discrimination and gives an overview of discrimination and the law [**click here**]

CIPD is a professional body which has been setting standards for HR and people development for 100 years and aims to change positive change in the world This guide provides details on why diversity and inclusion is good business and offers additional information on managing diversity [**click here**]

Links will take you to third party sites which were available at time of publication (Summer 2021). The Black Country Chamber of Commerce or project partners are not responsible for third party content.

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RESOURCES

At the Walsall Workplace Diversity Conference a range of speakers explored many of the themes raised in the report and links to their businesses and further information is available by visiting walsalldiversity.co.uk, alternatively please visit the links below:

Business in the Community, Race Charter [**click here**]

Birmingham LGBT, Trans Resources [**click here**]

Access to Work, Supporting For Businesses and Individuals [**click here**]

Steps to Work, Helping Local People Into Meaningful and Sustainable Employment [**click here**]

In-Comm Training, Apprenticeship Providers, Training and Business Services [**click here**]

Walsall FC Community Programme, Making A Difference Through Participation and Engagement [**click here**]

University of Wolverhampton, Different Voices Video [**click here**]

Walsall for All, A Range of Resources To Support Individuals and Businesses [**click here**]

Black Country Chamber of Commerce, Campaigns And Projects To Help Businesses [**click here**]

Links will take you to third party sites which were available at time of publication (Summer 2021). The Black Country Chamber of Commerce or project partners are not responsible for third party content.

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Acknowledgements

This report is the culmination of the passion and determination of so many who strive to ensure that Walsall is a great place to live and work.

The commissioners, partners and authors would like to thank the outstanding assistance of those who have contributed to the work of this report including the commissioning team, Zara Khan from Walsall for All, Nigel Rowe from Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council and Balbinder Pahal, Hayley Blackmoor and Gerry Lyng from DWP. Our appreciation also goes to the team from the Black Country Chamber of Commerce for helping to develop and promote the survey with a special thanks to Joanne Smith for her tenacity and drive, Graham Croome, Tracey Jovicich, Gail Arnold, Alison Trinder, Gurpreet Boparai, Karen Webb, Shahanaz Rahman, Ed Torrence, Sarah Thompson, and Matthew Lowe as well as those individuals at the Business School from the University of Wolverhampton whose insights and support have been invaluable.

Finally, we would like to thank all those businesses, owners, managers and individuals for their openness and role in helping to make Walsall a diverse and welcoming place.

Project Partners

Walsall For All
Walsall is one of five integration areas in the country as part of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) Integrated Programme. The Walsall for All programme seeks to create integrated, empowered, and inclusive communities in the Walsall Metropolitan Borough area.

Department for Work and Pensions
The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is responsible for welfare, pensions, and child maintenance policy. As the UK's biggest public service department, it administers the State Pension and a range of working age, disability, and ill health benefits.

Black Country Chamber of Commerce
The Black Country Chamber of Commerce was established in 2001 as the successor organisation to Chambers which had operated separately across Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall, and Wolverhampton since the 1860s. As the region's largest business support organisation, it provides a range of products and services to its members and tackles issues which limit their growth or productivity.

University of Wolverhampton
The University of Wolverhampton is a large UK University based in the West Midlands; it has five campuses across Wolverhampton, Telford, Walsall, Shropshire and Staffordshire. The University devotes itself to regional development and is an integral part of the Black Country. It champions diversity, growth, and creating life changing experiences for all through knowledge, innovation and enterprise. It offers degree courses, apprenticeship schemes as well as Executive Education.

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About the Authors

Neil Anderson
Neil is the Director of External Affairs at the Black Country Chamber of Commerce and is the organisation's strategic lead for inclusivity and leads its policy, campaigns, communication, marketing, digital and events team. As a trustee and non-executive director at Birmingham LGBT, Full Potential Arts, Fircroft College and the Midland LGBT Employee Network, Neil has supported the work of organisations across the West Midlands who work with traditionally marginalised and underrepresented groups.

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WALSALL WORKPLACE DIVERSITY

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Details about the project will be available on the website walsallworkplacediversity.co.uk until April 2022.

For additional information about the report or the project, please contact:

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