



# Inclusive Employer

Evaluation Report 2022



BRADFORD  
Stronger Communities  
Partnership



Department for Levelling Up,  
Housing & Communities



City of  
**BRADFORD**  
METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

## SECTION 1

# Introduction

The Inclusive Employer project was commissioned under the 'Getting On' pillar. The objective of this pillar is to ensure that 'more people will have improved their quality of life, feel happier about the future, be able to fully participate and be better equipped to engage in the economy'. The focus of the Inclusive Employer project was to support organisations in Bradford district to be more inclusive and accessible to a diverse workforce, thereby allowing the people of Bradford district to achieve their full potential.

As part of the Bradford for Everyone programme, the project was founded on two premises:

- (1) workplaces can provide a common place to foster cohesion among people from diverse backgrounds (Estlund, 2003; Wolfson Report 2010), and;
- (2) integration through employment enables people to achieve their full potential despite their backgrounds.

The main aim of this project was to support Bradford district employers included in the scheme to transform their Employee Value Proposition and Culture (see below for definition) with a focus on improving the diversity and social mobility of their workforce. The project rationale was formulated around the assumption that social



mobility brings diversity of thoughts, and that diversity leads to increased collaboration and retention as well as improved market share and revenue growth.

## Structure and approach

This report begins with a process evaluation of the Inclusive Employer programme, in order to understand whether the programme's activities have been implemented and have resulted in the intended outputs. This is followed by an outcomes evaluation, which looks at the programme's outcomes and assesses the extent to which these were achieved.





## SECTION 2

# Process evaluation

## How has the project been implemented?

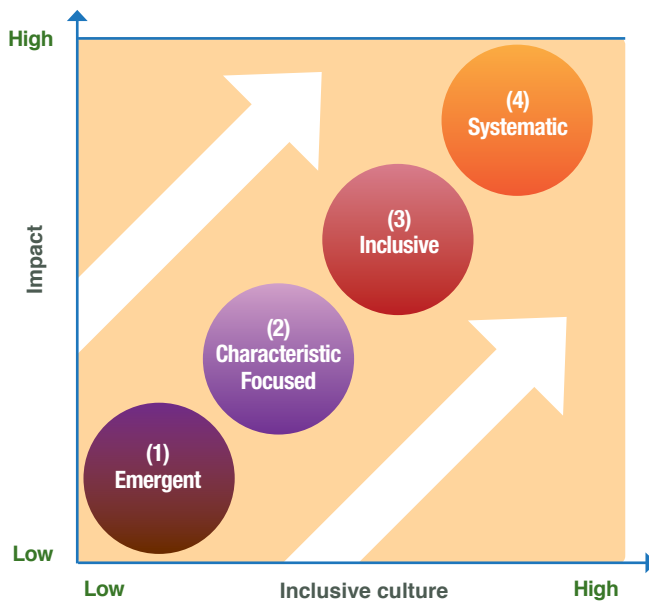
The Inclusive Employer project has been delivered by Grant Thornton working with two Participating Organisations (POs), Bradford Council and Yorkshire Building Society, to ensure both organisations are more accessible to a diverse talent pool and are able to support, develop and promote talent appropriately. The initiative established an employers' network to enable lessons to be shared amongst employers in Bradford district and also created a mechanism for employers to



communicate with members of their target talent pool to better understand their needs, wants and drivers in relation to employment.

Grant Thornton used their in-house designed and tested Inclusion Maturity Model to achieve the project objectives of improving labour market opportunities, improving diversity in the workforce and improving social mobility in three phases.

### Inclusion and maturity model



### Five inclusion factors

- 1. Talent attraction:** How does the organisation attract and recruit diverse talent?
- 2. Talent development:** How does the organisation develop, progress and retain diverse talent?
- 3. Strategic development:** How developed is the organisation's inclusion strategy? How does this strategy fit with the organisational context? How is success measured?
- 4. Culture:** How developed is the organisation's culture in enabling a consistent feeling of inclusion? Where does responsibility for inclusion lie? How much trust is afforded by colleagues? How ready is the organisation for change?
- 5. External impact:** How does the organisation impact its external stakeholders (eg. customers, suppliers, community) around inclusion?

### PHASE 1 Inclusion Maturity Assessment:

This phase included reviewing and assessing the current level of inclusion maturity within the POs, with a particular focus on social mobility – including their diversity data, culture maturity and lived experience. This also included a review and assessment of the POs' end-to-end people, policies and practices ('Employee Value Proposition' or 'EVP') and their culture in order to identify any barriers to social mobility. Based on the findings of the Inclusion Maturity Assessment from both POs, Grant Thornton suggested recommendations against five Inclusion Maturity factors (Talent Attraction, Talent Development,

Culture, Strategic Development and External Impact) for improvements.

**PHASE 2 Implementation Planning:** During this phase, Grant Thornton worked with each PO to develop a detailed implementation plan for all of their recommendations. Priorities with each PO were agreed in order for them to be able to realistically embed recommendations over time.

**PHASE 3 Check and Challenge:** This phase saw both POs move forward with implementing the recommendations with support from the delivery team.

## Is the project delivering on outputs (milestones) and outcomes as planned?

### Intended Outputs and Progress Made

Intended outputs	Progress made
2 x POs inclusion data set	2 x POs inclusion data set
2 x POs benchmarked against the Maturity Model	2 x POs benchmarked against the Maturity Model
2 x POs completed questionnaires and benchmarked employees' perceptions	2 x POs completed questionnaires and benchmarked employees' perceptions
15 organisations attended 3 x Employers' Network events	<p>Grant Thornton set up and delivered 3 webinars for the network culminating in an Inclusive Employers Toolkit, which has received positive feedback from District employers. There are 100 people in the network and about 30-50 people attend each meeting. These people are from a range of sectors including public, private and voluntary, and many EDI organisations. The meetings focus on all protected characteristics.</p> <p>The Inclusive Employers Toolkit has been disseminated to 180+ individuals across 100+ Businesses/Organisations across the District and 6 new participating organisations have reviewed and provided feedback on the Inclusive Employers Toolkit, which will support the councils approach to make it accessible to all. An Inclusion Executive Coach (IEC) has been employed to support and mentor participating organisations, develop and pilot add-ons to the toolkit for improved accessibility and usability. The IEC will also manage and grow the Inclusive Employer Network to share learning and further disseminate the toolkit to as many employers as possible across the district.</p>

Intended outcomes	Progress made
Each PO has made at least 5% improvement from baseline data set in 3 or 4 key areas (including social mobility)	<p><b>Bradford Council:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bradford Council has invested £1m into their HR function which has led to a restructure. Plans include new roles in learning and development, recruitment and retention, and talent management.</li> <li>● In the 2021/22 performance appraisal year, Bradford Council set out that every manager (Special A and above) had an Equalities Objective as part of their performance appraisal objectives. Presently, 93% of staff above special A have agreed Equality objectives as part of their annual appraisal and around 91% of new starters have undertaken Equality and Diversity training.</li> <li>● Bradford Council's workforce comprises of 65% females, which has remained relatively consistent over the last 15 years. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Currently, there are 469 people in middle management roles (Grades PO2-PO6), and of these 44% are female.</li> <li>– In recent years there has been an increased representation of women and black and ethnic minorities into Chief Officer grades.</li> <li>– From Dec' 2020 to Dec' 2021 there has been a 1.5% increase of ethnic minority groups (19.9%) and 5.6% increase of females (53%) in the top 5% pay scale.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Bradford Council has invested £250,000 into Equalities and a new role has been developed to lead on the Equalities Plan.</li> <li>● In 2021 the Council refreshed its Equalities Plan, which has led to a number of staff engagement networks, such as The R.E.S.P.E.C.T campaign, which highlights the Council's internal vision that everyone should feel included, valued, and able to be their 'true self' at work. The upcoming launch of the RESPECT Allyship programme, created by colleagues who are passionate about equalities, diversity and inclusion, is supported and advocated by the Chief Executive.</li> <li>● The methodology for carrying out Equalities Impact Assessments has been refreshed.</li> <li>● Bradford Council has signed up to the Stonewall Kitemark, and is positively progressing placement opportunities as part of their social mobility commitment to attract younger people into the workforce. To date, Bradford Council have had 427 kickstart placements and 15 placements on the new Leaving Care Employment programme, which is positively progressing.</li> </ul>

Intended outcomes	Progress made
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bradford Council have designed and approved a Workforce Development Plan (2021-2024). The internal evidence-base for the work includes a holistic view of staff feedback from the engagement sessions held in 2020, the Council Plan, the recently updated equality objectives, outputs from culture and inclusive employer surveys and reports, induction and LMS evaluation, the current workforce development strategy (2015-2021), and a review of existing KPI's and performance data.</li> </ul> <p><b>Yorkshire Building Society:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>YBS has seen increased female representation in level E and above roles from 39% in 2019 to 46% in 2020. This has been achieved a year earlier than planned</li> </ul>
<p><b>Both POs have improved their EVP at least one place forward against the inclusion maturity model</b></p>	<p><b>Bradford Council:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See Table 2 for more detail on progress that has been made against each inclusion factor</li> </ul> <p><b>Yorkshire Building Society:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback from new recruits has indicated that YBS is now establishing itself as an employer that prioritises inclusion both in its external communication and in practice too</li> <li>See Table 2 for more detail on progress that has been made against each inclusion factor</li> </ul>
<p><b>80% of those who completed the baseline and follow-up perceptions survey (min 10% out of 20%) show improved perception of diversity and inclusion within their organisation</b></p>	<p><b>Bradford Council:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals have reached out to the HR Director and Chief Executive over the past 10-11 months expressing positive sentiments around inclusion in the Council</li> <li>1500 staff responded to the well-being survey in 2020, indicating improved trust in the Council (compared to c. 550 responses to the inclusion survey in 2019)</li> </ul> <p><b>Yorkshire Building Society:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>YBS's engagement score increased to 8.1 in July 2020, marking a 0.7 increase since November 2019. This now places YBS within the top 25% of financial services organisations</li> <li>Inclusive Companies has ranked YBS at number 35 on its 'Inclusive Top 50 UK Employers List' in 2020. This marks a 12-place improvement when compared with 2019</li> </ul>





## Outcomes evaluation

### Did the project produce or contribute to the intended outcomes as agreed in the evaluation plan?

The project completed its Phase 1 assessment of inclusion maturity for both POs in February 2020 and its Phase 3 assessment in May 2021. The findings of the Phase 1 review showed Bradford Council was at the first stage ('emergent' \*) and Yorkshire Building Society was at the second stage ('characteristic focused' \*\*) on the Inclusion Maturity Model. On the basis of this, Bradford Council was provided with 41 specific recommendations and Yorkshire Building Society was provided with 47 specific recommendations across the five factors.

Both POs' inclusion maturity findings evidence both strengths and development areas, and these directed the recommendations Grant Thornton made. According to the delivery team, the strengths and development



areas "were mainly in opposition with each other which provided a great opportunity for sharing best practice; however, there were some important shared areas including increasing the trust between the workforce and leadership".

*\*The organisation is setting out on its inclusion journey and is doing what it needs to from a regulatory and legal perspective to enable inclusion for colleagues.*

*\*\*The organisation recognises that it needs to provide tailored support to under-represented groups to 'level' the playing field.*

### Assessment of Progress Made against Inclusion Factors

Inclusion Factor	Bradford Council	Yorkshire Building Society
<b>Talent Attraction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Immediate changes in Recruitment and Selection policy, including diverse hiring panels. Continued commitment in this area with Recruitment system and process being reviewed in May 2021</li> <li>● HR function restructure taking place in 2021 is aligned to delivery of areas of the inclusion plan that are yet to be delivered and includes additional roles for coaching which were not previously in the structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Review of recruitment started but remains in progress</li> <li>● Of 9 recommendations, one has been implemented, seven are in progress and one is not started</li> </ul>
<b>Talent Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A new Senior Leadership Development programme on equalities has been designed with external support</li> <li>● All members of CMT are now acting as mentors to individuals as part of the BAME fellowship programme</li> <li>● Developing a programme supporting 15 care leavers on a 12-month paid programme, demonstrating commitment to social mobility, and a number of 'kick start' programmes commencing in 2021</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● YBS has focussed on delivering standardised strengths-based recruitment training</li> <li>● Quarterly check-ins have been introduced and a focus on stretch assignments has been successfully embedded providing new opportunities. These are supporting talent development and retention across the organisation with successful case studies of internal moves and assignments</li> </ul>

Inclusion Factor	Bradford Council	Yorkshire Building Society
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Five staff networks were launched with allocation of budget (£1.5k) to these and each has a CMT sponsor. Numbers in the region of 10-20 staff have been attending each network</li> <li>● HR Director and Chief Executive have received numerous direct messages from attendees expressing their positive sentiments towards the progress made and the staff networks; such messages were seldom received previously</li> <li>● Progress has been made to improve the grievance process. In August 2022, there were 50 grievance cases; there are now 29, demonstrating a 42% reduction. The Council is committed to continuing to reduce this figure, also with focus on reducing 'days to resolve' grievance cases</li> <li>● 1500 staff engaged with the well-being survey in August 2020, indicating increased trust in the Council as c. 550 staff responded to the inclusion survey</li> <li>● Most departments now have Inclusion Champion and initial meeting held</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● YBS has embedded strong senior leadership engagement and support</li> <li>● Anecdotally, conversations around inclusion have become increasingly commonplace within the organisation</li> <li>● New recruits have remarked that YBS is an inclusive employer, and this was apparent from recruitment through to joining and it being a reality</li> <li>● YBS have implemented chat packs and huddles around wellbeing, which have proven to be effective</li> <li>● 'Time-to-talk' engagement pieces are being rolled out across the organisation demonstrating further commitment to YBS embedding an inclusive culture</li> <li>● Senior leadership and staff engagement sessions have been held involving all of the Chief Officers</li> <li>● YBS has evidenced progress in staff engagement surveys</li> </ul>
Strategic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Equalities objectives were approved in the year and a new People strategy is in place, which supports inclusion</li> <li>● An internal I&amp;D dashboard is being developed to be used at CMT (currently in draft stage and completion is imminent). This demonstrates progress being made above and beyond the recommendations</li> <li>● HRD noted richer conversations are being had at a senior level on inclusion</li> <li>● New Equalities impact assessment template is in place, which includes a low-income impact category (supporting social mobility). Furthermore, an Equalities Communication Plan has been drafted. These two items demonstrate commitment above and beyond the recommendations identified</li> <li>● An Equalities Officer role has been recruited, demonstrating further commitment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● YBS has had two priorities: 'wellbeing of colleagues' and 'delivery of service to customers'. This has helped anchor and focus the team</li> <li>● YBS has developed a robust Inclusion Strategy with clear governance in place through the Inclusion Committee</li> <li>● Inclusion pillars are integrated into both the People and Business Strategy</li> <li>● All Chief Officers now have inclusion objectives set and all Chief Officers and Directors have been through inclusive leadership training over the past year</li> <li>● Going forwards, YBS has set up 'Lives Impacted', demonstrating ongoing commitment to the agenda and each Directorate will be provided with an I&amp;D dashboard</li> <li>● The I&amp;D committee have set eight momentum measures as part of the strategy of areas to focus on</li> <li>● All Strategic Development initiatives have been implemented</li> </ul>
External Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CMT members of staff are mentoring individuals from other organisations as part of the Yorkshire and West Harrogate BAME fellowship programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A number of school partnership programmes have been developed, supported by a new careers hub demonstrating the progress YBS is making to its external stakeholders and the wider district</li> <li>● YBS has made firm commitments to supporting local initiatives through its sponsorship of Bradford150 leadership programme and its pledge to transfer apprenticeship levy to local Bradford businesses</li> <li>● Furthermore, for 2021, the YBS Board has committed an investment of £800k in 2021 to support the community, including helping at least 40,000 people achieve greater financial wellbeing and at least 2,000 people in Bradford improve their skills and progress to employment</li> </ul>



**What unintended outcomes (positive/negative) were produced? What were the particular features of the programme and context that made a difference and what was the influence of other factors?**

**Engagement from POs:**

Following the completion of the all three phases, a like-for-like comparison was not possible as follow up data using the Inclusion Maturity Model was not collected to benchmark change in both POs' agreed outcomes. However, we used alternative methods of collecting the information to assess the progress in inclusion and diversity levels by both POs using interviews, and the delivery team's quarterly and end-of-phase reports.

Overall, both POs showed a great appetite for securing the opportunity to improve their inclusion and diversity

by continuing their journey to being more inclusive and diverse.

COVID-19 hitting soon after Phase 1 impacted the engagement of both POs to some extent. Both organisations were affected considerably by COVID-19, with some key roles important in developing and implementing the interventions being redeployed to deal with the situation.

The third phase saw more engagement from Yorkshire Building Society in attending all 'Check and Challenge' sessions, resulting in 15 recommendations implemented, 27 in progress and only four 'not started'. During this phase, Yorkshire Building Society received acknowledgement that they had placed 35th in the Inclusive Employer awards (12 places ahead of their previous placing).

Both POs appreciated the support provided by the experts in analysing the data and implementing the Inclusion Maturity Model. This helped resources in terms of time and dedicated staff.

“ So it was, you know, it was essentially, absolutely, the right thing to do, a huge amount of commitment. So we knew that there was an energy there, um, and we wanted to do this and deliver it. And also, you know...we don't know everything and working with partners is an opportunity to, for people to come and look at things through a different lens and for us to learn in a different way, be challenged in a slightly different way to how we would normally challenge ourselves

Bradford Council

“ We'd done sort of pockets of this, but we thought this is a great opportunity to take some learning from Grant Thornton, but also build our relationship with the Bradford community, and especially Bradford Council as one of the major employers and to be honest, you know, we care about...our colleagues, our customers but our community as well. So it sort of, it sort of fitted nicely with our ambition.

Yorkshire Building Society



### Impact on employees and their perceptions:

Both organisations have increased their efforts to engage employees and as a result have seen more people engaging. Due to a lack of benchmark surveys following the project delivery, it is currently unknown if employees have shown an improved perception of diversity and inclusion within their organisations. However, Bradford Council has seen a reduction in grievance cases by 42% (from August 2020 to March 2021) and the HR Director and Chief Executive have received numerous positive messages directly from staff expressing positive sentiments. The council has recruited an Equality Lead and staff engagement groups for protected characteristics were created to share views. The recruitment process and panelling has been reviewed and is changing to be more diverse and transparent. A focus has been placed on tackling racism and a whole council equality strategy and people plan has been developed to promote equality. The culture of the organisation has shifted to be more proactive, such as being anti-racist. All protected characteristics have been prioritised with more focus on LGBTQ+ and disability equality as well as gender and race. Intersectionality has been highlighted and recognised as an important consideration moving forward. Bradford Council has also led on campaigns to change behaviour with shared values and critical thinking. Equality and diversity training has been made mandatory for all staff.

Yorkshire Building Society's engagement score increased to 8.1% in July 2020, marking a 0.7 increase since November 2019.

“ We've had some really positive feedback from colleagues, around our openness and our communication and how engaging we're being with them being part of it. So, there's definitely the appetite there to be involved and help drive it forward. ”

Yorkshire Building Society

Furthermore, Yorkshire Building Society's internal survey showed improvement in workforce perceptions. For example, “I believe all people are treated fairly at YBS” increased from a score of 7.0 in 2019 to 8.0 in 2020.

### Partnership and shared learning:

Both organisations had the opportunity to share good practices and the challenges of embedding inclusion and diversity into their organisations. This was primarily done through the Inclusive Employers' Network, where learning from the two POs was shared through three events. The Inclusive Employers toolkit was also developed and launched, which was aimed at helping Bradford-based employers from small to large organisations who are keen to move forwards with inclusion and diversity. The toolkit, which can be accessed [here](#), was well-received and has received good engagement from the network, which will help it become embedded within their organisations.

More than 40 representatives from different employment sectors across the District attended the launch event. The first event was attended by 32 organisations; second and third online events (this third event was linked with the Bradford for Everyone's Partner Forum) were attended by 31 and 60 organisations from the public, private, business and voluntary sectors. The rate of returning organisations was encouraging with 28 organisations. The attendee organisations fed back saying that: 'this has been a catalyst for change'; it has been 'very useful to share learning and hear what others are doing'; and 'measuring our current position helped us identify ways to improve'.



The shared learning trend continues within the Inclusive Employers network:

“ So really enjoyed hearing the journey that Bradford Council were also on and the... the learnings from there, and being part of that broader network and taking that learning and getting, I suppose, the toolkit to help us on that journey. ”

Yorkshire Building Society

“ ... also connecting with YBS, with Grant Thornton, through the Inclusive Employers Network. I'm much...it's opened doors I think, for me and for others, in terms of access, so that mutual learning, mutual support and I think those are some of the fundamental things that are really valuable and it will, you know, help me. And, equally, you know, hearing people's experiences and sharing ideas and learning, it generates that passion for people to, you know, 'we can do this' and 'actually that's a really good idea', 'actually I could tap into them ”

Bradford Council

### Impact and Sustainability:

This project focused on system change with the aim of making an impact in improving inclusion within organisations, enabling social mobility, and therefore bringing improved quality of life for people living and working in the District. Acknowledging that the impact would not be visible until some time after the project delivery, the focus of the evaluation was to maximise learning in order to be able to understand what worked and what did not work.

Key individuals from both POs have been trained to use the Inclusion Maturity Model to measure change as more progress is made with interventions. This will ensure there is legacy planning for Bradford Council and Yorkshire Building Society as the benefits will take time to embed and change. Both POs will be able to continue assessing their progress against this maturity toolkit and, as a programme, we could continue collecting this information to see how it has improved.



# Key Learnings

- 1 The project has highlighted the importance of measuring diversity and inclusion in the workplace using established indicators and measures.
- 2 The Inclusion Maturity Model provides a comprehensive method of collecting triangulated baseline data. A second inclusion maturity survey was not conducted by the POs, which has made it more challenging to measure progress against initial results. However, the implementation of such a benchmarking tool is likely to work differently in different organisations, depending on organisations' leadership commitment, stakeholders and available resources.
- 3 In order to build upon the success of the POs' initial progress, a long-term plan is needed to continue assessing levels of inclusion, diversity and social mobility. Impact is not likely to be immediately apparent, but will become evident over time.
- 4 Buy-in from an organisation's senior leadership team is hugely important in ensuring the success of such system change projects and in allowing individuals in organisations to feel and believe in inclusion. Accountability and transparency, particularly in leadership roles, is vital. Consideration needs to be given to how to maintain momentum longer-term.
- 5 The Employers' Network was highly successful and demonstrates a demand amongst local businesses for forums of this kind. The toolkit was well received and produced in collaboration with the network, which has helped to embed it within local organisational practices.





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