

# Aspire in Partnership (AiP)



Newsletter – January 2025



This report provides a quarterly summary of EDI-focussed activity, aimed at supporting employers to diversify their workforces.

Aspire in Partnership (AiP) is a Growth Company (GC) service designed to help businesses attract and retain best-in-class talent from a diverse range of backgrounds – creating a productive workforce and opportunities for all.

## Overall Impact

Over the months of October to December 2024, we’ve proactively supported 28 employers to widen their candidate pools, placing 181 unemployed people into work in the process. All placements are with employers paying at least the Real Living Wage (RLW).

Below is a breakdown of the key D&I metrics:

RLW Job Starts	Male	Female	Non-binary	16-24	25-49	50+
181	48%	51%	1%	11%	71%	18%
Arab	Asian/ Asian British	Black	Mixed heritage	White		
0%	9%	41%	7%	43%		

## Employer Case Studies

### Tyldesley Distribution Services Ltd

AiP often works with employers who have struggled to find suitable candidates when recruiting without specialist support. Following several unsuccessful attempts to hire a Transport Planner, Tyldesley Distribution Services contacted AiP to see if there was anything they could do to attract a wider candidate pool.

We worked with the company on the positioning of their job adverts (what you say, how you say it and where you say it). Very often, without realising it, hiring managers will include language that is, for example, too male-centric or difficult to read because it uses jargon. This narrows the range of people most likely to apply.



Following a quick review the adverts were re-positioned and the wording made easier to read and understand. The result was several suitable candidates applied, with a Polish lady securing the position.

## Weightmans

Last year, Weightmans Solicitors began to review the way in which they recruited with the objective of widening their employee demographic, including that of their senior management team. AiP supported over several months, resulting in simple changes to recruitment processes and the delivery of Entry to EDI Workshops for their HR & Internal Recruitment Teams.

One area of focus centred on Neurodiversity. Weightmans were asked by a candidate if adjustments could be made during the recruitment process, as they're autistic. Changes made included issuing the interview question content prior to the interview, plus issuing detailed guidance on where the interview was to be held, and who the panellists would be. These changes helped the successful candidate to perform to the best of her ability, securing a role as a para legal.

To date the candidate has settled in extremely well, performing above expectations. She has since divulged that she was also under consideration with a rival legal firm, however pulled-out of their process as they were not willing to make any accommodations during the recruitment process. Their loss is very much Weightmans gain.

## EDI Workshops for Hiring Managers

In July 2024, AiP launched a new workshop aimed at hiring managers, to give them an entry-level understanding of Diversity & Inclusion so they can make better hiring decisions. Areas covered include key benefits of EDI, Legal Aspects, Positive Action, Moving from Equality to Equity, Organisational Frameworks and an Inclusive Recruitment best practice overview, which considers a range of affinity groups.

The workshops have proved very popular with over 320 delegates attending during the last six months.

In addition to the Entry to EDI Workshop, a second workshop aimed at internal recruiters has also been developed, which breaks down each stage of a recruitment process and covers inclusive recruitment best practice at each step.

Both workshops are funded by the Growth Company as part of our mission to promote EDI best-practice and are free to access.

**To enquire about future workshops, please contact Adrian Bird - details below.**

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## Service Spotlight: Salford Supported Employment

### Kim's Story

The Salford Supported Employment service supports customers with complex needs through a phased approach with the ultimate aim of securing suitable and sustainable employment.

Recently, Salford City Council's Early Help service referred Kim along to see us. Kim, who is autistic and has ADHD, faces challenges like impulse control, emotional sensitivity, and executive function difficulties. She sought employment in advice and guidance but also struggled with large debts and caring for her two neuro-divergent children.

Initial support focused on helping Kim manage her finances, including accessing payment plans and discretionary housing payments. She was also referred to Welfare Rights for ongoing support. The next phase involved enhancing her employability skills. Kim found job searching and interviews daunting, a common issue for those with autism and ADHD. Employers can assist by adapting recruitment processes.

Kim proactively pursued job opportunities and completed an Information, Advice & Guidance Level 3 course. Despite her nervousness and tendency to ramble during interviews, she used notes to stay focused, boosting her confidence. After several interviews, Kim secured a job with a housing association and is thrilled to be working again.

**Please contact Adrian Bird for advice on simple adaptations employers can make to ensure all candidates make the best of themselves – details below.**

## Colleague Representative Groups Network

November saw a networking event for co-Chairs of Colleague Representative Groups (CRGs), featuring peer-to-peer learning. Over 60 co-Chairs from 22 organisations attended to share best practice and discuss challenges.

The event began with presentations from the Growth Company's EDI Staff Networks, highlighting key changes, recent campaigns, and their impact. Bruntwood's Josh Whiteley and Hilary Leavy discussed allyship, intersectionality, and the maturity of Diversity & Inclusion within their organisation before Isabel Tavora from the University of Manchester introduced a Staff Networks Self-Assessment Tool to help network leads assess and develop their networks.



Table discussions covered topics such as the role of executive sponsors, time management, operating on limited budgets, network recognition, and celebrating success. Key points included the need for active involvement from executive sponsors, balancing network responsibilities with day jobs, creative solutions for limited budgets, and gaining visibility for network activities.

The Peer-to-Peer CRG Network, established in 2023, brings together co-Chairs of EDI Staff Networks to share best practices and collaborate. Eight affinity groups meet every 10-12 weeks online, with in-person meetings in May and November.

**For more information, please contact Adrian Bird – details below.**

## The role of CRG's in inclusive recruitment

A key area of focus for CRG's is supporting their organisations to attract and retain employees from diverse backgrounds. Very often examination of employee demographic data shows clear shortfalls in under-represented communities.

CRGs will advocate for more inclusive hiring practices by highlighting the importance and benefits of diversity within the organisation. They can help ensure that job postings are inclusive and that recruitment processes are free from bias.

CRG members may be willing to create content for websites and social media, which demonstrate an organisation's commitment to Diversity & Inclusion. Candidates are more inclined to apply for roles when they see people like them already working at the company. CRG's can be used to arrange community outreach - extremely effective in attracting people from diverse communities by giving your colleagues a platform to showcase how great the organisation is to work for.

Finally, including CRG members on interview panels alongside hiring managers can increase the confidence candidates have in your organisation.

As an example, The Growth Company's ethnicity network "Embrace" has been instrumental in changing the ethnic demographic of our colleagues. This has been accomplished by introducing a Blind CV process prior to shortlisting, achieving Trailblazer status with Race Equality Matters and introducing a guaranteed interview process for candidates who meet the essential criteria and are from a diverse ethnic community. Embrace's focus is now moving towards developing retention of colleagues and maintaining a diverse demographic within the company.



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