



Spotlight on...

equality, diversity and inclusion

**CONSIDERATE
CONSTRUCTORS
SCHEME**

Case Study: Costain

Implementing a Religion, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage Network

Costain established its Religion, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage Network (REACH) in June 2019. The network is one of six employee networks in Costain which focus on supporting, educating and connecting our employees on the matters of religion, ethnicity and culture. REACH has been essential in highlighting the challenges faced by non-white colleagues and being part of the solution in tackling these head on.

The REACH network is led by a volunteer Chair and steering group and is supported by a senior sponsor. The steering group is divided into workstreams such as Events, Communications, Data and Results, Secretarial activities, Site Engagement and Mentoring and Learning. Both the Chair and the senior sponsor form part of the Inclusion Board, which consists of all the employee network Chairs, their senior sponsors and the Group Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead. The Inclusion Board includes three Executive Board members and is responsible for determining inclusive practice throughout the organisation and attaining Board approval.

The REACH network has been extremely proactive in educating employees around the business about religious and cultural celebrations. They have often worked alongside the other networks to host events which were intersectional by nature, such as the Chinese New Year Lunch and Learn, with the Parenting and Carers Network, where we all learned about the traditions behind the event and made origami dragons together.

The murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 were a real turning point for our business in realising the need for further support for our non-white colleagues. It raised the conversation about race whilst highlighting the concerns which some of our white colleagues had addressing ethnicity and colour. It developed a united front of wanting to understand and be better.

As part of Costain's commitment to continuous improvement, we hold an annual membership with Business in the Community (BITC), with a core focus on "race". We had previously retained a membership with a core focus on gender, however we identified that we needed to do more to build support around ethnicity. In conjunction with our REACH Network, our BITC Race Advisor held a number of "Let's Talk About Race" sessions with different areas of the business. These sessions have continued to happen in 2021 and developed the fluency of senior leadership teams in talking about ethnicity and created a safe space to ask questions they may not have felt able to previously ask.

Based on the information and feedback captured from these sessions, the REACH Network formulated five proposals to take to Costain's Inclusion Board. These were shared with the REACH Network members (and those that attended the initial Costain Let's Talk About Race session) in a survey to review, rate and comment on to ensure full buy-in from the community the Network represents. The proposals covered topics such as: allowing the network to audit available training modules, participating in the recruitment and promotion processes, a REACH specific objective to increase diversity at all business levels for sector directors and members of the executive board, and participating in the formulation of the company's engagement survey. The proposals were generally accepted by the Inclusion Board and consequently have formed part of the Network's strategy.

Spotlight on... equality, diversity and inclusion

Case Study: Costain



Furthermore, the REACH Network launched an internal reverse mentoring scheme, where members of the network were paired up with senior leaders to bring perspective of ethnicity to business decision making. This has been hugely successful with the number of senior leaders oversubscribed. As a result of its success, the scheme will be extended to the other networks for its next cohort of leaders. Costain became a signatory to the 2020 BITC Race at Work Charter through which Costain has pledged to undertake the following actions:

- 1. Appoint an Executive Sponsor for Race.**
- 2. Capture ethnicity data and publicise progress.**
- 3. Commit at board level to zero tolerance to bullying and harassment.**
- 4. Make it clear that supporting equality in the workplace is the responsibility of all leaders and managers.**
- 5. Take action to support ethnic minority career progression.**

Costain was also one of the first fifty signatories to the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) Change the Race Ratio. Our pledge commits us to the following actions:

- 1. Increase racial and ethnic diversity among Board members.**
- 2. Increase racial and ethnic diversity in senior leadership.**
- 3. Be transparent on actions.**
- 4. Create an inclusive culture in which talent from all diversities can thrive.**

Following this action, our CEO presented on the importance diversity and inclusion at a recent CBI event, which sparked further networking with clients who heard him speak.

To continue the momentum from the Let's Talk About Race sessions, the REACH network have hosted a number of coffee mornings and lunch and learns

to continue educating people around the topics of microaggressions and race equality. They have helped other companies set up race networks, such as client Thames Water, and have also branched out to other companies' race networks to share learning, including forming a Race Cross-Sector Collaboration Group with a number of joint venture partners and client organisations. The REACH Network has helped lead and organise Race events as part of this group. We have also supported our client Highways England in school events with the Manchester Enterprise Academy, to demonstrate that our sector ethnically diverse and open to everyone.

Costain recognises its responsibility as a principal contractor to set an inclusive culture on site. The REACH network has started undertaking racism and wider EDI surveys on Costain sites to expand our understanding of race disparities within the workforce. The data from these surveys is being presented back to the projects to highlight any areas of concern and we are assisting the project in tackling selected areas. REACH is also using the skills of individuals in their network to analyse the data of successful candidates accessing our leadership and development programmes and understand any unconscious bias in the system.

Finally, as part of our 2021 Inclusion Strategy, Costain has committed to achieving an employee population which is representative of the societies in which we work by 2030. Costain has set a target of 14% of our population to be from a black, Asian or minority ethnic background by 2024, including 14% in senior positions. By 2024, we also target to have one executive member from a minority ethnic background. Under the strategy, we have pledged fifty of our senior leaders to undertake allyship training in 2021 and we have committed to publishing our Race Pay Gap Report in 2022, although this reporting has not yet been mandated by the UK government.