

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Westminster		
Unit of Assessment: 17 Business and Management Studies		
Title of case study: Driving an Evidence-based Approach to Diversity and Inclusion, Policy and Practice		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2010 – 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Peter Urwin Linda Clarke Angela Wright Elisabeth Michielsens Sylvia Snijders Susan Shortland	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Applied Economics Professor Senior Lecturer Principal Lecturer Senior Lecturer Senior Lecturer	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: Oct 1995 ongoing June 1992 ongoing Sept 2003 – Jan 2017 March 1997 ongoing Sept 2005 ongoing Sept 2016 ongoing
Period when the claimed impact occurred: Aug 2013 – Dec 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? Y/N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Since 2010 Prof Urwin and colleagues at Westminster Business School (WBS) have led studies investigating ‘what works’ in Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) practice, uncovering the contingent nature of many approaches to D&I and seeking to identify how to maximise efficacy. Through collaboration with two key organisations – the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and the Black Solicitor’s Network (BSN) – Urwin has created the following impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabled experts in D&I across various sectors to share best practice and develop their own approaches. • Informed UK Government guidance on the effectiveness of D&I training approaches, causing a significant shift in practice. • Created greater transparency regarding D&I data in the legal profession, crucial for mobilising D&I initiatives within the sector. • Changed BSN practice regarding its strategy for increasing inclusivity at all levels of the legal profession. 		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>As the McGregor-Smith review (2017) found, UK progress on Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) has stalled, and to move forward there is a need for robust evidence on what works. Prof Urwin has led research by the WBS team that explores the drivers of diversity and the contingent nature of D&I initiatives intended to achieve associated gains. This research involved direct engagement with organisations, the undertaking of statistical research that draws together data across organisations, and the production of systematic evidence reviews.</p> <p>Work in this area began with projects commissioned in 2010/2011 by the London Development Agency (LDA) and Diversity Works for London (DWfL). Working with private sector organisations, the research investigated the ability to measure Diversity Return on Investment (DROI) through the development and piloting of a Diversity Scorecard and Value Analysis Tool that enabled 35 businesses (from large corporates to micro-businesses) to calculate and prioritise the DROI of different initiatives [1]. Amongst the findings from these 35 case studies was the understanding that such tools can provide practical means for the strategic development of D&I initiatives within an organisation and the importance of leadership in taking these initiatives forward.</p> <p>A 2013 systematic literature review carried out for the Government Equalities Office (GEO) and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS, now BEIS), however, uncovered the contingent nature of drivers of diversity such as the business case explored above. Most significantly, D&I management, policy and practice were found to function as important mediators that can determine the extent to which D&I strategies are successful within a given organisation [2]. Between 2014 and 2020, the WBS team worked within a variety of organisations to further investigate the specifics of this contingent nature, with a particular focus on the role played by D&I management, policy and practice. This involved qualitative and quantitative research within</p>		

organisations to discover what had worked in their particular context, identifying where gaps and weaknesses remained, and working with them to further understand the process of evidence-based practice from the practice perspective [3]. An example of this work is the research commissioned by the Royal Society as part of their 2014 diversity programme. Undertaking both qualitative fieldwork and quantitative analysis of the Workplace Employment Relations Survey and Labour Force Survey, this study further confirmed the highly contingent nature of the business case for diversity, with 'the potential benefits of diversity' seen amongst respondents as 'highly contextual and difficult to measure' and 'the leadership of teams as either constraints or enablers of positive outcomes' [4].

Between 2006 and 2015 Prof Urwin worked with the Black Solicitors' Network (BSN) to produce the annual Diversity League Tables (DLT) – a process of annual data collection covering around 25,000 employees in the UK Offices of 51 law firms. Prof Urwin led on the analysis and presentation of findings each year, including the communication of insights from other strands of investigation, with the aim of informing appropriate firm and chamber policy responses to the data. In 2017 a multivariate analysis used ten-years of BSN DLT data to identify the drivers of female and minority ethnic representation across law firms [5]. Regression analyses from this study [6] identify some limited evidence of cross-cutting impacts on gender and ethnic diversity associated with the adoption of D&I policies by law firms (measured using a 17-point scale devised by the researchers). However, the levels of gender and ethnic diversity in firms is primarily driven by areas of practice and, therefore, without a significant change in the practice of those tasked with resourcing (i.e. middle managers), initiatives and policies are not sufficient to drive workplace diversity [6].

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- [1] Dodds, I., David, A.H., Moss, G., Karuk, V. and **Urwin, P.** (2012), "Diversity's contribution to the bottom line: assigning a monetary value to diversity initiatives"; in Moss, G. (ed.) *Lessons on Profiting from Diversity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: 241-262.
- [2] **Urwin, P.**, Parry, E., Dodds, I., Karuk, V. and David, A. (2013), *The Business Case for Equality and Diversity: a survey of the academic literature*, BIS Occasional Paper No. 4, Government Equalities Office and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.
- [3] **Michielsens, E.**, Bingham, C. and **Clarke, L.** (2014), "Managing diversity through flexible work arrangements: management perspectives", *Employee Relations*, Vol. 36 No. 1, pp. 49-69. [Double blind peer reviewed]
- [4] **Wright, A.**, **Michielsens, E.**, **Snijders, S.** Kumarappan, L., Williamson, M., **Clarke, L.** and **Urwin, P.** (2014), *Diversity in STEMM: Establishing a Business Case*, Royal Society.
- [5] Gould, M. and **Urwin, P.** (2017), "Barriers and Drivers of Diversity: Analysis of 10 years of the BSN Diversity Survey Sample of Firms", in *Diversity League Table: a 10-year demographic survey of the legal profession*, Black Solicitors Network: 15-25. ISBN 9781527210905
- [6] **Urwin, P.** and Gould, M. (2020), "UK Demographic Diversity in Law Firms: Have Ten Years of Diversity Initiatives had an Impact?", *Academy of Management Annual Meeting Proceedings*, July.

Funding

- *The Business Case for Diversity*, DWfL, £37,790
- *Strategic Economic Impact of Diversity to Business Performance*, LDA & DWfL, £47,535
- *Understanding the Business Impacts of Equality and Diversity*, BIS & GEO, £41,750
- *Establishing the business case for diversity in the scientific workforce*, Royal Society, £29,694

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

To ensure impact from findings arising from the underpinning research, Prof Urwin has developed extensive programmes of engagement in partnership with professional bodies such as the BSN and CIPD, communicating evidence in a way that is relevant to practice. This approach is particularly important given the above research findings highlight the potentially contingent nature of success for many D&I interventions.

CIPD's Evidence into Practice programme

Since 2014 Prof Urwin has worked to promote evidence-based practice in collaboration with Jonny Gifford, Senior Advisor for Organisational Behaviour at The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) – a professional association for human resource management professionals.

In December 2016, WBS hosted the CIPD Applied Research Conference (ARC), and for the first six months of 2018 Gifford was seconded to WBS as a 0.5 Visiting Fellow (his remaining fraction spent with the CIPD). This collaboration gave rise to the *What works in diversity: Evidence into Practice Workshop Programme*, delivered between March and July 2019 and led by D&I researchers at WBS in partnership with researchers at the CIPD. This programme of engagement brought together 28 D&I leaders from 20 small, medium and large-sized (including multinational) organisations within various sectors (finance and accounting, health, higher education, retail, government and hospitality) and supported them in developing practice that is informed by robust research evidence [a-i].

These workshops have created impact from the insights produced by the above programme of underpinning research in two ways. Firstly, it **enabled D&I leaders to encounter differences in approach and outcome across various sectors, and to thus recognise the potentially contingent nature of D&I impacts**. As a participating D&I strategic lead from an NHS Foundation Trust states: 'it's really helpful to talk to public sector, private sector, third sector, global organisations as well. We get more creativity and some innovation in our thinking through this kind of network' which offers a 'really good range of perspectives' [a-ii]. Secondly, these forums were used to provide a platform to communicate the above WBS research on 'what works' within specific contexts, which **enabled actionable changes within their relevant practice**. Follow-up contact with the Inclusion Officer at Kent Fire and Rescue over a year after the workshops confirmed that: 'The series of Evidence into Practice Workshops provided an exciting forum to share my own experience and insights, gain additional understanding from the experience of other practitioners from a range of industries, and update my understanding on the latest evidence on what works in D&I policy and practice. Through these workshops this latest research was debated and considered in the context of everyday D&I work, making the outcome really useful - it has certainly helped me to further improve policy and practice at my own organisation' [a-iii].

Recognising that practitioner expertise and stakeholder views are crucial for diagnosing issues and identifying potential solutions, a 2019 report produced by the CIPD and Urwin brought together the findings from these workshops with scientific literature and organisational data in order to identify what strategies and practices are most likely to increase workplace diversity and inclusion [a-iv, p.4]. This report – *Diversity Management that Works: An Evidence Based Review* – has been downloaded 9,716 times and received 22,473 cumulative page views between October 2019 and 31st December 2020 via the website of CIPD, whose members consist of HR professionals from across a broad range of sectors in the UK. That this is one of the most impactful studies of D&I across the HR profession is confirmed by the fact it has **informed the government's recent guidance to the Civil Service to phase out unconscious bias training** on the basis that such 'training interventions do not seem to be effective at improving diversity outcomes within workplaces' [a-v, p.1].

This advice was provided by the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT), who were commissioned by the Government Equalities Office to provide a summary of the evidence of the effectiveness of diversity training and so 'sought out and referenced studies which seek to investigate real world and behavioural outcomes from UBT [unconscious bias training] and diversity training interventions' [a-v, p.4]. One such study cited by BIT is *Diversity Management that Works*, whose findings on the ineffectiveness of standalone UBT sessions in combatting unconscious bias are key to their recommendation and recounted by BIT as so: 'The CIPD noted that, while UBT can increase people's awareness and knowledge of diversity issues, this evidence is generally based on self-reported measures, which may not be reliable. Further, there is no conclusive evidence that diversity training changes attitudes – with some studies showing that UBT does not change *explicit* gender stereotypes either. CIPD noted that there is typically no sustained impact on behaviour and emotional prejudice following UBT, which is not enough in itself to create diverse and inclusive organisations' [a-v, p.2; referencing a-iv, p.24-5].

This BIT guidance is important as it **directs the Civil Service to move away from training that evidence increasingly suggests is not effective**, whatever the workplace context, and to

instead: 'Invest in initiatives [...] that have better evidence of efficacy' [a-v, p.5]. In a Written Ministerial Statement (15th December 2020), the UK Government confirmed that: 'Given the evidence, now captured in the [BIT] report accompanying this statement, an internal review decided in January 2020 that unconscious bias training would be phased out in departments' in favour of D&I strategies 'based on clear evidence of what works' [a-vi]. The Civil Service employs 430,750 full-time equivalent staff (Sept 2020) and the expansive reach of this impact is further indicated by the Government statement, which adds: 'The government expects other parts of the public sector, including local government, the police, and the NHS, to review their approaches in light of the evidence and the developments in the Civil Service' [a-vi].

Enhancing Strategies for Increasing Diversity in the Legal Sector

Output [2] fed into the evidence-base that **informed the landmark *Race in the workplace: The McGregor-Smith Review* (2017)**. This BEIS-commissioned independent review cites output [2] in order to outline the barriers to diversity in the UK workforce and why these negatively affect businesses: 'BIS research highlights that a potential source of discrimination might be that employers overestimate the cost of hiring a worker from a different minority group' [b-i, p.58] and 'a lack of equality policies can lead to greater staff turnover rates, with an associated loss of talent, as well as potential employment tribunals and associated bad press' [b-i, p.55]. Baroness McGregor-Smith further draws on the research to highlight the contingency Urwin and colleagues have found in the success of existent D&I initiatives: 'research by BIS on the Business Case for Equality and Diversity suggests that the case for change will vary for individual businesses, depending on the economic and organisational context within which it is operating' [b-i, p.55].

One of the key recommendations of the McGregor-Smith review was that businesses should 'publish their data, as well as their long-term, aspirational diversity targets and report against their progress annually' as 'making this information public will motivate organisations to tackle this issue with the determination and sense of urgency it deserves' [b-i, p.5]. In this respect, Prof Urwin's collaboration with the Black Solicitors Network (BSN) – the leading UK body representing the interests of existing and aspiring black solicitors – has been **at the vanguard of facilitating the sharing of diversity data by employers**, while the government has continued to lag on this matter [b-ii]. In 2010/2011, Urwin introduced a 'Policy Score', calculated from the responses of firms to a variety of questions covering five areas of diversity policy and practice (gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disabilities, and social mobility). These data have been used to create BSN's annual Diversity League Table (DLT), for which Urwin provided analysis between 2006 and 2017, as confirmed by Paulette Mastin, Chair of BSN [b-iii]. Each year Urwin has developed diversity measures on the basis of the data and presented them at London-based launch events typically attended by more than 100 lawyers from 50 firms across the legal profession [b-iv]. This greatly improved transparency across the sector and communicated the changes to practice that are needed to improve such measures.

As Mastin states, the DLT is 'a ground-breaking piece of work that pre-dated all current cross-strand diversity monitoring initiatives and requirements, leading to **greater transparency around diversity measures in the legal profession**' [b-v, p.5]. Such transparency, Mastin writes, has been key to creating gains in inclusion within the legal sector as it creates 'the ability to identify where there are issues and address them. The DLT has been instrumental in this regard in that it provides a comprehensive analysis of the demographics of many leading law firms and Chambers in the UK across core diversity strands [...] Through this publication, law firms are encouraged to share best practice and are able to gauge progress in the recruitment, retention and progression of diverse lawyers. **Many firms now compile and publish the diversity statistics of their workforce as part of this trend towards greater transparency**' and '**the number of women and ethnic minorities entering the legal profession has increased significantly**' [b-vi]. For this reason, The Hon. Dame Linda Dobbs D.B.E., a former High Court Judge, stated in 2017: 'Since the publication of the first Diversity League Table the profession has seen significant change in the profiles of those who work within it. There has been positive change, for which the DLT can take much credit' [b-v, p.3].

This impact of the DLT is further testified to by those working within the legal sector. For instance, the Managing Director of the Centre for Synchronous Leadership states: 'I work as a consultant with many clients across the legal sector and have repeatedly cited this valuable

research, and witnessed the **change in response from people who were otherwise unreceptive to talking about diversity in their firm**. I have also seen the enthusiasm of others familiar with it in raising awareness and getting increased clarity on what interventions will be most meaningful' [b-vii]. Further, a partner at a firm that has 'a longstanding commitment to D+I' points out that: 'The DLT is a great reminder that even firms who have strong diversity records need to continue to prioritise D+I and that there is no place for complacency' [b-vii].

Urwin's analysis of the data collected for the DLT across ten years resulted in outputs [5] and [6], which found that, though significant successes can be identified at entry level, there is still the need to move the diversity dial at higher leadership levels and across the sector as a whole. As Mastin writes, these findings have **stimulated a change in BSN's practice aimed at more directly addressing contingencies in D&I approaches**, as highlighted in Urwin's broader research: 'A significant emerging theme from this retrospective was that despite the development of a wide body of experience, knowledge and initiatives in the area of diversity and inclusion, there has been little discernible change in terms of gender and ethnic diversity at the middle to senior levels of the profession. This prompted us to look beyond the annual reporting of diversity issues (via the traditional DLT and other surveys) towards identifying and exploring what success in diversity and inclusion looks like, whether there is tangible commitment beyond "box-ticking" policies and practices and what policies and practices actually work' [b-iii, see also b-viii].

Mastin confirms that the outcome of this change in practice was the creation of a 'new research study beginning in 2020 with DLT2020 which will profile successful change in diversity and inclusion through a series of law firm case studies focussing on gender and ethnicity' [b-iii]. These case studies examine such firms' action plans for achieving their D&I objectives, the challenges they have faced in implementing these plans, the outcomes/successes achieved, and how they plan to further drive change on the basis of these successes. Through this study, **BSN will drive the creation of evidence-into-practice strategies for other firms to follow**: 'by focussing on where change is happening within the profession and what it takes to make progress on diversity and inclusion [...] those who are seeking to deliver change can at least see how to approach change on equity, diversity and inclusion in order to maximise the chances of making progress' [b-iii].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- [a] (i) CIPD, "Evidence into Practice research programme: What actually works in D&I?" [\[link\]](#) (ii) GoodWorkTV, "D&I workshop - supporting people to thrive at work", 18/10/19 [\[video\]](#) (iii) Testimony: Inclusion Officer at Kent Fire and Rescue (iv) Gifford, J, Green, M, Young, J, Urwin, P, *Diversity Management that Works: An Evidence-based Review*, CIPD, Oct 2019 [\[link\]](#) (v) The Behavioural Insights Team, "Unconscious bias and diversity training – what the evidence says", 15/12/20 [\[link\]](#) (vi) Gov.uk, "Written Ministerial Statement on Unconscious Bias Training" 15/12/20 [\[link\]](#)
- [b] (i) Baroness McGregor-Smith, *Race in the workplace: The McGregor-Smith Review*. Independent review for BEIS, 28/2/17 [\[link\]](#) (ii) J.Pickard and D.Thomas, "Author of 2017 ethnic pay review urges UK government to act now", *Financial Times*, 17/6/20 [\[link\]](#) (iii) Testimony: Paulette Mastin, Black Solicitors Network (BSN) (iv) BSN, "Diversity League Table 2014 – Results, Launch event and publication release", 30/10/14 [\[link\]](#) (v) BSN, *Diversity League Table: a 10-year demographic survey of the legal profession*, 2017 [\[link\]](#) (vi) P. Mastin, "Black History Month: Report reveals "worrying" barrier to partnership for women and BMEs", *The Lawyer*, 13/10/17 [\[link\]](#) (vii) Testimony: from those working within the legal sector. (viii) P. Mastin, "BSN – 25 years of striving for equality", *The Law Society Gazette*, 26/10/20 [\[link\]](#)