



REFRESHING LAW

Down to Earth

Bias - how do we quash it?

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Bias

- The action of supporting or opposing a particular person in an unfair way because of allowing personal opinions to influence your judgment



Conscious Bias

- I am aware that I have certain prejudices



Unconscious Bias

- I am unaware that I have certain prejudices



Accept it's normal: we all do it

- Once we recognise and can appreciate why we have these inherent reactions, we can start to manage our biases
- It might not come from a bad place – we might be trying to help



Talk about it

- Once we recognise that we have these reactions and that it's normal we need to find ways to talk about them in a way which doesn't punish us for having those reactions
- We need to learn to speak to people to understand a situation from their perspective so we aren't making inappropriate judgements



Training

- Learn where our biases are.
- We all need to develop the capacity to shine a torch on ourselves and our thinking and practice “constructive uncertainty” and bring the things we might do unconsciously to the conscious mind



Avoid strengthening our biases

- Exposure to negative messages or images can reinforce negative associations, whether or not we consciously dismiss them



It's a dynamic thing

- Spend time with groups that we perceive as 'others'.
- Can be created or re-created by exposure to new situations, images or stories.
- Expose yourself to positive images and stories prior to making key decisions



Do not rush decisions

- Recognise when you have incomplete information
- Don't rush decision-making
- Make sure those making decision are sufficiently fed and watered and breaks are taken



Challenge your thinking?

- *'lacks the relevant sector experience'*
- *'major player in a key project'*



Punitive measures don't work

- Telling people they are prejudiced makes the problem worse
- Demonising effect – drives it underground
- Training which has been confrontational has to date made no impact on bias and even made it worse.



Summary

- It will always be here
- We need to think differently about the subject to get different outcomes
- Challenge for HR to promote greater understanding and to devote resources to tackling the issue



Moral imperative vs legal imperative

- It's the right thing to do
- Legally an employer is responsible for the acts and omissions of its staff
- Public sector duty to advance equality of opportunity, to remove and minimise disadvantages and to take steps to eliminate discrimination and encourage participation in public life





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