Improving inclusion in the workspace

WOMEN IN MOBILITY

Women in Mobility UK

Whitepaper
March 2023

Introduction

Backround

Only around 20% of the transport industry workforce are women. An alarming statistic that hasn't improved much in recent years. Motivated to help the sector become more diverse and inclusive, <u>Women in Mobility UK</u> (WiM UK) recently organised an in-person workshop on "Improving inclusion in the workspace" in London. The key aim of the workshop was to explore ways in which public and private sector companies working in transport and mobility can improve gender inclusion in the workplace.

Women from a range of organisations attended the workshop sharing their views and experiences. We have developed this summary report to share the key lessons learned.

Image description: A group photo in an office, of the women attending the workshop. One row is sitting/kneeling and the other standing, behind two small coffee tables.
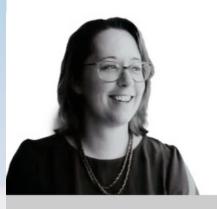
Introduction

About Women in Mobility UK

WiM UK works to raise the visibility of women in the UK transport sector and improve diversity and inclusivity across all aspects of the mobility ecosystem. The network is run by three mobility enthusiasts with a wealth of experience, drive and determination to make our planet a better, more inclusive place.

WiM UK Goals

- Foster visibility & build networks
- Support an empowered & diverse workforce
- Create career development opportunities
- Promote inclusive & sustainable mobility
- Shape the mobility discourse
- Develop partnerships across sectors

WiM UK Founders

Shared Mobility Enthusiast

Annie Reddaway

"I see a WIM UK as a space for women in mobility to connect, share our knowledge and experience and learn together. It is really important to inspire and empower each other and celebrate our achievements."

Disruptive Mobility All-Rounder

Olga Anapryenka

"Women make up a large proportion of mobility users but not of the industry designing and implementing the systems; I hope we can provide a space for women in the industry to network, learn and develop."

Accessible Mobility Advocate

Sandra Witzel

"Active leadership from women creates better outcomes for everyone, not least the mobility sector. At WiM UK, we do our part to improve diversity and inclusivity, push the conversation and challenge each other."

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Introduction

Table of contents

Acknowledgements

Image description: A group of women sat around two tables in a meeting room, participating in the workshop.

1. What works well

The participants shared examples of successful initiatives, activities and other ways to make their respective workplaces more inclusive. These are tried and tested, have received positive feedback throughout the process, and can be recommended to all transport businesses/organisations.

Mentorships

The importance of both internal and external mentors was highlighted by participants. Mentors can help with career progression, personal development and wellbeing.

A mentorship can work for both mentee and mentor: a more senior person can act as a sounding board to a junior person but at the same time learn themselves from the process.

Mentorship programmes can be run internally within the organisation (through HR or third party suppliers) or be kept completely separate.

It is important to set clear expectations and goals at the beginning of a mentoring relationship for it to be successful.

Buddy systems

Buddy systems are best for new starters in an organisation. A new team member is assigned a "buddy" to support with both onboarding and day-to-day processes. There should be a clear time limit and responsibilities assigned for the programme.

Involving men into conversation

Let's make sure men are part of the discussion and understand the barriers lack of inclusion brings to organisations. This offers an opportunity for men to better understand the issues around gender equity. Real life examples are helpful to demonstrate what this looks like for the individuals as well as the team.

Male champions

Inclusion can't happen without men. Having male allies in an organisation is crucial for success and ensures buy-in from the whole team. Male leaders should be champions of inclusion to help set the overall inclusion strategy.

1. What works well

Inclusive job descriptions
Job descriptions should offer as much flexibility as possible, for example flexible arrangements around working from home vs office. Flexible working hours and days also ensure a role is more attractive to women.
A clearly written job description which outlines the role without a long list of unrealistic "must haves" will encourage a more diverse pool of applicants. Language regarding role requirements and expectations should be balanced and avoid buzzwords ('rock star', 'ninja' etc.). The language also needs to be inclusive and avoid stereotypes and gender specifications.

Employee satisfaction surveys
Anonymous staff surveys are an important tool to keep the finger on the pulse. Make sure to include questions that allow for feedback on inclusion and diversity. Segmenting by age and gender may offer important insights. Run surveys regularly and share the results with the whole organisation. Survey results should be used for the organisation to develop, grow and create a more inclusive and positive work environment, so it's important to learn from them and follow through

Knowledge sharing
Knowledge sharing is an important aspect of growth and development. In this context, an organisation can benefit from setting up an internal resource (share point, intranet page etc.) that everyone can access.
Sharing information about existing initiatives supporting women (e.g. Women in Steer, Women of Tier) as well as external (e.g. Women in Transport, Women in Mobility UK, other local or industry specific groups supporting women) can encourage women to participate.
A knowledge hub sharing information about opportunities for professional development for women such as mentorship and leadership programmes can be beneficial with support training and development of staff.
Sharing best practice from other sectors or industries and organising events can help include both men and women into conversation.

A good example is the recently published 'Management of menopause transition in the police service' guidance: Managing menopause in the workplace – new guidance published | College of Policing

1. What works well

Internal groups for women

Creating an internal networking and support group for women offers a positive space to connect, learn and share. Meeting frequently, e.g. once a month, can provoke discussion and provide a safe space to share or address any issues.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) groups in general can support an organisation at all levels. They can also provide training and should therefore also include leadership which can learn from issues and shared experiences. A group sponsored by the leadership team is then able to implement organisation-wide training (e.g. LGBTQ+ inclusion) for the benefit of everyone.

In order to ensure these groups and their findings aren't sidelined, it is important to set ownership, deadlines and other Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Existing HR departments can support this process to help spread the workload and remove any pressure.

Financial support

Allocation of a budget for professional memberships for employees encourages participation.

Clear set of values

Transparency about an organisations' values is important to ensure the values reflect a culture of inclusion and openness.
To make sure values are actually lived and don't just exist on paper, annual 'culture days' devoted to activities and discussion about organisational values can be a good solution. The leadership team should participate and listen to staff, foster the exchange of ideas in a relaxed and open environment.

> For an organisation to become more inclusive it requires a holistic approach. Leadership teams need to educate themselves and foster an environment of trust and learning, provide budgets, general resources and enshrine inclusion in their policies. Clear KPIs and targets can help the organisation evolve and move forward.

2. What stops change

Lack of awareness, accountability and resources can lead to a standstill in the development of inclusion measures and strategies. The reasons can be multi-faceted and depend on the type and size of the organisation, as well as the culture.

Go through this list and highlight the points you think apply to your organisation. Where can you help achieve change, who can support you in this process?

- Lack of available budget within the company to introduce new initiatives
- No HR department
- Timing of internal events: if organised in the evening, they can be difficult to attend due to childcare responsibilities
- Lack of women in senior management
- Fear of change within senior management: "let's not get into it, as we will do it wrong"
- Lack of knowledge about diversity and no understanding of gender related issues
- Male colleagues not always aware of the need for inclusion, or how to contribute
- Lack of space to talk if there are no trustworthy colleagues or managers
- Risk of tokenism – the fear that if someone speaks up, they will be labelled as "a diversity/inclusivity person"
- Stereotypes about women being pregnant and having children
- Lack of supportive policies (e.g. menopause, share parental leave, flexibility, mental health)

2. What stops change (cont)

- No understanding how to report and who to talk to about sexual harassment or gender discrimination at the workplace
- Diversity is seen as a tick-box exercise - just having the right policies and mission statements in place is not enough, they need to be lived by the organisation
- No KPIs, time or other support for DEI or women's groups
- Silos and intersectionality can cause minority groups to be pitted against each other, e.g. social mobility + gender; social mobility + race
- Lack of education internally about the need for diversity/inclusion/gender groups - people in the organisation might not understand why they are needed
- Understanding the purpose of a role and why it was created is important. For example, a diversity representative is a role that both the organisation and staff can benefit from
- Difference in regions can cause friction, e.g. culture can be very different in a city-based warehouse or office versus more rural counterparts. Messages and activities need to go beyond HQ and reach the whole organisation.

Fill in your own points:

- _____
- _____
- _____

3. The ideal, inclusive workplace - what does it look like?

There are many aspects that can make one workplace more inclusive compared to another.

Below is a list of findings from our workshop that are crucial to create the right environment. Feel free to add your own points and share within your organisation

- Ongoing DEI training for the whole organisation
- Give staff the opportunity to try new things (by allocating time, resources etc.)
- Encourage access to mentors
- Foster an environment of openness and trust
- Employ on merit and establish fair promotion processes whilst being aware of unconscious bias
- Offer flexibility in working location, time and days where possible
- Provide equal maternity and paternity leave (= parental leave)
- Set up an internal company budget allocated to improving diversity
- Provide a safe and clean work environment, e.g. safety for all staff, access to sanitary pads/tampons in the bathroom
- Consult with employees and DEI groups about how to best set up toilets in your organisation, e.g. unisex or separate seating/standing vs gendered
- Allow sharing of opinions in a safe environment
- Establish positive and inclusive values and link them to the organisational culture
- Set realistic expectations for colleagues and staff
- Ensure equal opportunities and pay at all levels
- Allow everyone to be able to be themselves
- Follow through with policies

Fill in your own points:

- _
- _

Thank You

WOMEN IN MOBILITY

We invite all female mobility enthusiasts to join our group. Everyone is welcome to discuss the future of mobility and collaboratively create a better transport future.

Linkedin
Women in Mobility UK | Groups | LinkedIn

Website
www.womeninmobility.org.uk