



Diversity and inclusion stories:

Elizabeth
Support Worker

Listen and get inspired by Elizabeth as she talks about her experience of diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

First off, tell me about you – what's your name, what do you do and where are you from?

My name is Elizabeth, and I am a support worker. My job is to give help and emotional support to vulnerable people. I was born in Nigeria and came to the UK when I was 8 years old.

Can you tell me a little bit about why you chose this role?

A personal passion and previous work experience that I have obtained over the years led me to this job. I was presented with the chance to develop skills that made me more attractive to prospective employers.

Sounds like you are very passionate about what you do. Was this always the case or was there an 'ah ha' moment for you?

My role as a student diversity and inclusion representative at university ignited my passion for working to create inclusive cultures in education and in the workplace. I would organise events which would act as a safe place for students to discuss their personal beliefs and cultures openly, so others could have the chance to learn about people from different backgrounds. My time at university inspired me to progress my interest in the legislation side of diversity and inclusion, by completing a master's degree in law.

That all sounds great. Did this experience help in your current job?

When I started my current job, I was passionate about creating an inclusive workplace and after receiving support and encouragement from my team, I organised and led a workshop all around telling people about my culture and allowing others to discuss theirs too.

We hold regular events where we can celebrate different backgrounds by bringing in food from around the world and respecting different religious holidays.

How did it feel seeing your colleagues' interest in something you are passionate about?

The support and engagement I've received at work has helped me to express myself and empowered me to continue to educate people on understanding individual differences and skills. It's also shown how creating a more inclusive environment at work can make work so much more fun and interesting.

That's brilliant! Can you tell me more about reverse mentoring?

Reverse mentoring is when someone younger and newer to the world of work mentors a more senior person in the company, so they can learn from each other.

How did you find working with your mentee? Did anything surprise you?

I was surprised to find out how much I had in common with the mentee I was paired with. He told me how he grew up in Nigeria and studied law. I loved hearing about his work speaking to children at schools and with people like me to connect with the community and support each other. I felt really inspired to see how successful he has become.

What piece of advice would give other young people from different backgrounds starting their career?

One bit of advice I would give to other young people from different ethnic minority groups – to find a mentor, a colleague or even friends who you find relatable, inspire you and you can learn from. I would also say that, at work, to talk to the manager and let them know if there is anything they can do to help you feel more welcome.

Where could young people go for support if they might find it challenging to talk about their experiences?

There are some really good networks you can join as someone from an African background where you can talk openly about any worries, concerns or thoughts such as The New Black UK and CILIP BAME Network who aim to contribute to equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives and provide a forum to understand and improve equality, diversity and inclusion in different sectors.

Check out more stories like this by visiting barclayslifeskills.com and searching “Diversity and inclusion stories”.