

IF YOUR FACE FITS

EXPLORING COMMON MISTAKES
TO ADDRESSING EQUALITY AND
EQUITY IN RECRUITMENT.

**A PRACTITIONER GUIDE BASED
ON NO MORE TICK BOXES**

INTRODUCTION

Improving recruitment and career progression practices has been an ongoing challenge. How organisations look and how they are experienced is an enduring legacy of our inability to affect sustainable change to disrupt existing recruitment patterns.

We struggle to understand why and how to use evidence to support our endeavours to improve practice. This lies at the heart of why things can remain stubbornly the same. This practitioner guide is drawn from a larger compendium of practice also published by NHS East of England which draws together available research on recruitment, this can be found in the [No More Tick Boxes](#) document.

Because the recruitment process does not sit in isolation, the evidence also explores and shines a light on workplace practices such as induction, talent management and appraisals.

How to use this work

This summary is divided into a number of key themes. Within each theme, we draw attention to the types of practices that consistently get in the way of equality and equity.

We also highlight the impact of these practices, much of which we will recognise as the picture that we currently see and experience. There are some suggestions (which are based on evidence) of the types of things that can be done to improve our practice.

In [No More Tick Boxes](#), detailed attention is paid to understanding the relationship between the poor outcomes we currently experience and what drives them. Do make use of this work, as it is critically important to understanding the ‘why’ and to resist reducing action to a simple check list – which we also know, doesn’t work.

INTRODUCTION

This practitioner guide “If Your Face Fits” has been devised to steer recruitment and career development practice by quickly identifying common pitfalls and what could be done by way of improvement.

As such, it makes reference to a larger body of work, No More Tick Boxes, in which my colleague Roger Kline has pulled together a compendium of useful evidence to support more effective and equitable recruitment practice. The documents work well together and are designed as such.

Using the experience that we have of working with organisations to directly improve their recruitment practices, I hope that this shorter guide will ‘speak’ to the ongoing challenges and poor experiences and encourage more ambitious interventions that in turn will lead to more equitable practices. I was delighted to work on this resource and am grateful to Harprit Hockley and Roger Kline for the opportunity to collaborate.

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CONTENTS

Introduction	02
■ The principles behind the practice	05
■ You get what you ask for	07
■ Drawing the short straw	10
■ Mirror Mirror	13
■ Recognising biases in interviewing	16
■ You're it!	17
■ Improving panel discussions	19
■ Assumptions that impact on decision making	19
■ Working inside out	20
■ Induction and on-boarding	21
■ Creating a 'soft' landing	22
■ Talent Spotting	23
■ Appraisals	27
■ Concluding remarks	29



THE PRINCIPLES BEHIND THE PRACTICE

Imagine if you were to cut a slice through these components, this slice would represent the system including our wider society. From its centre – to its edge. This slice would represent the system – including our wider society, how we view what matters and what we value, what we are expected to take accountability for and how organisations work on issues of discrimination.

Nothing works well on its own. There is an interdependency of actions, reflecting the relationship between actions that individuals can take and how they experience the organisation/system that they work in.



We tend to place a lot of effort to support individuals to understand their biases, to recognise stereotypes and to see the relationship between what they think about others and how these beliefs become part of our behaviours. This is still an important aspect of the work that organisations should do. However, the evidence to support this practice is complex. Individualised work in this area doesn't always have the impact we want it to have on discrimination. It's not that understanding biases and discrimination isn't important – it's just that our ability to hold ourselves to account for change is limited – especially if the systems around us (and our employer) do not require us to change – or require change that makes little impact.

There is more evidence that an effort to create processes that mitigate biases – is likely to have more impact. This has a lot to do with nudge theory – e.g. the idea of eating from smaller plates as a way of limiting food intake. Many of the practices suggested in this toolkit and in the longer version of the guide, are examples of surrounding the system with processes which if implemented well, can help to guide individual practices.

The area of equality and diversity is confusing to most of us. Organisations have a responsibility to help staff understand why poor practice should be amended, what is required of them and the expectations (outcomes) that can be derived as a result. We can only do this if we are clear about the evidence that we are using to build in change. If all leaders, from Board, senior leadership and middle managers, understand why what they are doing is likely to work, this will help to build appetite and understanding, but also confidence.

Many things that we do in the name of furthering equality have made little or no change. In fact, most time we don't expect any change. Drawing on evidence and supporting its implementation means that you are more able to hold people to account for the change you expect to see. We (including boards) should always ask of any actual or proposed intervention – “what evidence is there behind it, how does this relate to the causes of discrimination, what makes us think it is likely to work and how will we know if it does (or doesn't work)” ?

Much has already been expressed as part of the [NHS People Plan](#) about the need for a compassionate and inclusive NHS. Efforts to change recruitment practices cannot sit in a vacuum. They have to be part of the wider aspirations of an organisation to develop its own “DNA” of inclusivity.

YOU GET WHAT YOU ASK FOR

CREATING A JOB DESCRIPTION AND ADVERTISING THE ROLE

Employers and recruiting managers believe in the relationship between the production of a job description and the selection of the 'right' candidate.

Evidence would suggest however, that this relationship is a weak one and that job descriptions often reinforce and obscure existing biases. This can result in justifying a lack of diverse candidates and putting off those who have the potential for the role.



YOU GET WHAT YOU ASK FOR

CREATING A JOB DESCRIPTION AND ADVERTISING THE ROLE

What goes wrong?	What's its impact ?
Job Descriptions are rarely reviewed	Resulting in a poor understanding of the skills required to do the role and what it entails.
Too many essential criteria	Results in a lack of understanding of what is really essential to undertake the role. This can be off putting to candidates who have skills but have less belief in their own abilities Too many criteria can make it harder for recruitment panels to shortlist well. When's there is too much information, our biases can take over.
Inclusion of desirable criteria	Results in opportunities for bias – what is desirable to one person, might not be as desirable to others . This practice can easily legitimise biases – I can discriminate in favour of what I believe is desirable.
Request for prior experience	Prior experience may not be essential for the role. Individuals are not 'born' with the prior experience. This strategy results in the appointment of those who have occupied previous role type, resulting in reducing the talent pool.
Use of agenda for change	Often stated as a reason for job criteria to remain the same, resulting in use of criteria which reflects the grade of the post. This can lengthen the job description making it hard to gain role clarity. There is no requirement to marry shortlisting and selection criteria against all job evaluation factors. Which means the appointment process can be more focussed.
Use of executive search agencies	Obligating responsibility for candidate diversity to executive search agencies with no instructions to create a diverse shortlist. Not reviewing the results of executive search agencies against previous appointment processes.
The recruitment process	Recruitment is often run as a one off appointment - which results in less opportunity to reflect on the diversity of applicants or the results of appointment.
Advertisements	Can contain phrases that are off putting (either very jargonistic or using phrases such as 'ambitious', 'determined') which can appeal to men, rather than women. Or ask for experience and use this as an accurate measure of the potential to do the role.

YOU GET WHAT YOU ASK FOR

CREATING A JOB DESCRIPTION AND ADVERTISING THE ROLE

What action can be taken to improve the use of job descriptions and advertising the role?

Job descriptions construction

- One of the best ways to use a JD is to carefully consider the criteria required for the role. Research suggests that improving this process requires no more than six essential criteria for each job. This makes the role more attractive to diverse applicants.
- The construction of job descriptions matter. Certain phrases appeal to men more than women. The use of some words and jargon will deter some applicants. Use <https://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com/>
- Notice the use of the word ‘fit’ – this is not about criteria, it is usually about biases. Be prepared to challenge this when you hear it, by asking what it really means and how it relates to the job description.

Advertising the role

- Review where adverts are posted – some media can be exclusive. Where do you place ads and have you diversified this process? Open days – especially targeted at particular groups or geographical areas – can be a way of attracting those who may not be in the ‘know’ about the role. Use internal networks – such as staff networks, and external networks – such as voluntary organisations /partners. Remember to use social media.
- Lengthen the application period – the shorter the period, the more it advantages those who are ‘in the know’. Shorter processes are more open to attracting ‘who we know’
- Offer information discussions for individuals to find out more about the role before they apply –and where appropriate make this part of the process.
- Make sure you mention that your interview arrangements are accessible to those who have a disability throughout the interview process and most importantly that reasonable adjustments will be made if appointed to the role.
- When using executive search agencies – insist on a diverse long list for posts, which translate into diverse short lists and ask about previous performance in this area.

DRAWING THE SHORT STRAW

IMPROVING THE SHORTLISTING PROCESS

Shortlisting processes can be short-chained often hijacked by poor preparation, lack of time management and having to “make do” with who is available to shortlist, rather than drawing on those who can assist in the choice of an excellent candidate.

The numbers of applications in any process can also be off putting for those involved in shortlisting – making the process one of expediency, rather than one of careful consideration against the criteria.



DRAWING THE SHORT STRAW

IMPROVING THE SHORTLISTING PROCESS

What goes wrong?	What's its impact?
Candidates are recognisable to the shortlisting panel	Members of the shortlisting panel are able to draw on what is known of a candidate as a means of including them/not including them, in the shortlist.
Not enough time to shortlist well	Shortlisting that is done hastily is more open to bias. Potential for relevant candidates to be missed.
Not using the essential criteria to score candidates	Enables bias to be brought into the shortlisting process.
Shortlisting process not carried out independently by members of the recruitment panel	Members of the recruitment panel can be influenced by each other during the shortlisting process.

What action can be taken to improve the shortlisting process?

About the panel

- Shortlisting should comprise of 3 or more members – fewer people provide more opportunity for bias.
- Shortlisting panel members should not be drawn from the recruiting department. Use an independent panel member who can objectively contribute and can make decisions more objective.
- Panels should have recent (within 12 months) training so that they understand biases and are mature enough are able to speak about the potential for their own biases in the process.
- More diverse panels, may help to put candidates at ease.

DRAWING THE SHORT STRAW

IMPROVING THE SHORTLISTING PROCESS

About the process

- Plan the process well – give time to finding panel members, time for shortlisting (anticipating that for some posts applicant numbers will be high).
- Use an anonymised recruitment process (removal of personal information such as name, gender, ethnicity, and where qualifications obtained) to reduce opportunities to employ bias and improve the diversity of shortlisting. CV's should not be used. ([See page 41 of No More Tick Boxes](#)).
- Don't shortlist on the basis of the number of candidates that there is time to interview. This reduces the shortlist to time constraints and can remove eligible candidates from the process.
- Use a structured approach to go through each candidate based on the shortlisting criteria. Use essential criteria to score. The panel should score against the criteria independently before the shortlisting panel meets, ensuring more independent choice and less group influence.
- Panels should avoid making assumptions about ; rapid career progression/ evidence of length of time in a role/career breaks/ which institutions degrees were awarded from – these are assumptions, but often interpreted as 'facts'.
- Panels should also be expected to give feedback on the shortlisting process – indicating why individuals had not been shortlisted, using the criteria. This feedback is really helpful to unsuccessful candidates. Not being able to provide this feedback is usually an indication that the process has not been followed well and that biases have taken hold.
- Panels should be expected to routinely explain individual appointment decisions and what steps are being taken to ensure candidates not appointed get support to do better next time. ([See page 131 of No More Tick Boxes](#)).
- Consider using a version of the Rooney rule or increase the numbers of under-represented groups who are shortlisted ([See page 107 of No More Tick Boxes](#)). But only if candidates meet the essential criteria.

MIRROR MIRROR

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Unfortunately we are becoming more aware of the challenges of the interview process – not only its propensity for bias, but often its inability to select quality candidates. Interviews are not an exact science. ([Read more on page 116 of No More Tick Boxes](#)).

Despite the processes we might seek to put in place to help candidates demonstrate their skills – interviews essentially boil down to the decisions that the panel make and how you can support them to make more considered, and less biased decisions.



MIRROR MIRROR

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

What goes wrong?	What's its impact ?
Poor preparation	Members of the panel are not inducted into the process, have little understanding of the role and what skills are being assessed throughout the process.
Bias and snap judgements	Panels don't understand their own propensity for bias throughout the process and their ability to confirm their first impressions. This results in affirmation bias (See page 157 of No More tick boxes).
Poor understanding of the criteria	If the criteria are not well understood, there are opportunities for panel members to rely on their assumptions, rather than on the process.
Poor interpretation of non-verbals	Non-verbal signals can be misinterpreted in two ways. The panel can look for signals from the interviewee, interpreting smiling (or lack of it), eye contact (or lack of it) as levels of interest for the role and as such a way of judging interview performance. Interviewees can find panel interaction off putting and panels often mis-judge the impact of 'them' on the performance of the candidate (See page 127 of No More Tick boxes).
Tests and application stages	Tests and many stages in the appointment process can make the process more open to bias. We tend not to be wired for complexity – and the more complexity we have, the more opportunity there is for decisions to be made on initial assumptions and biased beliefs.
Getting someone who is 'diverse' on the panel	Assumption that this strategy is a silver bullet and that the panel will be fair, because it has someone who is from a more diverse background. (See page 143 of No More Tick Boxes). Fails to recognise issues of panel power and conformity to culture/biases.
Use of unstructured interviews	Unstructured interviews are poor predictors of performance (See page 114 of No More Tick Boxes) and result in more bias and less clarity of decision making.
Not taking notes	More opportunity for bias to creep. You will not remember what you have heard unless you have an eidetic memory! Taking notes throughout the process really helps with recalling candidates and scoring, in addition to providing feedback.
Too many interviews in the space of one day	Panel members can find it hard to distinguish between candidates and levels of engagement can diminish throughout the process, resulting in better /poorer attention depending on candidate order.

MIRROR MIRROR

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

What action can be taken to improve fairness in the interview process?

Improving the process

- Think before you test. Tests should be relevant for the role. Evidence on the use of tests is mixed ([See page 102 of No More Tick Boxes](#)). In other words, using tests does not always aid decision making nor help in the choice of the ideal candidate.
- Not all tests are 'fair' and offer insight into the skills of the candidate. Explore the validity of tests – for example, the situational judgement test, does show validity over other selection measures ([See pages 113 and 114 of No More Tick Boxes](#)).
- Skills-based assessments (asking people to do something in relation to role) is the best predictor of job performance
- Multiple forms of assessments can enable candidates to demonstrate their skills in different ways (A head for Hiring ([See page 115 of No More Tick Boxes](#))).
- Formulating structured questions based on the essential criteria ([See page 112 of No More Tick Boxes](#)). Ask the same questions to every person who is interviewed. This can help screen out panel biases.
- It goes without saying, but is so rarely considered – but panel members should have some idea of what constitutes a 'good' answer. This should be formulated and noted in advance of the interview process.
- Use of diversity may improve candidate selection – panel member diversity can provide the opportunity to hear answers in different ways, to offer different insights and ultimately contribute to the 'picture' of the candidate, that is created throughout the interview process – but it is certainly not a 'silver bullet'.
- Beware the increased risk of bias in the final decision making – due to time pressure.

MIRROR MIRROR

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Skills of panel members

- The panel need to be self-aware, recognising that interviewees will pick up on their non-verbal signals (smiling, nodding, frowning, etc) This is especially important in encouraging candidates to do their best in the process.
- Virtual interview processes can increase bias – panel members might note the background of applicant, distractions etc. – these factors need to be recognised and dismissed.
- At the risk of repetition, the panels understanding of the process, the criteria, model answers, scoring processes, has a real impact on fairness, and attention should be spent to all these elements.
- Developing the skill of the chair – their skill of facilitating the process is critical in supporting how the panel performs and discusses the assessment of candidates.
- Acting to support interview fairness, doesn't just mean supporting individuals to do their role better. It means recognising the inherent biases in the process and trying to screen as many of these out, so that panel members can be supported to choose well.

Recognising biases in interviewing

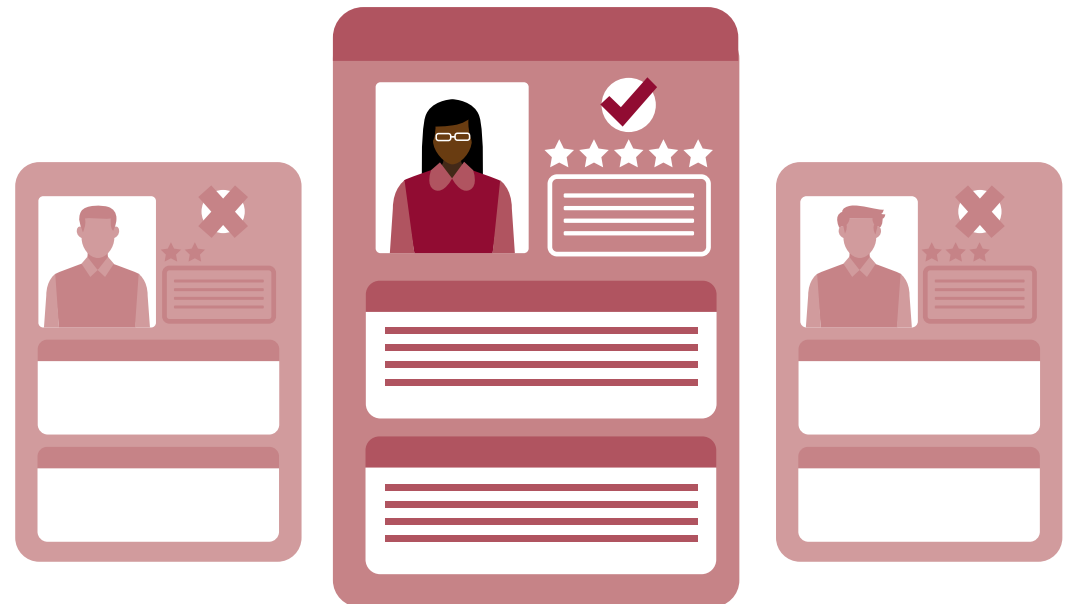
There is a very long list of biases that we are all subject to and in danger of acting upon, especially in the interview process ([See page 127 of No More Tick Boxes](#)). These include (but are not limited to):

- Our ability to judge different types of people more harshly using the same criteria – this impacts more negatively on women and BME candidates.
- Using past work as a potential predictor for future performance ([See pages 121 and page 37 of No More Tick Boxes](#)).
- Making judgements about career breaks, awarding institutions, and those who can 'hit the ground' running.
- Belief in merit – although this is a challenging concept – we don't all have the same opportunities in life, so notions of 'merit' can be flawed. In interview terms, this can manifest in a belief that someone should have achieved better or more. These ideas can easily creep into discussions and decision making processes ([See page 121 of No More Tick Boxes](#)).
- Societal biases – again, this is another challenging concept, individuals might have to navigate the beliefs, stereotypes and biases from the wider organisation. This might mean that women, for example, might experience more challenge to their leadership than white men, who many still believe are the 'rightful' leaders in many situations.

YOU'RE IT !

THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS...

Despite our efforts to enhance the interview process, so that we are given the best opportunity to choose a candidate and that candidates have the best opportunity to demonstrate their skills, decision making is often where things go wrong or to 'type'.



YOU'RE IT !

THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS...

What goes wrong?	What's its impact ?
Over-reliance on the views of one panel member	As previously mentioned, the chair, or even someone from the recruiting area, can have more sway in the process. (See page 127 of No More Tick Boxes), Tversky and Kahneman (1974). In some instances the hiring manager is removed from the panel entirely, as there is a likelihood that people recruit in their own image.
Over-reliance on the expert	In roles where levels of technical expertise might be held with one member of the interview panel, there is a danger that this expertise might also be loaded with disguised biases that can go unchecked. This can happen on 'higher level' roles, where often knowing someone from previous roles is seen as legitimate information to bring into the process.
Discussing candidates before independent scoring	Discussing candidates before panel members have had the opportunity to score independently, can bring in conformity bias. Individuals who have firmer views can sway the views of others. (Kaheman 2011) (See page 127 of No More Tick Boxes).
Poor chairing skills	Chair uses their position to confirm their candidate of choice, rather than facilitating the diversity of panel members views, which might make for a better decision. The 'power' of the chair should not be under-estimated as a predictor of candidate selection.
Time pressure	The pressure to make a decision, because of time, can lead to candidates being appointed without enhanced consideration.
Not using the criteria	Veering away from the criteria, especially when it is challenging to make a decision is more normal practice than we often appreciate. Decisions can be made between candidates that have more qualifications or experience than someone else, or by drawing on personal favourites i.e. someone who can 'hit the ground running'. These factors often advantage candidates who are not diverse.

YOU'RE IT !

THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS...

Improving panel discussions

- Be really clear about what level of expertise is required and ensure that all panel members are aware of this criteria. This can help to avoid decisions being made by the one panel member, who understands/knows the role.
- Panel members should score independently.
- Discuss candidates fully based on their interview and application. Use the panel to complete the descriptions of the candidates and to double check what was heard.
- If panel members have different interview scores and different choices of who might be the successful candidate – this is a good thing! It is diversity in action and panels should take their time to review the evidence behind their choices using their interview notes.
- Having clear declination reasons against the criteria, not only means that the process has been clearly followed by panel members, but means that candidates can be given accurate feedback. This feedback should be shared so that candidates are able to work on what they need to improve.

Assumptions that impact on decision making

- There are many things that can **feed** your biases in relation to the performance of candidates at interview – confusing confidence with competence ([See page 127 of No More Tick Boxes](#)).
- The panel interprets non-verbal signals made by candidates, or is unaware of their own non-verbal signals and the impact that this makes on the performance of the candidate ([See page 127 of No More Tick Boxes](#)).
- Belief that others know better and following their lead, can mean that comments made about the worth of a candidate by one panel member, can lead to others following suit. ([See page 127 of No More Tick Boxes](#)).

YOU'RE IT !

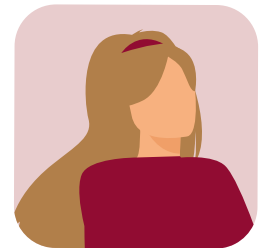
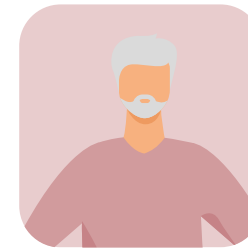
THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS...

Working inside out

Recruitment is a sticking point for the NHS. But focussing solely on improving recruitment could create a sticking plaster for wider concerns, including how an organisation is experienced and whether it is able to nurture and support all staff.

Improving recruitment processes is not enough, otherwise keeping employees and maximising their talents will quickly become additional areas of concern. Not surprisingly then, all functions of an organisation need attention including:

- Induction process (or onboarding) – this is more than a one day overview of the organisation – this is about how people are welcomed into the role and what the organisation does to support the post holder to be effective. At a minimum this is a 6-month process.
- Talent development.
- Appraisals.



INDUCTION AND ON-BOARDING

Settling people into their roles is the employer's responsibility. How well employers do this can directly relate to the level of performance they can expect of the appointee.

Recognising the relationship between how well employees are inducted and understand their role is often under-estimated and induction is often a process, rather than an outcome.



INDUCTION AND ON-BOARDING

What goes wrong?	What's its impact ?
Induction is corporate and not tailored to the role	For some roles, Individuals are left to forge their own path to discover their role and its expectations. This might inhibit their performance.
Belief that newcomers will be welcomed	Although we implicitly understand the notion of in groups and out groups – these experiences can be exacerbated for under-represented groups . Resulting in people being held to a different standard – or making it hard to perform in role. (See page 157 of No More Tick Boxes).
Blaming the individual	Employers collect a range of data, including turnover, poorer appraisals, progression, and access to development opportunities. Seeking individual explanations for why people have left a role/not performed as well, can hide trend data, which can show that environments are maintained which do not serve marginalised individuals well.

Creating a 'soft' landing

- From the get go, employers should be discussing the career aspirations of all their employees. These should be clearly documented and reviewed regularly. Employers should meet their responsibilities to help employees meet their goals.
- Employees should be inducted into the teams that they are going to work in. Care should be taken to understand if there are any barriers that might inhibited individuals from working effectively.
- Employers should make routine and regular checks on new employees especially between the 1–6 month mark.
- Interrogate data by protected characteristics (turnover, rate of progression, poor appraisals, access to development opportunities etc) to explore trends that might help to understand how conducive your organisation is relation to the support and development of marginalised individuals.

TALENT SPOTTING

SUPPORTING AND DEVELOPING PEOPLE

Firstly, the idea that you can ‘spot’ talent is problematic. If we think about what this means in practice, it is really about legitimising our biases.

Often our views on talent are driven by previous experiences, coupled with the active biases about people we see. This combination can often exclude those who don’t ‘fit’.

Given our imperfections, it is no wonder that we have very ‘narrow’ views of talent.



TALENT SPOTTING

SUPPORTING AND DEVELOPING PEOPLE

What goes wrong?	What's its impact ?
We make judgements on what we see and experience	Because we are surrounded with talented people, who are predominately from particular 'groups' – this can confirm our beliefs about 'who' is talented and which types of people can be successful in leadership roles. This confirmation bias helps to maintain the status quo. (See page 152 of No More Tick Boxes).
Belief in what leaders look like and who can lead us	Again, we have a very clear stereotype of the type of person who can occupy leadership roles. (See page 162 of No More Tick Boxes) - https://hbr.org/2018/03/for-women-and-minorities-to-get-ahead-managers-must-assign-work-fairly . Our ability to act on this stereotype is boundless. This is also the same when it comes to class, where our belief in cultural capital plays out to exclude those who don't hold those backgrounds. This can result in BME individuals not being recognised as leadership material.
Holding people to different standards	We don't recognise our attribution biases and therefore can't adjust for it in how we view people. This means that we reward those who are part of our 'in group' really easily and those who are in our 'out groups' have to work much harder for the same favour. This results in disabled, BME and female staff being under-represented in higher levels of the workforce (See page 35 of No More Tick Boxes).
Leaders do not understand their own inability to respond effectively to different types of people	Encouragement and good quality feedback can be lacking if leaders are hesitant about their relationships with diverse team members/groups. The impact of these relationships is often down played, but can lead to higher levels of disciplinarys and poor experiences of inclusion. (See page 160 of No More Tick Boxes).
Believing that under-represented staff are in need of support	Much effort is put into programmes to support under-represented staff, as opposed to supporting the environment in which they have to operate. (See page 144 of No More Tick Boxes) https://www.nber.org/papers/w9873 . This reproduces the idea of a deficit model, where organisations place effort in addressing the impact of discrimination on BME people, rather than addressing its causes.
Casually giving opportunities to 'act up' and to be seconded to the usual suspects	Individuals who are not part of the 'in group' do not get opportunities to develop their skills, resulting in stagnation and a lack of opportunity to add to their CV. (See page 37 of No More Tick Boxes). Not recognising the importance of stretch opportunities (See page 65 of No More Tick Boxes) – http://www.personneltoday.com/hr/702010-a-model-approach-for-learning/
Our belief in merit	To put in bluntly, merit is often a self-fulfilling process which draws on those who have access to opportunity and are better networked. Acting on merit is our way of maintaining the status quo (See page 156 of No More Tick Boxes).

TALENT SPOTTING

SUPPORTING AND DEVELOPING PEOPLE

How you widen your talent pool

- Advertise all 'stretch' opportunities and all secondments. Plucking people out of the air advances their individual opportunity.
- Be careful when you ask for volunteers. Instead think about how you extend and offer opportunities to develop and support all individuals. Link your decisions back to personal development/ appraisal goals. Think about how you develop the capability of everyone.
- Appraisals are also subject to bias. Managers need support in understanding how this can impact on who is given a more positive appraisal ([See page 91 of No More Tick Boxes](#)) how gender bias corrupts performance reviews and what to do about it.
- As with all aspects of performance, understand the criteria that is being used to form judgement and be clear about what good looks like. Too often examples are used from memory to form part of appraisal process. And, we know how inconsistent our memories are!
- Asking other managers to peer review (or moderate) appraisals can avoid views of performance being formed by one person.
- Leadership training – should cover biases and focus on interpreting feedback well and giving feedback – including practicing giving uncomfortable feedback and using data to hold people to account.
- Organisational performance data, should be broken down to directorate level or even team level so that leaders can understand and work on trends that arise from staff experiences and outcomes.

TALENT SPOTTING

SUPPORTING AND DEVELOPING PEOPLE

Understanding how culture is experienced

- Along with reviewing and understanding the data, you should 'hear' from those experiences in your organisation that are less likely to be heard. ([See page 40 of No More Tick Boxes](#)).
- Conduct exit interviews (not with the line manager) and analyse exit interviews by protected characteristics.
- Monitor progression indicators across the organisations for different staff groups. Understanding more about rates of progression will give you valuable information about your ability to manage talent. Do you have glass ceilings or sticky floors? Ask and answer this question as part of your talent management strategy.
- Turnover rates and staff survey data, when combined with other forms of data, can support understanding of culture if reviewed by protected characteristics, role and location.



APPRAISALS

Appraisals are not stand alone predictors of performance, research by ([See page 91 of No More Tick Boxes](#)), demonstrated the link between the quality of the appraisal conversation and the outcomes in organisations.



APPRAISALS

What goes wrong?	What's its impact ?
Not knowing what we are judging	Not having clarity about on the criteria that is used to make judgements about performance leaves performance open to interpretation.
More bias	Bias in both questions and interpretation can mean that employees undergoing appraisals might find it hard to meet expectations – especially as these often lie in the mind of the beholder.
Lack of honest feedback	Being able to give honest feedback is a skill. ‘protective hesitancy’ (Thomas (2001) (See page 91 of No More Tick Boxes) explains how white mentors could be hesitant in giving honest feedback to people of colour. Individual progress is often dependent on knowing how to improve and dishonest feedback is less than useful. See feedback to women (See page 92 of No More Tick Boxes).

Supporting staff to improve their performance involves:

- Ensuring that appraisals have clear criteria, which is consistent and understood across all managers.
- Checking the quality of appraisals is important to understand how they are experienced, whether the criteria is well understood and used appropriately, and whether the measures of performance make sense across similar roles.
- Understanding the evidence about how bias can occur and the types of roles and individuals who are likely to face unfavourable bias as part of the appraisal process. ([See page 92 of No More Tick Boxes](#)).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We hope that this resource has provided a helpful route map for organisations to reflect on how they work on recruitment and talent management, the kinds of interventions they use and how they assess what is progressive and sustainable.

Part of the reason for lack of progress in this and other areas, is that we are often seeking quick solutions to complex problems. This statement has a very familiar ring to it!

There is also an art to implementation, which is hard to describe. But if we had to name it, we would describe it as ‘finesse’ – having a grounded understanding of these issues, of how the system reacts when it is challenged, and how to strategise for change. This often means that the tick box approaches we so often crave are less than helpful and are often like “water off a ducks back”.

We place a lot of energy into this kind of work but possibly, don’t think hard enough about what we do before we do it. We also raise the expectations of those who are often marginalised within our organisations. Those who have little voice or power, but who are valid and much needed contributors to the work of the NHS. Before you get busy with implementation, perhaps it would be helpful for us all to pause and to reflect on the following:

- What are your local circumstances? What interventions have been attempted – do they address systemic causes, and most importantly do they elevate our understanding of the type of culture that people experience?
- Do your interventions ‘prop up’ or sustain the existing system – or are they more likely to challenge its root causes?
- Are your approaches to change building on the evidence of what is likely to work and do you also think about what will you ‘let go of’ (stop doing)? Organisations rarely stop doing anything – but just add more into their overcrowded and busy lives.
- Do you have a strategy for how you will properly consider and use this work?
- And finally, how do we look more critically at ourselves, instead of pointing the finger of what needs to be done by others?
- And, whatever you do – try to resist the urge to write another action plan!

**“OUR SELF-IMAGE,
STRONGLY HELD,
ESSENTIALLY DETERMINES
WHAT WE BECOME.”**

MAXWELL MARTZ

A thick black L-shaped line in the bottom right corner of the slide, consisting of a vertical line and a horizontal line meeting at a right angle.