MARINE SOCIETY AND SEA CADETS EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI) AUDIT REPORT
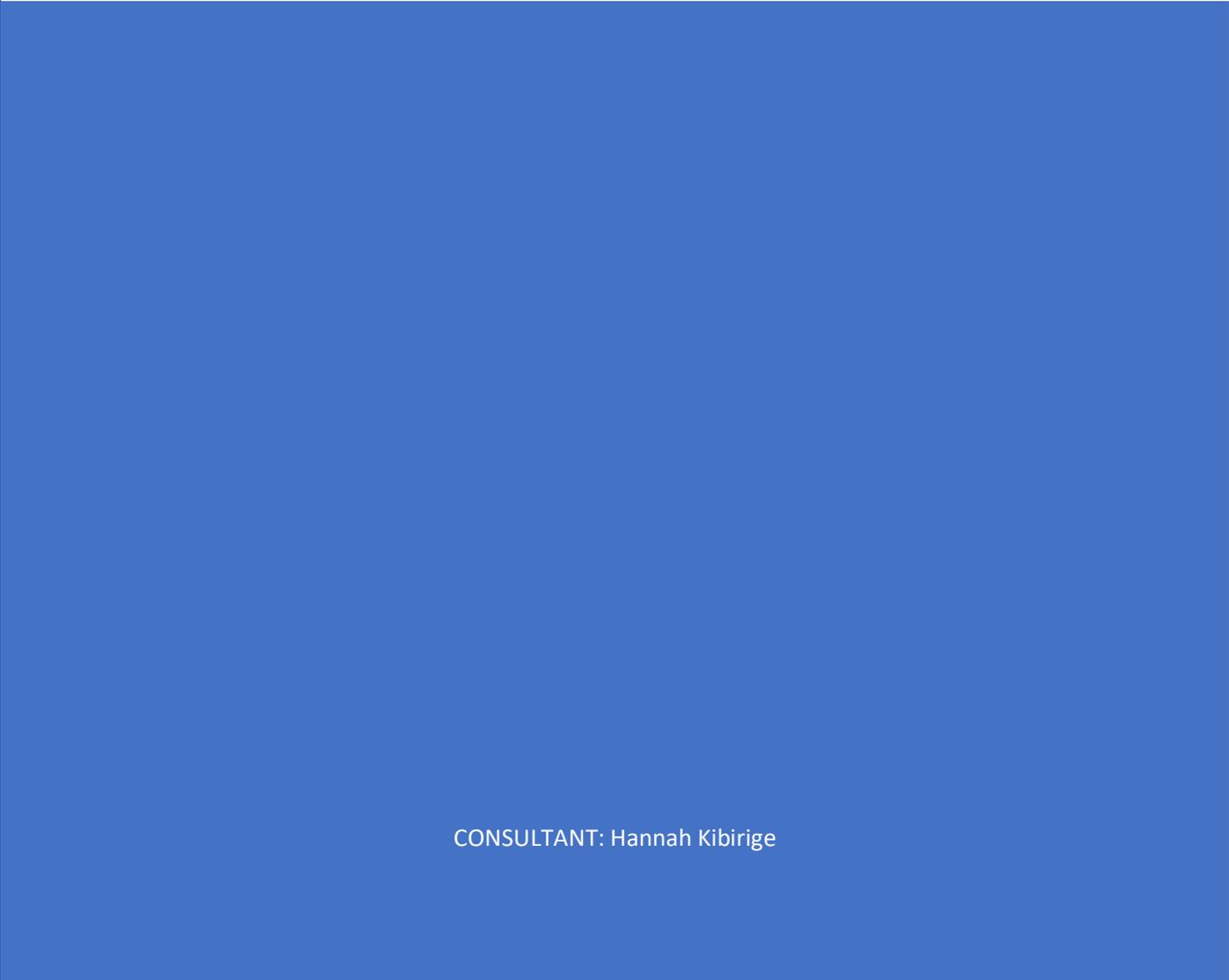
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MARINE SOCIETY AND SEA CADETS (MSSC)
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Audit: Findings and Recommendations

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Executive Summary

In September 2021, Marine Society and Sea Cadets (MSSC) commissioned an independent equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) audit in order to better understand the experiences of those from under-represented and marginalised communities at MSSC. The audit was designed to explore current barriers to equality, diversity and inclusion, and to identify priority areas for action.

Data was collected via 16 interviews, 15 focus groups, 12 Area/cadet conferences and over 350 survey responses. Participants included volunteers, cadets, employees, MSSC Trustees and Marine Society apprentices. The voices and experiences of marginalised and under-represented communities were central to the audit process, and to the report.

The EDI audit found that - while most participants felt a sense of belonging and acknowledged positive efforts and intents around EDI - there is a range of barriers to equality, diversity and inclusion at MSSC. The audit report provides a breakdown of barriers and issues across different contexts and for different participant groups.

Key issues included: inappropriate, discriminatory comments, jokes or 'banter', inadequate processes to handle incidents, gaps in EDI policies, processes and data, and a general lack of awareness, understanding and confidence across MSSC on how to create inclusive, accessible environments. A general lack of diversity in senior and leadership positions was also highlighted.

The audit also revealed EDI issues in relation to specific communities. These included reports of: outdated attitudes around gender and LGBTQ+ equality, a lack of ethnic diversity across MSSC, a range of accessibility barriers for disabled and neurodiverse people, events/traditions that centre Christianity and are not inclusive for those of other faiths or of no faith, and gendered environments that prevent full inclusion for trans and non-binary people.

The report contains a comprehensive set of recommendations which are designed to be taken forwards - in consultation with stakeholders across MSSC - in the form of an EDI vision, long-term strategy and action plan. Priority areas include: establishing clear and robust EDI policies, processes, guidance and expected behaviours, pathways to report and tackle discrimination, more opportunities for EDI training and community engagement programmes.

1. <u>AUDIT METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH</u>

The equality, diversity and inclusion audit was developed on the basis of a framework that was designed by the consultant and approved by an MSSC EDI audit steering group, made up of senior management team members.

The audit used a range of qualitative methods. Data was collected via: 16 semi-structured interviews and 15 focus groups involving stakeholders from across MSSC, 12 Volunteer & Cadet conference sessions, 5 written submissions and a survey with over 350 respondents.

Participants came from a range of regions across England. They included MSSC trustees, charity employees including the senior management team (SMT), Sea Cadets volunteers and cadets, plus Marine Society apprentices. Participants represented a range of underrepresented or marginalised groups and communities.

The audit also included a desktop review of relevant policies, processes, existing data and previous surveys. This was triangulated with the qualitative data shared by participants.

<u>MSSC</u>
Use of the term 'MSSC' in this report encompasses:

- MSSC charity employees, MSSC trustees and its organisation
- Sea Cadets volunteers and cadets and its organisation
- Marine Society Apprentices (please note, this does not include other Seafarer students and beneficiaries)

The report indicates where only one of the groups above is being referred to.

Participants frequently referred to the Royal Navy throughout the audit. For clarity, MSSC is independent from the Royal Navy in both its operation and purpose.

<u>Lived experience</u>
The EDI audit process and report intentionally centres the lived experiences of those from underrepresented or marginalised backgrounds or groups, who are less often heard in listening exercises or surveys. This approach is rooted in the belief that people with lived experience are best placed to identify issues that affect them, and shape solutions.

The report also recognises intersectionality of experience (i.e. the cumulative experience and impact of different aspects of one person's identity). The audit and report does incorporate broader views and ideas from those who do not identify as being from marginalised or under-represented groups.

<u>Participants</u>
A non-exhaustive list of underrepresented/marginalised groups were prioritised for involvement with the EDI steering group. This took into account legal protected characteristics, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, groups that are marginalised in society,

and groups felt to be underrepresented at MSSC. This included: women and non-binary people, LGBTQ+ people, disabled people, neurodivergent people, people of minoritised faith/beliefs, people from minority ethnic backgrounds and people of colour.

It is recognised that this is not a definitive or exhaustive list of marginalised groups or of under-represented groups in society. All those who identified as such were invited to participate in the audit. The audit also included participants who did not identify as belonging to underrepresented or marginalised groups.

Focus groups:
1 MSSC trustee focus group
7 Employee focus groups (2 open sessions, race/ethnicity, LBGTQ+, disability/mental health/neurodivergence, culture working group, senior management team)
3 Volunteer focus groups (disability/mental health/neurodivergence, LBGTQ+, race/ethnicity)
4 Cadet focus groups (mixed identity focus groups)

Gender and faith/beliefs focus groups for employees and race/ethnicity focus group for volunteers did not take place due to low sign-up. There were however participants who spoke about experiences of faith and gender in other focus groups, and in the survey.

Additional steps were taken to engage Cadets from minoritised ethnic backgrounds. Running focus groups in a unit context inevitably limits the confidentiality of the space and may have impacted on contributions.

Interviews: 16 interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders, including HR, safeguarding, employees and volunteers who could not attend focus groups, or requested a confidential space.

Survey: A survey with over 350 respondents, including volunteers, employees, Cadets and Marine Society apprentices. As responses were anonymous, it is not possible to confirm crossover with focus group/interview participants.

Document review: A substantial document review was carried out, comprising existing EDI-related data, research projects and initiatives, HR policies, EDI processes, guidance, annual surveys and strategy documents. The document review is not exhaustive. Full details are included in **Annex A.**

Cadet and volunteer conferences: Feedback from 12 equality, diversity and inclusion conference sessions and the Cadet conference survey, all held in autumn 2021, were also incorporated.

All of the above data was analysed thematically based on the audit framework, alongside the identification of further themes based on key word coding.

<u>Quotes</u>
Quotes used in the report are cleaned verbatim transcriptions. Participation in the audit was agreed as confidential. For this reason, and for ease of reference, quotes are typically attributed using umbrella identity categories (e.g. LGBTQ+). Focus group participants provided less specific demographic data than survey participants. Where a participant did not identify as belonging to a marginalised group, there is no descriptor beyond the participant type (i.e. cadet, volunteer, employee).

{…} in direct quotes denotes an editorial clarification or is used to put a quote into context in order to enable a clearer understanding of what the participant is talking about.

<u>Equity vs equality</u>
This audit and report are rooted in the concept of 'equity'. Equity goes beyond the concept of 'equality', by recognising that providing the same or equal opportunities to all is not enough to create equal outcomes for all. Please see glossary *(p5)* for definitions. 'Equality' is the current language and policies at MSSC and so was used in setting up the audit process. However, a focus on equity is the recommended and intended approach going forwards.

<u>Audit Framework</u>
The audit was based on the following framework. The report is arranged accordingly, drawing out additional themes that came through in the audit. The report aims to provide a picture of EDI across MSSC and to identify challenges and areas for improvement. Differentiation in terms of the employee context and experience is provided where relevant.

- **Culture and belonging:** the extent to which marginalised and under-represented groups feel valued, supported, and feel a sense of belonging at MSSC. The extent to which EDI is integral to the culture of MSSC.
- **Diverse representation**: the extent to which there is diverse representation across MSSC and in its decision-making, and how diverse representation is communicated
- **Leadership:** the extent to which there is clear and demonstrable leadership and senior accountability for EDI, and a future vision and direction for EDI at MSSC
- **Policies and processes:** whether policies and processes ensure equitable, fair and inclusive treatment and support across MSSC. Whether there are adequate mechanisms to address and report discrimination and exclusion.
- **Recruitment, retention and progression:** whether people from marginalised and under-represented backgrounds are proactively recruited, have equal access to opportunities and are supported to develop and thrive at MSSC.
- **Awareness and learning:** the extent to which people across MSSC understand equality, diversity and inclusion at individual and organisational level. The extent to which people are willing and able to access learning, upskilling, guidance, advice.
- **Community collaboration:** the extent to which MSSC engages under-represented communities locally, regionally and nationally and builds mutually beneficial and long-lasting collaborations.

2. GLOSSARY

Ableism: Discrimination, oppressive or unfair treatment on the basis of a person's disability or neurodivergence

Disability: Disability is an umbrella term that encompasses a broad range of differences, including physical, mental, developmental, sensory, visual, hearing. Disabled people use a range of terms and models to describe their identities.

The **social model of disability,** developed by disabled people (and used in this report) says that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference. Barriers can be physical (e.g. access to buildings) or caused by people's attitudes e.g. assuming disabled people are all the same or can't do certain things.

This differs from the **medical model of disability** which sees impairments/differences as problems that needs fixing, an approach which is viewed as limiting disabled peoples' independence, choice and control in their lives.

Diversity: Diversity recognises that we all have different backgrounds, experiences and identities. Diversity in an organisation means that the organisation employs, engages and serves a diverse group of people that's reflective of the society in which it exists and operates. Some people prefer to use the term 'representation' to focus on how organisations should be reflective of the society we live in and the communities we serve.

EDI: This is used as an acronym for equity/equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the report.

Equality: Equality describes treating everyone in the same way or providing individuals or groups the same resources or opportunities. In organisations, this term is often used when talking about 'equal opportunities/equality of opportunity'.

Equity: A different concept to equality, which reflects the approach taken in this audit. Equity acknowledges that inequalities exist more widely in society and that those inequalities will inevitably play out in organisations. Equity recognises that providing everyone with the same or equal opportunities is not enough to create equal outcomes. It means recognising the barriers different groups face and giving people what they need in a way that is proportionate to their circumstances. Equity

Inclusion: Inclusion describes a proactive process to make sure people of different backgrounds, experiences and identities feel welcomed, respected, fully able to participate and thrive. It is not only about creating a diverse environment, but also ensuring a culture where individuals can be their full selves.

Intersectionality: This concept acknowledges that people have many aspects to their identity (e.g. age, nationality, religion, gender, beliefs, socio-economic background) which

intersect to create a unique experience and can compound a person's experience of discrimination or privilege in the world.

Marginalised groups/communities: This term is used to describe any groups or communities in society that experience discrimination or a power imbalance in society broadly.

Microaggressions: Verbal or non-verbal actions, behaviours and slights that discriminate against members of marginalised groups. Microaggressions are often subtle, unintentional and rooted in deeply engrained social stereotypes or treatment of marginalised groups. Cumulatively, they create harmful and oppressive experiences for marginalised groups.

Neurodivergence/neurodiversity: Terms used to describe individuals who think or learn differently than what is considered to be typical. This includes ADHD/ADD, autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia, Tourette's

Participants: When the word 'participants' is used in the report without further description, it refers to a range of people across different focus groups who have stated the same.

PoC refers to 'person/people of colour' i.e. any person who does not identify as white

Staff: In some quotes 'staff' has been replaced with **'volunteer*'** to avoid confusion with MSSC employees. This is denoted by an asterisk.

Transgender/trans: An umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans people may use different terms or a variety of terms to describe themselves.

Under-represented groups/communities: In the report, this is used to describe any identity groups that lack representation at MSSC compared to their local or national representation of that community.

*Terms/categories used to describe identities are recognised as presenting limitations. Umbrella terms used in this report aim to reflect how participants described themselves via the survey or the name of the focus group they took part in. Participant anonymity was also considered.

3. KEY FINDINGS

- Cadets, volunteers, Marine Society apprentices, employees and MSSC trustees who took part in the audit positively acknowledged MSSC's efforts and intents to be inclusive. Participants did however identify a range of barriers to equity, diversity and inclusion. Those from marginalised or under-represented backgrounds often reported a combination of positive and negative experiences.

- Approaches to equity, diversity and inclusion at MSSC are inconsistent, and vary across contexts and geographical locations. This includes: units/districts/training centres/events for volunteers/cadets, and teams/offices/departments for employees.

- **Culture and Belonging: Volunteers and Cadets:** Barriers to inclusion and belonging for volunteers and cadets from marginalised backgrounds include: accessibility needs not being met or understood, inappropriate or discriminatory comments, outdated attitudes to gender and LGBTQ+ equality or feeling like 'the only one' from a cultural, ethnic or faith background. Some participants from marginalised backgrounds reported serious and overt incidents of exclusion and discrimination. Most participants did however still report a sense of belonging.

- **Culture and Belonging: Employees:** EDI issues identified in the workplace culture included an inconsistent approach and lack of awareness around reasonable adjustments/accessibility and inclusion needs. Participants reported a lack of understanding of more subtle manifestations of discrimination and exclusion. Examples were given around race, gender and disability. Microaggressions, particularly relating to gender, were reported. Recent efforts to diversify the workforce, create inclusive policies and more spaces to talk about EDI (including the audit itself) were highlighted as positives.

- **Talking about EDI:** Many participants said that there is often a lack of knowledge, confidence and a 'fear of getting it wrong' when it comes to talking about EDI at MSSC. This is shared across employees, volunteers and cadets. Positively some volunteers, employees and cadets reported organising or being a part of regular, informal conversations in more recent years. Many participants spoke about the potential to nurture and embed conversations and support around EDI by establishing EDI networks and creating regular informal spaces to discuss barriers and celebrate diversity.

- **Policies and processes** There are numerous policies and processes in place to address EDI across MSSC. However, many are inconsistently applied in practice and lack important detail, supporting guidance or training. Notable gaps include a trans inclusion policy, accessibility/reasonable adjustments guidance and clear explanation of discriminatory behaviours in an EDI policy. Most participants said that the reporting and handling of discriminatory incidents for volunteers and cadets requires improvement.

- **Diverse representation:** A lack of ethnic diversity was reported across the board (by employees, volunteers and cadets) at MSSC. A lack of diversity in senior roles (employee and volunteer) was also highlighted. Participants perceive there to be particularly poor representation of disabled people, women, and people of colour in senior volunteer roles. This was often linked to barriers and bias in promotion and progression opportunities. Many participants (employees and volunteers) said that improving diversity on decision-making groups will be key to shaping inclusive outcomes at MSSC.

- **Leadership:.** Many participants were keen to see clearer accountability structures and leadership on EDI, including via a strategy action plan and investment in dedicated resource/expertise for MSSC, and in leadership's own knowledge and understanding of EDI. A lack of diversity in leadership and senior roles (employees and volunteers) is felt to limit inclusive decision-making. Concern about a lack of diverse, senior volunteer role models for existing and potential Cadets from marginalised backgrounds was also raised. Participants expressed particular concern that some senior volunteers are not committed to EDI.

- **Awareness and learning:** Volunteers, cadets and employees reported a lack of knowledge and awareness across a wide range of EDI issues. Most employees, and volunteers have undergone introductory EDI training, but described existing guidance, training and resources as insufficient. Further learning beyond induction depends largely on the inclination of employee/volunteer leaders and line managers. Cadets more commonly learn about EDI as Junior Cadets,

- **Community collaboration:** Participants identified positive examples of existing community engagement. Most said there were further opportunities to be engaged in and to celebrate community and cultural events. Participants also talked about the potential to build new outreach programmes and to identify meaningful, community partnerships that will address particular areas of underrepresentation.

4. CULTURE AND BELONGING: VOLUNTEERS AND CADETS

During the audit, participants identified a range of barriers to inclusion and belonging at MSSC. Participants from marginalised and underrepresented backgrounds shared experiences of exclusionary behaviours, ranging from 'banter' and microaggressions to examples of overt exclusion and discrimination.

Despite this, most participants spoke positively of MSSC and of recent commitments to EDI. Many described their own commitment and willingness to support MSSC in becoming more equitable and inclusive. Cadets and volunteers, in particular, emphasised a strong sense of belonging at MSSC, often referring to Sea Cadets as feeling like 'a family'.

The affinity and sense of loyalty to the organisation is positive and reflects one of MSSC's core values. During the audit however, it was observed that this can sometimes make it difficult for people to highlight and challenge problematic or inappropriate behaviours.

The federated structure of Sea Cadets and regional organisation of MSSC also means that 'micro-cultures' exist, and as a result there is significant variation in experiences of inclusion across contexts, units and regions. MSSC should focus on building greater consistency across the culture, focusing particularly on the areas raised by participants from marginalised/under-represented groups.

4.1 MSSC's identity

Participants across all groups in the audit said that there are markedly different views of MSSC's identity as an organisation. This diversity of views was equally evident through the participants own contributions. Some see MSSC as a youth charity, while others look at MSSC as a youth version of, or as a route to, the Royal Navy. Significantly, many participants described this in relation to how people approach equality, diversity and inclusion.

Many participants said that volunteers with a strong affiliation to the Navy, and/or to the idea that Sea Cadets should run akin to the Navy, were less likely to embody inclusive attitudes or behaviours. Equally, it was suggested that some volunteers are holding on to an outdated perception of the Royal Navy's culture, values and approach to EDI, in particular historic, and discriminatory, attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people and on gender equality

Participants described this as being more commonplace amongst volunteers than elsewhere. This was described as feeling particularly problematic where these views are held at volunteer leadership levels.

Hierarchical structures and ranks in Sea Cadets were described by some as a barrier to inclusion, particularly in the context of a youth organisation. Younger members are not always afforded equal respect as older people at MSSC. Some participants said that the

military affiliation is, at times, used to excuse inappropriate or even bullying behaviours towards younger or junior members.

History, tradition and uniform were described as being integral to MSSC's identity. While many participants associate positively with these elements, participants from marginalised communities also spoke about related barriers to inclusion.

There appears to be a lack of consideration, including in the Sea Cadets' ethos, that for some marginalised communities, British naval history will not purely elicit feelings of pride and positive sentiment. This is particularly true for LGBTQ+ people and for people of colour.

MSSC could more openly acknowledge and reflect this, both in documents and in talking about the history, culture and traditions of MSSC, as many organisations have sought to do in recent years. It is important to keep seeing and promoting this as a positive, and to avoid approaching this through the lens of risk management..

MSSC has clearly made considerable efforts to distinguish its purpose from that of the Royal Navy, including via the organisational vision, strategy and Sea Cadets ethos. The audit revealed that there is still work to do in distinguishing how and why MSSC's approach to EDI differs from the military/Royal Navy because of its purpose as charity for young people - and in communicating this to all. Addressing this is also likely to help in terms of the external perception of MSSC amongst diverse communities. It is also worth noting that while some participants viewed the Royal Navy's approach to EDI as a progressive example to follow, others did not.

Quotes from participants

People still see it as being forced to act as a stereotype and not as a modern youth group. **LBGTQ+ volunteer**

I think they want the organisation to stay as it is. They want it to look like the Royal Navy. I'm not saying it's conscious, but a lot of this stuff is unconscious. I don't think there's a real deep-seated will to change anything. **PoC employee**

Older volunteers bringing with them "back in the day" attitudes to the current world. It's a case of trying to unlearn negative attitudes**. MSSC Trustee**

Sea Cadets is becoming more inclusive but there is still a strong "conservative" element among staff* who do not embrace this. As this "old guard" retire things will hopefully improve. **Volunteer**

There is a stigma around the Navy and its associated organisations of tradition to the point of exclusion, where certain people would be more concerned with cadets wearing a specific

knot in their tie than their mental wellbeing. Such conservative traditionalism can be off-putting to potential cadets, employees and even donors. **Employee**

[Within Cadets, there are] some elements of justification for bullying under the pretext of 'military' and particularly [in the Royal Marines Cadets]. **Employee (senior manager)**

An 18-year-old should be able to challenge an older without ending up in trouble themselves. **Volunteer**

Presumptions about a military styled organisation. Not enough role models or examples to encourage a feeling of belonging. **Employee**

Question every level of our structure and whether it is useful going forward to progress as a relevant youth organisation. Tough conversations about ranks and rates to be had. **Employee**

Some volunteers fear expressing themselves/becoming more comfortable with their own identities due to the effect that it may have on their cadets/ in their unit. **MSSC Trustee**

4.2 Behaviours and dynamics

Many participants reported inappropriate 'banter' and comments as commonplace in the volunteer/cadet context. Examples shared in the audit included sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic and ableist comments and 'jokes'. This was less commonly reported in the workplace. In some instances, comments were felt to be unintentional and rooted in a lack of understanding or awareness – but not always.

Some participants described having effectively developed a 'resilience' to exclusionary comments or behaviours around identity and/or had observed others from marginalised backgrounds doing this. For example, joining in with or pre-empting jokes or comments, often to avoid others feeling uncomfortable. This may be compounded by the guidance around 'sense of humour' within the Sea Cadets' ethos, where there is opportunity to more clearly outline unacceptable behaviours.

This environment clearly presents barriers to existing members, and for new joiners, from underrepresented communities feeling fully included and able to be themselves at MSSC.

A small number of volunteers and cadets described serious and direct incidences of discrimination, not all of which had been dealt with appropriately, if at all. It is important not to be complacent about the frequency of serious incidents at this stage, and to instead focus on improving reporting mechanisms, and confidence in reporting processes.

Overall, participants from marginalised groups tended to describe a combination of positive and negative experiences. Cadets and volunteers described experiencing differing

levels of inclusion and safety depending on the context. For example, activities outside the unit, at district, area or national level, in ward rooms and on training courses.

The audit revealed an inconsistent approach to calling out or challenging discrimination, and in understanding of expected behaviours around EDI across MSSC. Many cadets and volunteers described feeling 'safer' or more included at unit level than in other contexts.

The survey indicates a high degree of confidence generally amongst Cadets that incidents would be taken seriously and tackled. Some Cadets provided positive examples of discrimination being addressed by volunteers and other cadets. However, Cadets from marginalised backgrounds are less confident.

There was a strong contingent of participants who were not from marginalised backgrounds who stated that there is little or no work to be done on EDI at MSSC. This indicates a need for much greater awareness of barriers to inclusion at MSSC, and barriers that exist in wider society that will inevitably affect MSSC's cadets, apprentices, volunteers and employees.

Participants variously reflected that older people, senior volunteers and those who have been in the organisation longer are less inclusive and more likely to be resistant to change, both around EDI and more widely. Many participants also said it can be challenging for younger people – Cadets, employees and volunteers alike - to challenge the inappropriate comments/behaviours of older or long-standing volunteers..

Notably, during the audit, people of different ages, socio-economic backgrounds, and cultural backgrounds recognised the need for MSSC to change, adapt and adopt a more inclusive approach. While it is important to recognise a clear trend around outdated, discriminatory views, it is equally important to avoid blanket assumptions about who holds these views, including on the basis of age and socio-economic background. Participants of different ages and backgrounds described experiencing marginalisation themselves, and hold a deeper lived experience and understanding of EDI than others.

Quotes from participants

Some things are seen as 'banter' and not taken seriously. **Volunteer**

I feel Sea Cadets often call it 'character building' as a joke, but where to draw the line between having a joke and bullying/discrimination. To me, it shouldn't be joked about. **Female cadet (aged 15)**

I have witnessed [volunteers]* calling Cadets Mongol on 3 occasions which I have reported, then another volunteer saying could he park his 'spacka' wagon close to training. I said you can't say that it's inappropriate […] we have cadets that could be listening. I've listened to guys go on about making sure when they go out they keep [their] back against the wall. I don't understand in this day and age with the wide, diverse Cadet range coming in why staff feel the need to comment such rubbish. **LGBTQ+ volunteer**

Many of the cadets at my unit make sexist and gay jokes and comments about my ethnicity, however they say these things while no staff are around so I feel like I wouldn't be believed since it is my word against theirs. **Mixed race, LGBTQ+ Cadet**

I have experienced issues away from my unit where things have not been dealt with. **Bisexual, PoC Cadet**

I became an adult instructor and had to deal with people outside the unit. The mentality at unit level is different. The unit is an inclusive environment, like a little family. **LGBTQ+ volunteer**

Get the message out there and build confidence that it is ok to challenge inappropriate comments in an appropriate way, not necessarily official channels. **Volunteer**

4.3 Gender

Problematic gender dynamics were raised across the volunteer (and employee) contexts. This ranged from sexist comments, behaviours and microaggressions to more serious bullying incidents in the volunteer context. This includes incidents which have caused female volunteers to reconsider, change or leave certain teams or roles.

Structural sexism and gender-specific language were also raised throughout the audit. Terms used to describe the culture around gender at MSSC included 'lad culture', 'boy's club' and 'male naval arrogance'. Sexism was particularly reported in the volunteer context, but some participants also spoke of this in relation to the employee context. It is important to note how these contexts are inextricably intertwined e.g. some employees spoke of interactions with Sea Cadets and their exposure to the gendered comments, behaviours and attitudes of volunteers.

Quotes from participants

The corps views it as acceptable for males to behave in a bullying and intimidating manner. When complaints are made following formal routes, still things are swept away and males remain in post without any outcomes or sanctions. This relates to several cases, not an isolated incidence. **Female volunteer**

As a female seafarer it was really important to me to be able to learn from females sometimes […] there is a different dynamic on the boat and generally less egos. The reason I found learning from females important is that the technique was more important than strength and generally women have developed the techniques to enable them to complete the tasks onboard e.g. flaking a main sail. We will get women driver comments and there will be comments on engineering. We need to be able to learn in a safe space. Resilience is really important, and sadly we have to prove ourselves more than the men do. **Female participant**

I've heard shocking stories of sexism and homophobia first-hand from people who have dealt with HQ. **Female volunteer**

There is sexism across the board at volunteer level. **Employee**

[I] received a complaint about gender discrimination within the Offshore Crew. **Employee**

4.4 Faith

While acknowledging that MSSC is open to people of all faiths/beliefs and none, many participants said that in practice Christianity is treated as the 'core' faith at MSSC. This was described as feeling exclusionary to existing members and a potential barrier to new joiners, who are of other faiths or of no faith.

Examples shared included: only celebrating Christian festivals, centring Christianity in the Trafalgar parade, use of Christian prayers and reference to 'God' in the Sea Cadet promise.

Some participants reported that the approach and guidance in relation to accepted adjustments to uniform is not applied consistently. Participants also highlighted structural issues, including perceived bias in the Chaplaincy appointments process.

Good practice examples were also raised. These included; engaging with local faith leaders, flexibility around adjustments to uniforms, accommodating dietary requirements, acknowledging and/or celebrating the festivals and customs of faiths other than Christianity, flexibility in delivery models to accommodate faith requirements e.g. single sex provision.

Quotes from participants

Young people at one unit described the Sea Cadet promise as 'churchy' and felt that this would be off-putting if you are not Christian. **Volunteer**

We still have prayers as part of a formal. ceremonial event and say the Lord's Prayer. While appreciating tradition, it can be deemed offensive to Christians when someone else who does not practice the religion is made to recite the prayer with no meaning. Additionally, people from other faiths can feel excluded. To become a more inclusive organisation, can we move to a 'period of reflection' allowing any religion, belief, and denomination of faith feel equal, valued and included. **Female volunteer**

There is also still an assumption amongst volunteers and maybe staff that Sea Cadets is a "Christian organisation" **Employee**

Overtly Christian on some/many occasions. **Employee (senior manager)**

Remove Christian-specific prayers. **Volunteer**

> Sea Cadets is inclusive. There's no problem with me wearing my turban and … people take time off for religious dates no problem. **Sikh cadet**

4.5 Race and ethnicity

Relatively few volunteers and cadets of colour took part in the audit. Of those who did, many reflected on being 'the only one' either at the unit, or in other contexts at MSSC. Similarly, many white cadets noted that there were no, or very few, people of colour in their own units. This wasn't always described negatively. However, in general, a lack of racial diversity does appear to impact on how well some units think about or understand barriers to inclusion for people of different cultural and racial identities, and how effectively they respond to racist comments or incidents.

People of colour reported significantly different experiences depending on the make-up of their unit. Cadets at units with higher proportions of people of colour were likely to describe minimal or no barriers or negative experiences. There are some limitations to this feedback as it was provided in the context of the unit rather than anonymously.

In some cases, cadets and volunteers reported serious and direct racist comments and incidents that had gone unchallenged. One cadet in particular described experiencing direct, overt and repeated racial discrimination. They also described the burden of standing up and advocating for other marginalised cadets in the knowledge that this would not be tackled.

Quotes from the audit

There's people from all ethnicities and cultures and backgrounds at my unit and everyone is welcome. If there was any discrimination we'd tell a volunteer* and we have this blue book … and there's also safeguarding. **PoC Cadet**

There's never been any issues [of discrimination] in our unit, if there was we'd say it's unacceptable. **PoC Cadet**

I have received racist, sexist, and homophobic comments as a cadet from other cadets to the point where even if it is reported they get away with just saying sorry. Cadets is not a safe space for those who are different. **PoC, LGBTQ+ Cadet**

My sons have received racist comments that were poorly dealt with. But what can I expect when I hear racist, sexist and homophobic language in the ward room. **Volunteer and parent of mixed-race Cadets**

There is quite a lot of stigma around people of colour in units because it is joked about by cadets. **Volunteer**

It's like a polite racism, it's not obvious but it's there. **Volunteer**

Someone said that all Muslims are terrorists – and nobody, no one at all challenged it apart from me. **PoC Cadet**

4.6 Disability, neurodivergence, mental health

Accessibility was raised as a barrier to inclusion in various contexts. Examples included; the physical accessibility of buildings, offices, boats, boat stations and training centres, alongside the accessibility of activities themselves. Participants also highlighted a lack of support for people with visual and hearing impairments.

Many volunteers described a combination of a lack of confidence, capacity and guidance around determining what a reasonable adjustment is. Volunteers and employees expressed concern that there is often good intent, but there is no clear plan or process for supporting disabled cadets or volunteers with accessibility requirements.

There were some examples of a complete lack of intent to include disabled cadets/volunteers – and at its worst, discriminatory attitudes and attempts to exclude disabled or neurodiverse young people and volunteers.

Positively, participants did share individual examples of employees, volunteers, cadets making concerted efforts to overcome barriers to accessibility for disabled, neurodivergent people and those with mental health conditions. The challenge is that this currently appears to rely primarily on the existing knowledge, goodwill, motivation and capacity of volunteers or employees in any given context.

There is opportunity for a clearer and more consistent approach to accessibility right across MSSC.

Quotes from participants:

I believe we need to do some work to make premises more accessible. Still too many units and other premises aren't wheelchair-friendly. Also still experiencing a "we can't/don't know how to manage your needs so you can't join" attitude, so we need some specific educational resource available to enable an attitude change. **Volunteer**

I wanted to sign up as a volunteer but as a wheelchair user the facilities and location of my son's unit makes access limited. I have become a volunteer and was encouraged to join and that there would be things I could support the unit with from home. **Disabled volunteer**

I heard comments from volunteers outside the unit who knew we had a dyspraxic Cadet. 'He's not very smart is he, he shouldn't be in the band, he's not very good at drill.' **Volunteer**

Senior [volunteers] need to understand that volunteers come from different backgrounds and have different mental and physical abilities. We need to educate senior staff at units to lead by example and live and breathe the values. **Volunteer**

I have been bullied by some Cadets about my autism, but the officers sorted it out quickly. **Autistic cadet**

Not very good at including young people/adults who need different ways to stick to the code of conduct. **Volunteer**

More responsiveness to the needs of disabled volunteers, especially partially sighted or blind. **Employee**

Help Units develop learning areas that are disability-friendly and are accessible for less mobile people. **Volunteer**

Many units, because of the age of the building are unable to accommodate people with a disability i.e. mobility. **Volunteer**

Positive practice and experiences

Some units are very accessible and units such as South Shields have a wheelchair adapted boat - everything is possible. **LGBTQ+ volunteer**

I have high-functioning autism and I feel that my unit has been very welcoming and accommodating without treating me too differently (I hate being treated differently). I like how they expect me to do my bit and give me responsibility. They trusted me to be quartermaster with nothing more than a crash course in piping from an AC. I love knowing people realise how much I'm capable of! **Autistic cadet**

Currently disability can be a problem but we are working hard to make the unit DDA compliant. **Volunteer**

The volunteers had training/background with people with additional needs so we were able to implement support strategies. **Volunteer**

4.7 LGBTQ+

Many participants described improvements over LGBTQ+ inclusion in recent years, and a demise in discriminatory attitudes and comments. However, some discriminatory incidents were reported, and not all LGBTQ+ volunteers feel comfortable to be themselves or open about their identity at MSSC.

Some participants (Cadets and volunteers) described LBGTQ+ inclusion as being 'taboo' and the enduring presence of a 'don't ask, don't tell' culture. Worryingly, a small number of participants were unclear as to whether volunteers are allowed to be openly LGBTQ+ in Sea Cadets.

Positively, LGBTQ+ young people reported that spending time with people who are of a similar background or identity to them at MSSC has helped them to feel safe and supported. Many described simple steps that MSSC could take to make them feel a greater sense of safety and belonging e.g. more open conversation around LGBTQ+ issues, gender-neutral uniforms or name changes.

Barriers to inclusion and belonging for trans and non-binary people were raised repeatedly during the audit. These mostly related to gendered aspects of the environment including: uniforms, toilet/changing facilities, forms & IT systems, changes to names/pronouns, gendered policies, sleeping/residential arrangements and access to competitions. Basic understanding and awareness around processes of social and physical transitioning, and support for trans young people and adults is also lacking.

The audit did reveal individual cases of good practice, where volunteers had allowed trans and non-binary young people to lead on their own inclusion needs and experience at MSSC. These examples could be drawn upon and shared much more widely in conjunction with a clear trans policy, to help tackle the expressed lack of knowledge, and confidence around trans inclusion.

Quotes from participants:

A lot of the Sea Cadets is still 'old school' British military. Chances are it was illegal to be gay and you could be kicked out for being trans. They still want to feel at home. You're dealing with the way things were when they were in the forces. **Trans volunteer**

Over the years it's been a continuous mountain. There's been highs when I felt totally included and troughs where you don't feel included at all. **Female, LGBTQ+ volunteer**

Staff shouldn't have to hide their sexual orientation. If a straight volunteer can mention their wife or husband why can't an LGBT staff member do so? **LGBTQ+ volunteer**

Knowing the Cadets [the trans young person] would have been mercilessly teased so I found him his own room. **Volunteer**

More training for older members of staff that don't spend time with Cadets as often. E.g. I can be myself at the unit but my district (LED) don't make things comfortable for me. **LGBTQ+ Cadet**

On the whole [it's been] a positive experience. From a trans perspective, it's a case of needing a really thick skin. There's rarely ill will, but there's naïve statements. "I just can't see you the way you are now." **Trans volunteer**

As an openly gay man, I made no secret of my position when discussing getting involved and indeed was reassured from the discussions with the members of staff and Unit Management that they welcome people from all backgrounds. **LGBTQ+ volunteer**

Through training and working with a trans cadet, lots of discussion with the unit regarding the support we can offer and how to get the Cadet's voice heard, working with the family too. **Volunteer**

Ask for chosen names and pronouns with the confidence that no staff or cadet will tell any family or friends if the cadet doesn't want certain people to know. **LGBTQ+ Cadet**

At the moment I have to compete as the gender I was assigned at birth (female) which causes a lot of difficulties for me and means I do not get the full cadet experience that other Cis gendered cadets get. **Trans Cadet**

4.8 Socio-economic background

MSSC has good representation across socio-economic backgrounds and young people living in areas of social deprivation. However, Cadets and volunteers did raise financial barriers to inclusion and belonging during the audit. Unequal access to courses, training and progression were raised. In terms of culture and belonging, some participants described those from more affluent backgrounds taking an exclusive attitude to others. In particular, some volunteers said that uniform is not necessarily the 'equaliser' that others perceive it to be.

I feel volunteers would benefit from some additional training. Some adults who come from dominant white British and affluent units attend a course with young people from backgrounds with lower incomes etc. and there seems to be a lack of understanding why cadets may not have the right equipment of standards of uniform. Example include cadets wearing school shoes with uniform instead of boots - whilst not in line with dress regs. When a unit have 40/50 cadets they cannot afford to buy this many boots and parents/guardians cannot afford them so it's either the child goes without and doesn't wear uniform, or we meet them halfway and they wear uniform that is clean and well presented with clean school shoes. **Volunteer**

5. <u>CULTURE AND BELONGING: EMPLOYEES</u>

Employees in the audit generally described MSSC as a welcoming, friendly place to work, and expressed a loyalty to the organisation. They welcomed the review itself and were able to identify some positive aspects of inclusion in the culture, and steps that had been taken around EDI.

Approaches to EDI in the workplace were however described as inconsistent, sometimes depending on where people are based in the organisation, both in relation to their team and geographically. The experiences of marginalised employees, and the prioritisation of EDI in the delivery of work, were also described as being variable and dependent on team leadership or line management.

In general, employees indicated that there is a lack of awareness around many areas of EDI, and for some colleagues an uncomfortableness or fear when it comes to talking about or addressing EDI issues. Employees from marginalised backgrounds highlighted that not everyone is able to identify, call out or challenge inappropriate behaviour especially if it's considered to be more 'low-level' or subtle as opposed to overt, direct discrimination.

Several employees reported gender dynamics in the workplace, and particularly the existence of microaggressions towards women. Examples included women being spoken over or interrupted in meetings and having their ideas, decisions and instructions only accepted - or more readily accepted -when voiced or validated by men.
Some participants described receiving direct challenge from colleagues and line reports, which they felt was based on their gender. Examples were shared at junior and senior levels.

Several female employees described MSSC as less progressive around gender equality and around EDI in general in comparison with previous places of work. Area offices were generally described as being less diverse and inclusive, male-led, and therefore often male-orientated, environments. Some described how subtle sexism and microaggressions are more likely to occur and go unnoticed, or unchallenged, as a result.

Other barriers to inclusion raised were a cliquiness and sense of hierarchy in the workplace and a feeling that inclusion issues are not always taken seriously and are sometimes deprioritised by leaders and managers. This included some examples of reasonable adjustments being deprioritised, challenged or considered but not provided, even though employees have expressed and explained a genuine need.

Disabled and neurodiverse employees flagged that, at times, a lack of awareness, consideration and flexibility in relation to reasonable adjustments can hinder their ability to be themselves and to thrive at MSSC. Diverse ways of thinking or working are not

consistently supported, embraced and seen as a strength.

Quotes from participants

I have found Sea Cadets to be very male-orientated. Women feel like they need to fit in. **Female employee**

I just don't think there's very much awareness of microaggressions. **Female, PoC employee**

I've been in a meeting where they've made lots of jokes about women, including about legs, and you play along as otherwise you're not funny. It's like a boy's club. **Female employee**

Consistency on the topic of ED&I and not feeling like a persistent battle against your own colleagues. **Employee**

Good individual behaviour by some teams or groups but not much coherence, particularly around disability **Disabled/neurodiverse employee**

I don't think we have a culture where people feel comfortable to come out to colleagues. Inappropriate behaviour or comments aren't challenged. **LGBTQ+ employee**

Talking over people in meetings – women get talked over a lot – it's been particularly bad virtually. I think it's different at HQ/London because they're not all ex-navy. **Female employee**

In meetings, sometimes women get talked over. A female manager had done a really good piece of work in difficult circumstances, and was trying to relay that, and it got talked over. It was a little bit upsetting to her. This has happened on a few occasions. It is known from a Navy aspect too. Attitudes towards the opposite sex can be a bit dated. **Male employee**

[No] notification of changes to processes or systems used. **Disabled/neurodiverse employee** (talking about the need to consider accessibility requirements)

A lot of our teams/directorates are really hierarchical and sometimes a bit cliquey.
If you're near the top of the hierarchy or in the right clique, there does tend to be genuine really good quality support for people from marginalised or underrepresented groups, but it feels like the further you get away from the centre the less good support gets. This isn't just a senior to junior thing it can be more nuanced e.g. who you report to.
Disabled/neurodiverse employee

[There are] challenges in the fragmented nature of our workplaces - boat stations/area offices and HQ sometimes feel like very different places and maybe not one organisation. **Employee**

Positive practice/experiences

Organisational approach to LGBTQ+ employees generally positive. **Employee**

Maintain and build on informal gatherings virtual and face to face in a relaxed format so that all are comfortable and able to share in conversations in order for people to feel included and to share. **Employee**

My line manager has a personal understanding … and took an inclusive approach to my access needs from the start. **Disabled employee**

Working with NSC in my new team is a completely inclusive experience. **Female employee**

Generally a very supportive culture. A lot to do with my manager himself. He seems to be very pragmatic. Working from home has also allowed a bit more flexibility in culture and more understanding [of accessibility]. **Disabled employee**

6. TALKING ABOUT EDI AT MSSC

While some participants reported feeling comfortable and willing to talk about EDI, most described a widespread lack of knowledge and confidence in talking about EDI across MSSC. This is often coupled with a fear or uncomfortableness around getting things wrong.

Cadets were frequently described as being more open, calling for more conversations about EDI and having the potential to shape and lead conversations around EDI at MSSC. Some volunteers and cadets described having conversations about EDI or how to improve diversity and inclusion regularly. However, whether conversations about EDI take place varies hugely from unit to unit, appears to be largely dependent on volunteer initiative, and could be better supported by tools and resources.

While many participants spoke positively of new initiatives to support conversations and learning around EDI, some said that MSSC's approach to EDI can feel tokenistic or reactive – rather than feeling truly embedded in the culture.

Overt opposition to talking about EDI exists in places, some of which was expressed in the audit itself. This ranges from volunteers and employees who do not see EDI as relevant to them or to their role to people who actively oppose EDI initiatives as unnecessary and 'special treatment' for certain groups of people.

In the workplace context, there are positive examples of EDI being talked about and, for many, an ambition to do more. Developing more, regular spaces for employees to discuss and embrace some of the challenge and uncomfortableness that naturally comes with EDI work should not only be prioritised but seen as a positive step on the way to creating a more inclusive environment.

Quotes from participants

Example of longstanding [District Officers] 'When I started in Cadets, we didn't have stuff like this to deal with? 'I don't see the need for that, why should people get special treatment?' **Volunteer**

A lot of people think 'what's this got to do with me?' Opening the conversation is massively key because people don't know what to say. **Trans volunteer**

Be more open about strong topics such as mental health. **LGBTQ+ cadet, living with anxiety and depression**

Openly speak out about it more. Although the Cadets is moving forward, some of these topics still feel taboo to openly discuss. **Cadet**

[We need] more open discussion about these topics. **Disabled, LGBTQ+ cadet**

We speak on this at UMT meetings and are trying to encourage more diverse cadets into the unit. **Volunteer**

Admin burden on Commanding Officer is huge so throwing in new things that people are unaware of/find hard to deal with is inviting difficulty. **Trans volunteer**

Employee context

Reactive e.g. started doing really good things around ethnicity after BLM started in earnest, but not good at thinking forward to respond to emerging trends. **Disabled employee**

I am part of the culture group where we have regular discussions. I also post on Compass for things like Non-Binary Visibility Day or Bisexual Visibility Day. This has led to staff contacting me privately to discuss matters. **LGBTQ+ employee**

Tokenistic approach to ED&I i.e. use of Pride flag during Pride. **Employee**

The continuing issue around only displaying LGBTQ+ lanyards and e-mail signatures during Pride month makes it seem like we are only a safe space for people who identify as LGBTQ+ one month a year. **LGBTQ+ employee**

7. <u>SUPPORT AND NETWORKS</u>

There is opportunity for MSSC both to provide more explicit support and actively support networks for people from marginalised backgrounds with shared experiences.

Many participants reported that they knew how to access support generally. Many participants from marginalised backgrounds reported positive experiences of receiving support through informal mechanisms and interactions, including peers and others from the same background as themselves. Placing the burden on people from marginalised backgrounds to support each other was, at times however described as being problematic and unsustainable.

Volunteers frequently talked about finding their own ways to support and include volunteers and cadets from marginalised backgrounds (particularly. trans and disabled cadets). This often comprised creating individual approaches, asking the national safeguarding team or researching online. There also appear to be 'mental health leads' in some areas.

There are clear opportunities to strengthen current support mechanisms through the creation of EDI networks, 'champions' and good practice case studies that can be easily accessed and shared across areas and units. Developing regular slots at events attended by many volunteers e.g. Area Conferences/training weekends was suggested as a way of familiarising more volunteers with tools and support.

Several volunteer participants expressed an interest in sharing their own lived experience and/or to champion EDI work in their local area. There are also volunteers with significant experience of EDI or EDI training in their professional lives that could be drawn upon e.g. SEND professionals.

For employees, the Culture Working Group has great potential to engage employees from marginalised groups in shaping workplace culture, perhaps through a subgroup or feedback mechanism. As MSSC's EDI work develops, additional groups and external support for specific marginalised groups could also be explored.

Finally, participants highlighted the potential to create cross-organisational networks comprising a mix of volunteers, employees and cadets on particular areas of diversity. These could be used to shape policy and guidance or to lead on external events/issues e.g. diversity history months.

Quotes from participants:

Lack of advice for Training Officers trying to support SEN adults. **Volunteer**

No literature for cadets around LGBT support. **LGBTQ+ employee**

Better communication with parents of disabled children. I forget what I should sign up to at sea cadets. By the time I get home to my parents I am uncomfortable asking questions so don't know what I should be doing. **Autistic cadet**

Staff [should be] trained to be more aware of what hidden disabilities can do to a cadet. **Autistic cadet, living with anxiety & depression**

There should be more support from the staff and the cadets, since many cadets don't realise how many bad things we have been through purely because of who we are. **LGBTQ+ cadet**

People have taken backchannel approaches to speak to me like Facebook but there's no official loops for that. I have asked for something like Aspire at Air Cadets. Lots of nods but nothing's happened. **Trans volunteer**

At an area staff training weekend, I put on an EDI discussion for a couple of hours. Lots of good will, but I've heard nothing about it since. **Volunteer**

Tends to be individual drivers or whoever has capability/capacity to carry this forwards. **Volunteer**

I'd had a phone call from that Commanding Officer because he knew I was trans and that the lad would have a hard time at camp. Commanding Officer had done a lot of research himself but wanted some additional support. **Trans volunteer**

8. DIVERSE REPRESENTATION

8.1 Volunteers and Cadets

In several areas, a lack of data due to low completion rates of all data fields and limitations of data systems, is a barrier to properly understanding and addressing all areas of diversity across MSSC. Many participants recognised and highlighted this as an issue in and of itself.

Unsurprisingly, participants held very mixed views with regards to the current diversity of MSSC. There were however some common themes. These included a perceived lack of diversity at senior levels, less diversity in the volunteer base than amongst cadets and employees, and a lack of ethnic diversity. Many participant groups speculated that people with particular disabilities will be under-represented at Sea Cadets by default because of accessibility.

MSSC's existing datasets reflect participants' view that volunteers and young people of colour are underrepresented. The Sea Cadets annual survey demonstrates positive representation of young people from some marginalised backgrounds including looked after young people, young carers and autistic young people. Young people from socio-

economically disadvantaged backgrounds, disabled young people and LGBTQ+ young people also appear to be represented in line with national population. Breaking down representation in umbrella categories wherever feasible would also be useful.

> At present we don't have many people for people [from under-represented backgrounds] to aspire to. **Female volunteer**
>
> In our local district there are many female cadets and uniformed volunteers but not many represented in top district positions. If this is the case with gender representation, I suspect that it is the same for other areas of diversity too. **Female volunteer**

a. Employees

Diversity is generally perceived to be better in the employee team than in MSSC more widely, and to have improved in recent years. However, participants did identify gaps and described diversity as lacking at more senior levels and in locations outside of London.

MSSC employee survey data 2020 provides an indication as to representation. However, a full dataset and the ability to analyse diversity by job grade, role and department would provide a stronger and more useful picture.

Gender balance was spoken about positively at the National Support Centre (NSC), but less so in other contexts. Employee survey data suggests that the representation of people of colour in the employee team is below national averages, with the potential exception of employees that are based in London.

Participants expressed particular concern that the lack of employee diversity outside of NSC and London is likely to impact upon the work MSSC delivers. It was suggested for example that this may lead to a lack of understanding of how to support young people, and effectively train and support volunteers on EDI/community engagement.

> Quotes from participants
>
> Some teams have a good balance of ethnic minority staff members where others do not. **PoC employee**
>
> We need more females in positions of Area Officers, Captains etc. **Employee**
>
> Less/no diversity in Area Offices. **Employee**
>
> There are just seismic gaps in the organisation in terms of diversity. At the top it's white and primarily male. If there's any minorities, we're further down. **PoC employee**
>
> We seem to have successfully recruited more staff from minority ethnic backgrounds recently. **Female employee**

Good female representation at NSC. **Employee**

No representation of disabilities at SMT or MSSC Trustee level. **Disabled employee**

MSSC is London-based = less affected by lack of diversity. **PoC employee**

The organisation is not diverse in either ethnicity or disability. Improvements have been made with females in management roles at NSC, however Area is poorly represented in all areas. **Employee**

All Senior Staff Officers and Area Officers are white, middle-aged males. **Employee (senior manager)**

8.2 Representation in decision-making at MSSC

Participants highlighted that the relative lack of diversity at senior levels means that by default decisions are often shaped and led by a group of people with relatively similar backgrounds and identities, with limited experience of marginalisation and social inequity. This is perceived to be older, white, cisgender men. In the employee context, this extended to 'middle class'.

'Military thinking' and ways of working were also described as a hindrance to making rapid, progressive and forward-thinking decisions on EDI, that are shaped by and therefore meet the needs of the diverse range of young people MSSC is aiming to support.

Marginalised groups are not always equally involved in decision-making processes at MSSC. Many participants spoke of new mechanisms introduced to include young people, but observed that young people are still not always equally listened to or included in shaping decisions that affect them.

There is also a general level of scepticism that feedback around EDI and from marginalised groups will genuinely be used to shape priorities. Relatedly, it was suggested that, at times, the potential reaction/fear around unsupportive volunteers is prioritised over the actual impact of EDI decisions or policies on marginalised groups.

Participants suggested various ways for people from under-represented backgrounds to be more proactively and meaningfully involved in decisions at MSSC. Ultimately and in the long-term, diversity on decision-making and in senior roles will be key. For many participants, the EDI audit was viewed as a positive step.

Quotes from participants

Involve young people in our decision making - especially from marginalised groups. **LGBTQ+ employee**

Feedback loops - how do people's voices get heard, listened to, incorporated as part of designing, improving provisions - and how is this fed back to them to show what change has been made as a result of their contributions? **MSSC Trustee**

Staff Forums/Focus Groups, run by staff that can feed back into HR/Senior Management Team in a confidential, supportive way. **Employee**

It is still very patriarchal. Operational decisions [are] made by a small number of similar minded individuals and consultation usually happens after or not at all with our stakeholders, volunteers and cadets. **Female employee**

As an organisation [we need] to have a fast moving and current approach to EDI that is decided by us, for the benefit of our cadets and volunteers, rather than the Navy or other Cadet Forces. Military influence within our organisation sometimes inhibits free thinking about issues - or slows down decisions tremendously. **Employee**

Bring in the voice of those who we feel aren't included at the moment to get their view on what needs to change/could be different. **MSSC Trustee**

8.3 Diverse representation in communications

Many participants reported improvements in this area, but said that internal and external communications, including social media, posters and videos, could be more diverse and inclusive. Ethnicity was raised frequently. However, concern was also expressed that this should not stray too far from the reality at MSSC – nationally and locally - and should not become tokenistic. Some participants felt that MSSC should take concrete steps to becoming more inclusive, before advertising its diversity.

Suggested ways to avoid tokenism shared by participants included; letting people from marginalised backgrounds tell their own stories in their own words and avoiding contrived messages. Sharing the real diversity of units, celebrating successes, developing a diversity calendar and using stories alongside images to explain MSSC's EDI journey and talk more transparently about aspiration vs reality, were all suggested as positive, authentic ways to represent diversity.

Quotes from participants

Seeing more people who are like them for sure!! A lot of the videos we watch don't have many POC (people of colour) or people of any other minority group, the most diversity that we'll see is a few girls. **PoC cadet**

Show more people of colour on the page, but I don't know. I just know I am the only one and sometimes it does feel weird. **PoC cadet**

Show people of different backgrounds on promotion posters. **Cadet**

On promotional pictures they should use pictures that show diversity because at the moment the pictures predominantly show caucasians. **PoC, Muslim cadet**

Not good at shouting about the disability inclusion we do have (despite this representation being quite good). **Disabled employee**

We sometimes can be tokenistic with representation visually. **Employee**

Lack of visuals/posters celebrating difference - including explanations. **LGBTQ+ employee**

Black history month, there wasn't much of anything. Something small internally, but there didn't seem to be much done. Comms team could focus on the community in general or what's being done. Don't want forced messages. Be good to pull out some stories and be able to share that. CEO does regular talks so there could be some sort of story sharing rather than messages. **PoC employee**

9. <u>LEADERSHIP</u>

Leadership at MSSC, in terms of the MSSC trustees and the Senior Management Team, displayed a clear commitment to understanding and progressing EDI in a genuine and sustainable way during the audit process. Most participants recognised the EDI audit itself as a positive step in this regard. Other examples of recent steps include sharing the gender pay gap data and a focus on diversity in relation to MSSC trustee recruitment.

However, participants also raised a number of concerns and reservations about whether MSSC's leadership teams will remain committed to EDI in the long-term and will openly acknowledge and take accountability for the current challenges and next steps.

Participants did speak positively of recent commitments from leadership around EDI. However, employees and volunteers from marginalised backgrounds expressed concern and doubt as to the level of will and commitment to create meaningful change from those in leadership positions. Some participants felt discouraged that day-to-day EDI issues were not being tackled during the audit process and expressed concern that leadership had not taken EDI seriously in the past.

Concerns were expressed, particularly by employees and volunteers from marginalised backgrounds, that many volunteers in middle and senior leadership roles are not committed

to promoting EDI. This was based on examples of abuses of hierarchy, power dynamics and personality-led approaches to running volunteer teams.

Participants described MSSC as an organisation that becomes more homogenous at senior levels in terms of volunteer and employee leadership, but particularly in the volunteer context. Ethnicity, class, disability and gender were raised by many participants. Structural barriers to establishing a more diverse leadership were also raised as concerns, specifically in relation to the appointment of Area Office leads and the Chaplaincy.

The importance of having more diverse role models in middle and senior leadership roles for young people - and of leadership teams proactively role modelling inclusive behaviours - were raised repeatedly.

Cadets talked about the potential for MSSC to show leadership by taking a stronger, outward voice on EDI issues. This was also raised by volunteers and employees from under-represented groups who reflected, for example, that messaging around issues and events such as Pride and Black Lives Matter and Pride are inconsistent, and that MSSC's external messaging does not always feel strongly supportive of those from marginalised communities at MSSC.

Notably, many participants talked positively about the potential for Cadets to shape and lead work around EDI.

Finally, participants spoke specifically about what feels missing in MSSC's approach to EDI, and what good leadership would look like. This included a clear vision and action plan(s), senior accountability and dedicated EDI resource, leads and expertise at MSSC.

Quotes from participants

Volunteer/cadet context

At district management level, things go awry with personalities. **LGBTQ+, female volunteer**

Senior staff/command structure need to understand that outdated views are still expressed. Individuals' views are their own but that is where they should remain. **LGBTQ+ volunteer**

Again and again, I witness people from different geographical backgrounds being discarded because some senior personnel have a dislike to a particular group of people due to their race, religion etc. **Volunteer**

There are too few non-white leaders to be able to answer this. There is massive under representation and quite honestly the previous Captain's decision to allow 'all lives matter' rhetoric on the Facebook page was offensive and against equality and diversity values. **Volunteer**

I don't know what level of will there is further up the chain. **Trans volunteer**

Leaders and leadership actually believing in it, rather than paying lip service to it. **Female volunteer**

The message needs to come from senior unit, district and area staff who need to lead by example. This can then roll down the chain positively rather [than being] looked upon as a negative tick box exercise. **Volunteer**

Involve young people in this – young people are way more open - they can lead the adults. **LGBTQ+ employee**

New Captain Sea Cadets is very good. **LGBTQ+ employee**

Employee context

Lack of diversity at Senior Management, MSSC trustee and Area office level. **Employee**

I do think there's a culture of closing ranks in SMT. Professionally, I have no trouble accessing them but when there is a problem, they are unapproachable. **PoC employee**

HR and Line Managers unwilling to have conversations around lack of ED&I in waiting for this review. **Disabled employee**

The EDI consultation process is very welcome. **Female employee**

My impression is that [EDI] is taken and communicated appropriately and there is a review which I am looking forward to hearing about its conclusions, initiatives. **Employee**

Lack of senior leaders promoting positive culture events. **Employee**

No clear role - heading up ED&I for either employees or volunteers! **Employee**

Create an EDI role who can champion and support managers with complex discussions/change implementation. **Employee**

Increase people from minoritised ethnic communities on the Board. We maybe need to think about developing a pipeline as we did with the two MSSC youth trustees, which has worked well. **MSSC Trustee**

Addition of young [MSSC] trustees on our board [is positive]. **Employee**

There should be more racially diverse representation in the senior leadership team. **PoC employee**

We shouldn't be tokenistic but should be willing to give considerations to minorities at senior levels within the organisation. **PoC employee**

When I have tried to raise issues I have experienced at MSSC, it has not been taken seriously. Senior managers and HR at MSSC seem to want to believe there isn't an issue. **Female employee**

10. <u>POLICIES AND PROCESSES: VOLUNTEERS AND CADETS</u>

EDI is referenced and addressed in numerous Sea Cadets policies. There are however notable gaps and , an absence of simple and practical, supporting guidance for volunteers in several places. Where policies or processes are in place, often they are not well known, or implemented consistently or effectively.

The implementation of rules or policies in practice at a local level was raised repeatedly. Many participants said that a refusal to be flexible and an overly-rigid application of regulations and rules by volunteers locally can pose a direct barrier to inclusion, or even be used as an excuse to exclude people. Cadets raised particular barriers to inclusion in terms of hair and uniform policies. It was noted during the audit that there is inconsistency here too. Recent changes to hair policy have been made to ensure greater inclusion, and have been accepted.

The development of policies and processes around EDI was often described as being reactive and in response to individual incident or perceived risk, rather than proactively looking at EDI gaps or considering the EDI impact of policies/processes. There is again a concern amongst some that MSSC policy is overly-influenced by MoD policy, and that this is not the right approach for MSSC.

Notable gaps include guidance around reasonable adjustments/disability and trans inclusion. There is potential to build on the Cadets' one-page profile, processes to understand Cadet's accessibility and inclusion requirements as they join and on an ongoing basis. A similar process would be useful for volunteers.

Quotes from participants

Our volunteers don't even have an ED&I policy but we expect them to be inclusive when they have no guidance on what that means. **Employee**

People get confused between inclusion/diversity behaviour and safeguarding. The processes get muddled. **LGBTQ+ volunteer**

A clearer policy on racism and marginalisation in the Cadet force. Clearer guidance on hair - braids, locs, etc. as nothing is specified in the uniform policy about them and they are [culturally protected] hairstyles. **PoC cadet**

There are no policies regarding LGBTQ + so units throughout the nation treat everyone differently. **Volunteer**

Trans policy and guidance - this is really needed and comes up frequently when camps or residentials are in planning. **LGBTQ+ employee**

Lack of gender recognition beyond binary male/female in policies and systems. **MSSC Trustee**

The rule on male [hair] length makes it almost impossible for someone to have an afro. **Cadet**

Teach Cadets how to manage hair for inspections. **Visually impaired cadet**

Launching new policies without considering impacts e.g. male/female hair [policy]. **LGBTQ+ employee**

Not have different uniform regulation for boys and girls. **Autistic cadet**

MoD guidance on trans is rubbish. Far too much emphasis on everybody needs to feel comfortable. Needs to be a much clearer package around trans. **Trans volunteer**

MOD policy [dictates] how we can represent those with protected characteristics. **Employee**

Cadet attitudes are always [to] want to include them as part of the activity. Adults always seem to have 'it doesn't quite hit this policy, rulebook'. **Volunteer**

Get rid of some of the pointless rules. **Volunteer**

11. <u>POLICIES AND PROCESSES: EMPLOYEES</u>

EDI is addressed in many of MSSC's HR policies and processes including the EDI policy, aspirational culture policy and bullying policy. There are however significant opportunities to embed and strengthen EDI in existing policies and processes. Supporting, practical guidance for line managers would help to ensure that policies are more effectively and consistently translated into practice – and do not have unintended negative impacts on marginalised groups. Policies should also undergo regular review through an EDI lens to assess those impacts.

In general, policies and processes could more explicitly centre support and inclusion for employees, whilst also protecting the organisation. Policies are readily available on the intranet, however a number of employees were not aware of them or said that they are not necessarily obvious.

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Understanding EDI policies/processes and values should form an integral part of the induction and welcoming process for all employees, and should specifically highlight any managerial responsibilities. EDI training is another opportunity to signpost to policies and processes.

Priority areas to address include; the EDI policy which should set out individual accountabilities and link to related policies e.g. recruitment, disability. A trans inclusion policy is also a notable gap. *More detail on recommended changes is provided in the document review,* **Annex A***.*

The audit revealed issues in employee access to reasonable adjustments. Employees described a lack of clear process with reasonable adjustments often relying upon the discretion of the line manager handling the request.

Some employees said the approach to reasonable adjustments was primarily driven by organisational resource, rather than prioritising what will support employees to perform, thrive and feel equally included as other colleagues.

Others reported a lack of awareness and sensitivity from line managers that employees may struggle to disclose their access requirements initially, may have changing access requirements or develop access requirements after the point of joining MSSC. Access requirements are also reportedly not always considered at mandatory events or meetings outside of the office e.g. all-staff conferences.

Some policies and processes were described as off-putting or intimidating for disabled and neurodiverse employees in particular. This included the requirement to provide absence records upon joining MSSC and offering only statutory sickness pay during probationary periods. It was observed that some Directors/Line managers exercise discretion around sickness absence, and allow for flexible home working rather than requiring people to use the sickness leave policy. It was highlighted that this may privilege more senior staff and disadvantage junior or frontline staff whose roles mean they cannot work from home.

MSSC's family-friendly and flexible working policies are described as positive in principle, though some participants said that their application is overly-rigid and would be more inclusive if adaptable to peoples' individual or family circumstances.

Participants also said that some policies had been developed with assumptions around traditional family structures, heterosexual relationships and use gendered language or approaches. Notably, several key policies have been updated recently to take a more inclusive, gender-neutral approach - which perhaps not all employees are aware of.

Employees did also identify more inclusive policies, and a commitment from HR to continually improve. These could be built upon to reflect the range of EDI issues that may affect the staff team e.g. a menopause policy is positive, but MSSC could also consider women's health in the round e.g. period policy.

Quotes from participants

Policies are not that easy to find. **Disabled/neurodiverse employee**

Policies/processes [are] not necessarily apparent or obvious. **PoC employee**

Current HR system looks very intimidating to disabled people. As it happens [it] isn't as the information collected is unused, but it still looks very hair raising. **Disabled/neurodiverse employee**

Reasonable adjustments declared on HR joining forms [are] not shared with line managers. **Disabled employee**

HR dismissal of disabilities when reasonable adjustments are requested. **Disabled employee**

Polices are based around heterosexual relationship assumptions. **LGBTQ+ employee**

Hardly any family-friendly policies, there's no childcare vouchers. **Employee**

12. REPORTING AND HANDLING INCIDENTS: VOLUNTEERS AND CADETS

There is a lack of clarity around reporting mechanisms, and the routes to use in relation to EDI incidents and discrimination. There are examples of issues being positively handled locally and particularly by the National Support Centre. However, reporting and handling is far from consistent and was frequently described as being inadequate.

Guidance and processes do not clearly identify different types of discrimination and the routes through which they can be reported. The need to go through local volunteers who may be a part of the problem, not see the issue as serious or may not want to be seen to fail so bury issues, were highlighted as a barrier.

There appears to be much greater confidence that serious or explicit incidents of discrimination reported to National Support Centre will be handled effectively. Amongst volunteers from marginalised groups, there is a lack of confidence that reporting will be taken seriously at the local level in particular. Confidence in reporting mechanisms appears higher amongst those who have not had recourse to use the mechanism to report discrimination.

Some participants also expressed a lack of confidence and satisfaction around the outcomes when incidents are reported, and the support or safety of those reporting. This

has a knock-on effect in terms of whether people feel it is worth reporting, particularly where local or senior volunteers may be part of the problem that is being reported.

Participants generally feel there is a lack of experience, expertise and capacity to handle EDI incidents. Safeguarding was a commonly cited reporting route, and many participants emphasised that the safeguarding team is particularly committed to an inclusive approach. Notably however the safeguarding team is not specifically resourced or trained to handle EDI incidents – nor is every EDI incident a safeguarding issue.

Most cadets referenced the blue pocket book and talking to volunteers when asked how they would report any issues.

Quotes from participants

Depends on what level the report is made. I feel at unit level it will probably depend on the unit involved. At levels above that I think it would be taken seriously. **Volunteer**

If you're talking about reporting EDI issues, I wouldn't know where to go. If you look at the chain of command, you're potentially looking at people who are part of the problem. **LGBTQ+ volunteer**

Currently I'm not sure who to even speak to if I faced discrimination, and therefore am not fully confident in the processes to deal with this. I feel the rank structure hinders communication between both volunteers, and volunteers and cadets. In having to call someone sir/ma'am I feel they are less approachable. **LGBTQ+ volunteer**

Looking at the way other situations have been investigated and solved, I have very little, to no faith in the structure that is in place to deal with incidents. **Non-binary volunteer**

I have experience of a reported case of discrimination being poorly handled, which discouraged others from making similar reports. None of our "how to report" guidance specifically mentions discrimination. **Volunteer**

Recent experiences leave me somewhat unsure that things will be dealt with swiftly before blowing up into something more serious. **Female volunteer**

I felt that a male volunteer did not treat me equally as I was an older woman. I thought at first I'd take the incident to arbitration. I decided not to, as I felt it would end up 'she said this' and 'he said that' and at my age I didn't need the hassle. I came out of uniform so I don't attend the unit as often, and therefore meet him regularly. If I attend at weekends, I don't meet him. **Female volunteer**

Homophobia is not taken seriously. This has been seen time and time again, in investigations where those investigating have lacked understanding or training. In my experience I have seen two experienced, committed and motivated volunteers, worn down with effects on their mental health as a result of the way they have been treated in the corps

and both have left in unacceptable circumstances. More notably, the homophobia has been from senior volunteers and has been challenged but let go, seemingly showing if you're at the right level you can say what you want regardless of whether it is offensive. We need to be better. **Female volunteer**

I feel confident that they will be taken seriously if reported but think more work needs to be done on recognising these things. Also dealing with it at a more local level otherwise the organisation will be overwhelmed. Timescales appear unacceptable currently. **Volunteer**

I had an incident regarding a trans cadet (I have 4 in my unit at present) and although NSC were brilliant (NSC employee was really helpful) they didn't have a policy to refer to when needed. **Volunteer**

I don't believe the safeguarding team have the experience or knowledge to deal with incidents. Everything takes too long. It looks as if the MSSC just pays lip service to it. **Volunteer**

We don't really have any incidents of discrimination but on the odd occasion that we do, it's not really discussed with us, or discussed as a whole, it's just sort of whoever did it gets told off and then we just never speak of it again or the situation is completely taken out of context. **PoC Cadet**

There is a history of reports not getting taken seriously. **LGBTQ+ Cadet**

Support for those who have had racist remarks towards them should be more than just reconciliation. **PoC cadet**

Whilst I feel that Sea Cadets is very inclusive, I think that some incidents will go unreported by individuals. **Volunteer**

If reported I do feel they will be taken seriously. The issue is whether or not they get reported at all. **Volunteer**

It will be reported, but not dealt with by professionals. **Volunteer**

Positive practice and experiences

Every few months my unit does lessons on inclusion and equality and diversity and makes sure every cadet feels welcome at Sea Cadets. They also make sure if someone is mean about anything to anyone else there is consequences to their actions. They also make it very clear who you can tell about incidents. We also do Blue Book and SHOUT lessons. **Cadet**

At Sea Cadets Dunbar no matter how small the incident is they always look into it and make sure the victim is ok. They also sometimes talk to everyone at colours and warn them about the incident e.g. if someone was calling someone else names they would be like 'make sure

you choose your words to others carefully' as an example. **Female Cadet, aged 13**

The very few incidents that have occurred have been dealt with confidently. **LGBTQ+ volunteer**

We have got much better at [reporting and handling incidents] in recent years. **Visually impaired volunteer**

13. <u>REPORTING AND HANDLING INCIDENTS: EMPLOYEES</u>

Employees expressed a stronger degree of confidence in workplace reporting mechanisms than volunteer mechanisms. Some employees shared examples of overt incidents being handled quickly and effectively by HR, including on the basis of gender and ethnicity.

However, there is significantly less confidence from employees around organisational responses to more subtle behaviours. Participants linked this to a lack of expertise and understanding around EDI issues and inappropriate/exclusive behaviours.

Employees from marginalised backgrounds also said that the relative lack of diversity in the organisation is creating a real and/or perceived lack of understanding of diverse lived experiences – which may prevent those from marginalised backgrounds from reporting.

Finally, participants suggested that overt and transparent organisational learning could be undertaken once issues have been identified, in order to ensure that they do not happen again and to build confidence in reporting all forms of incidents.

Quotes from participants:

HR, certainly want to handle these sorts of things well but I don't feel like they have the expertise – quite out of date. I wouldn't feel confident with them handling a discrimination case personally especially if it were something subtle/not very blatant.
Disabled/neurodiverse employee

There was a situation [HR} dealt with really rapidly. The [marginalised] employee being victimised was quite junior. It was full on, blatant discrimination that was resolved through an HR process. **PoC employee**

[HR] has been open and said you need to feel you can approach someone in SMT. **PoC employee**

As most of the staff/volunteers is White British, maybe a Black or Asian person may not feel comfortable sharing [their] experience. **PoC employee**

From experience of reporting other issues not related to ED&I, the organisation does not make significant changes. **LGBTQ+ employee**

People have assumptions that HR is not neutral so there's a reluctance. As a [person of colour] would I feel comfortable, probably not. Past experiences and past things I've seen would make me cautious to go down that line. Yes the policies are good… but for the small things, it's very difficult because it doesn't feel neutral enough. **PoC employee**

Training for leadership to manage concerns or issues. Some may struggle as not experienced. **LGBTQ+ employee**

14. RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, PROGRESSION: VOLUNTEERS AND CADETS

14.1 Recruitment
Cadets and volunteers raised a range of barriers to people from marginalised or under-represented backgrounds joining MSSC. This included the perception of Sea Cadets' as a military organisation, accessibility and cost (real or perceived).

Many participants said that existing recruitment often happens within those with existing connections to MSSC such as friends, family or Royal Navy connections, which naturally limits some aspects of diversity – cultural, ethnic or faith.

Current gaps in diversity were also felt to be potential barriers to others from those communities joining or feeling isolated when they did. It was suggested that more advertising in schools and the local community, foregrounding the diversity that already exists at cadets and taking more steps to proactively state and ensure that cadets is accessible, welcomes and celebrates diversity would support in tackling the former.

Many participants emphasised the importance of establishing more inclusive policies, practices and clarity around accessibility, before pursuing diversity in recruitment. It was also raised that volunteers' commitment to MSSC's inclusion values should form a more integral part of recruitment criteria.

The only barrier I could think of is the lack of ethnic diversity, which some may find off putting. **PoC Cadet**

Almost all the Cadets come from similar backgrounds, so new cadets might find it difficult to fit in. **Cadet**

I think we need to focus on recruiting and retaining girls and should think about how we create female role models by improving the volunteer experience for women, especially women with children. **Female volunteer**

We do not have to change how Sea cadets are run however we should be open and ready to accept all young people and adapt to individual circumstances when they arise. Renew marketing on Sea Cadets, being open and transparent regarding diversity would be a start but operational procedures need updating beforehand. **Volunteer**

95% of Sea Cadets operates as volunteers. It's at the induction process that we need to further explore if the person is really suitable for today's open society and fairness. **Volunteer**

The type of volunteers brought on board makes a huge difference. Kids are taught bias it is not innate. **Volunteer**

14.2 Joining

Induction and joining processes are key opportunities to 'get to know' and ensure that all Cadets and volunteers feel and are equally included, and to capture any inclusion requirements or reasonable adjustments in a welcoming way. Several of the more positive inclusion examples in the audit described this approach. However, this does not always happen in practice and is not clearly supported by current guidance/processes.

Parents, carers and young people are more likely to disclose any requirements – relating to faith, culture or accessibility – if the process feels welcoming and they are reassured that it will not be used as a reason to exclude.

Participants also observed that creating a more inclusive experience for volunteers from marginalised backgrounds (e.g. women) would naturally lead to more diverse role models, and an improved experience for young people form those same marginalised backgrounds.

Quotes from participants

When I first joined Sea Cadets, my parents told the unit I had Aspergers, they said as long as I can join in everything and listen then it was ok. They didn't seem to care about my individual differences/ extra support I may require. **Autistic cadet**

I see improvement in this where a potential cadet's first experience is not on a parade evening and is with their parent. At my unit this is undertaken as a new intake giving children the opportunity to use the support of their parent whilst listening to a cadet sharing their experience. If they want to go further they will join with a group which is less intimidating and staff have time to prepare. **Volunteer**

[EDI] is discussed and used as a refresher to cadets whenever we have someone new joining our Unit. **Volunteer**

Just completed volunteer induction. Discussed own disability with Commanding Officer and two Civilian Instructors. **Disabled volunteer**

I have not instructed at a unit where there has been a multicultural staff. I think to re-dress the balance we could encourage those of ethnic minorities to join as Cadets. **Volunteer**

The induction process is lengthy, the technology is difficult and there is no standard welcoming pathway for volunteers at Units, so their experience will depend entirely on how that Unit is run and managed. **Employee**

14.3 Opportunities and progression: Volunteers

Volunteers raised an array of inclusion barriers in relation to the opportunities available to them and their progression at MSSC.

These included nepotism, local politics or favouritism related to individuals' identities or backgrounds, subtle exclusion or being made to feel unwelcome as a member of a marginalised community, a tendency to favour men for progression/promotion and a failure to proactively consider gender and trans inclusion in the volunteer experience (e.g. women typically having more caring responsibilities). Some participants shared examples of volunteers who were neurodivergent or living with mental health conditions being poorly treated or overlooked. Some volunteers described leaving units or teams where they felt they were unwanted, excluded or prevented from progressing.

Participants also raised the significant time commitments required to volunteer, and a lack of flexibility in some volunteer roles. This was felt to disproportionately impact upon a range of people from marginalised backgrounds (women, disabled people, carers, single parents, people with lower incomes).

An overreliance on digital tools to access development and progression opportunities was also raised. Equally though, some volunteers reflected that the flexibility established during the pandemic had improved access for some e.g. Zoom access for families who cannot attend weekend residentials.

Accessibility issues were also raised for disabled and neurodiverse volunteers as potential barriers to progression, sometimes on a practical level and sometimes in terms of attitudes around capabilities.

Quotes from participants:

Truly flexible and consistent volunteering commitment messaging from unit to unit. Job sharing on key roles to enable there to be role models from different backgrounds. **Disabled volunteer**

The high time commitment does constrain some volunteers progressing. This could be overcome to some extent by having the Adult Volunteers Team operate as two 'watches' at each unit i.e. the commitment of one night plus weekend activities. **Volunteer**

None of our offshore fleet is disabled friendly, and support to send cadets and adults on activities with third party, disabled-friendly providers is not immediately and obviously available. **Volunteer**

Volunteers in some jobs, or constrained by money, have less access. **Volunteer**

Being dyslexic I have to rely on other members of staff to prop me up. I do not like emails or written online courses. Everything has to be read to me. I have been a staff member of Sea Cadets since 1993. I feel alienated by the amount of online stuff that is expected to be digested. I am at the mercy of my colleagues to be informed about up-and-coming courses and have missed opportunities. **Female, dyslexic volunteer**

In my training role at district level (not attached to a unit, it's a team in it's own right) I was discriminated against based on sex and sexual orientation, wasn't given opportunity to do the job properly and wasn't included in training/planning meetings. I wasn't allowed to feel included in the team. Felt resentment that had to be taken onto the team. Definitely discriminated against. I resolved it in the end by walking away. I didn't feel that reporting it in an official way would have any impact whatsoever. **LGBTQ+, female volunteer**

Allow a voting system for district staff members if possible, to avoid allowing bias[ed] staff to take high ranking roles and abusing their authority. **LGBTQ+ female volunteer (18-24)**

There is still a huge gender inequality. My ideas, thoughts and experience have been ignored in the past due to my gender. **Female volunteer (18-24)**

Like many such organisations it's cliquey, officers for example. **Disabled volunteer**

Because I'm me, I don't then get to be party to lots of conversations. I get the impression people are quite guarded around me. **Trans volunteer**

There is still a high degree of 'if your face fits', particularly outside of a unit environment. **Volunteer**

Disability, health issues can be barriers. **Disabled Volunteer**

There are a lack of opportunities for those with certain disabilities to be promoted within the organisation. Adults with Mental Health difficulties, despite making difficulties known,

have not received any adjustments to assist in the promotion / qualification process. **Volunteer**

There are many opportunities to progress but I do think there need to be more people of colour in headquarter roles as it's very white-led and orientated which can put people from different backgrounds off. **Volunteer**

There is a big gender divide in the organisation and it is not taken seriously by anyone. Most senior roles are occupied by males - whilst appreciating this could be due to experiences/seniority as females have had breaks for maternity/family. **Female volunteer**

Without sounding disrespectful the green side isn't as supportive as the blue side when it comes to advancement and promotion, and when it comes to staff in roles of responsibilities like being a Provisional Sergeant. It's difficult to be in a position of responsibility without rank. **Volunteer**

More males than females are promoted and run units. **Female volunteer (55-64)**

Women with children are statistically more likely to have caring responsibilities and therefore be unable to attend residential training. Thought needs to be given to the timing of courses to maximise opportunities for participation. **Female volunteer (35-44)**

People on lower incomes e.g. women and disabled people are less likely to afford the costs of training and activities. **Female volunteer**

14.4 Opportunities and progression: Cadets

A majority of cadet participants felt that opportunities for progression were equal. Some participants spoke of positive practice around asking and assessing cadets' inclusion and accessibility needs for training courses, events and residentials. However, participants also identified a range of EDI issues that affect cadets from marginalised backgrounds access to opportunities and progression. These included:

- Financial barriers including the cost of kit, transport, certain courses and activities
- Unequal spread of courses and opportunities geographically.
- Accessibility barriers relating to a wide range of impairments coupled with the lack of training for volunteers on supporting disabled and neurodiverse cadets.
- Less inclusive environments on training/courses, compared to the unit
- Lack of guidance on supporting trans cadets and gender-neutral facilities on courses/residentials
- Lack of diverse instructors, role models or supervisors (again gender and ethnicity were most commonly referenced)

Notably, many employees (and some Cadets) talked positively about the bursary scheme, whereas generally volunteers and cadets highlighted finances as a barrier. This suggests there are either some unconsidered issues around financial inclusion at MSSC, a communication gap on financial support available – or both.

Quotes from participants:

I have experience of dealing with discrimination of cadets because of their race, and inappropriate comments from cadets because of others' race. This must have some impact on some cadets' ability to access activities. This may be that those who have experience of this discrimination don't book onto courses because of this. We do not ensure there is a female instructor/supervisor on all of our courses e.g. yachts. **Volunteer**

Both adult volunteers and cadets need to be encouraged to open up and talk about any feeling of lack of opportunities. Parents of cadets are often reluctant to mention any problems as they feel that it will be a barrier to success. **Volunteer**

Financially my family cannot afford for me to join lots of the activities and transport is an issue. Mum struggles to do things online which makes accessing courses very difficult. **Cadet (aged 12)**

Bursaries are often not available for district/area courses where some would struggle with this. Perhaps a scheme could help. **Cadet (aged 16)**

The courses are not always open to every background. The units should have people trained to do the courses at the unit so it is more inclusive, or some transport if lots of people are going. Some people don't have the means to be able to get to the venue so that would be very helpful. **Cadet (aged 14)**

Nothing for cadets in Worksop, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Chesterfield or any areas nearby. You go on the course pages they're all London, Cornwall etc. Specialisations are the same. Nothing for us. We can't progress when no courses or anything run here. **Cadet aged 13)**

The SCC is London centric with training centres in the far south or north. **Volunteer**

Some of the most fun courses can be expensive and asking for help to pay for these courses can be embarrassing however the opportunities are available to everyone through bursaries. **Cadet (aged 15)**

Cadets who can't afford courses might be put off applying for them, especially Offshore, even though there are bursaries. **Cadet**

Some of the activities are quite expensive. And it is a struggle for my mom to be able to afford all of the additional kit I need, as well as the monthly subs and travel to/from cadets. However, I am from a family where my mum is a single mother. She has cancer. She also cares for my elder brother who is autistic. I would never have been able to afford an offshore voyage if it weren't for the bursary, for which I am extremely grateful. **Cadet**

Having a certain gender identity, or being transgender may limit your opportunities to progress. with overnight courses requiring certain gender sleeping arrangements, and there not often being gender neutral toilets, this can cause cadets and volunteers from this minority group to have stress, and be less able to go to on them, and therefore their progression will suffer. This is a key issue I believe that the organisation needs to explore and resolve to the best of its ability. **LGBTQ+ volunteer**

15. <u>RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND PROGRESSION: EMPLOYEES</u>

Some participants noted that recent recruitment drives had attracted more diverse candidates and MSSC trustees. Additionally, the document review found positive commitments and references to EDI in recruitment packs. Employees identified various ways in which workplace recruitment processes could be more inclusive and attract more diverse candidates.

These included; removing personal characteristics/anonymising recruitment and selection processes, more diverse hiring panels, inclusive recruitment training/guidance for hiring managers, diversifying advertising routes and taking into consideration how potential applicants from underrepresented groups or with no prior connection to MSSC/RN might perceive the culture, and taking steps to mitigate this e.g. use of jargon, military images.

Group recruitment exercises in assessment centres were described as presenting potential barriers if accessibility requirements and diverse ways of working/thinking are not adequately considered in the process. Reasonable adjustments and accessibility should be considered and communicated to candidates across all stages of recruitment and selection.

Finally, a more robust EDI statement, values and commitments could be included in job adverts, particularly encouraging those from under-represented backgrounds to apply.

The audit also revealed potential barriers to progression. These included unconscious bias in relation to diverse ways of working, gender dynamics where women's contributions may not be equally recognised or rewarded, less opportunities for employees outside of London and limited consideration around flexible working.

Specific recruitment, development, promotion opportunities for underrepresented groups are not currently considered, but should be explored in conjunction with staff once progression data becomes available.

Quotes from participants

Anonymous applications, advertise more widely, remove military images from adverts. **Employee**

I don't think people do it deliberately, but possibly people recruit in their own image. **PoC employee**

I'm not 100% sure but I think viewing the majority white, middle classed employee body may give some insight and reflection on maybe possibly there are [barriers to joining]. **Employee**

Basing many roles in London and insisting on being in the office twice a week is a barrier to many people - I know of people who have not applied for roles they were hugely suited for because of this. Covid has taught us we do not need to be physically in the office to be successful in a role. If you're out in the areas, you don't progress. The only progression is if you're in London - everyone who gets appointed is in London. **Female employee**

The organisation is perceived as very white. They need to go over and above to attract people from minorities. I don't know where they advertise and I think that'll have an impact. For example, I've never seen one of their jobs advertised. You need to advertise in the Jewish Chronicle and the Asian Times. **PoC employee**

Are we proactively looking at unconscious bias in selection? And asking agencies? **PoC employee**

The general age of people that are employed tends to miss the young professionals/graduates age ranges. **Employee**

No leadership programmes exists to encourage and support those from communities which are unrepresented at MSSC. **Employee**

A lot of cultural sense will creep into [my] writing, and then automatically gets corrected out. Openness and flexibility to different styles of working is lacking. Whenever culture creeps into writing or work, it automatically gets sanitised. **PoC employee**

16. <u>MONITORING DATA</u>

EDI monitoring data for volunteers and cadets is captured via Westminster and the Sea Cadets annual survey. Positively, MSSC captures and is able to report on most areas of diversity nationally - and has a strong dataset with regards to age, ethnicity, socio-economic background and sex (not gender identity) to unit level.

Annual survey data is particularly useful as it can be used alongside peoples' experiences, albeit the survey does not capture all cadets and volunteers. Continuing to build on the work of the policy and insights team and annual survey by exploring the experiences of marginalised groups regionally and incorporating EDI survey questions would be a positive next step. It also provides an opportunity for MSSC to measure EDI progress and trends against the forthcoming EDI action plan.

There are some gaps in monitoring data across MSSC, for employees, volunteers and young people due to non-completion rates and data categories that are limiting or are not inclusive of all identities. Gender identity and disability categories were highlighted in this regard. A review of all data categories is recommended in order to remain in line with best practice.

Addressing these gaps and ensuring that reporting systems capture demographics will allow MSSC to identify EDI trends in relation to areas such as complaints, progression, training and quality of experience. Notably, during the audit, work was underway to ensure the monitoring of EDI-related incidents on MSSC's safeguarding systems. Establishing more robust data on EDI representation and incidents at local levels will allow people to identify trends and take appropriate actions locally.

In all contexts, a short data monitoring campaign, explaining why this data is so important and how it will be used as part of the EDI action plan would be a good first step. Sharing the data more widely so that others are aware of trends, representation and what this might mean for their work or role at MSSC is also recommended.

Quotes from participants

Non-binary people have to be put into a gender label. **LGBTQ+ cadet**

[We need] processes for formally recording discriminatory incidents for monitoring purposes. **LGBTQ+ employee**

Need to ensure we understand diversity as [MSSC] trustees/not be afraid to fill the information gaps. **MSSC Trustee**

Lack of information on Compass around representation. **Disabled employee**

17. AWARENESS AND LEARNING: VOLUNTEERS

The need for training to support a better understanding of what equality, diversity and inclusion means in practice at MSSC, was raised by all participant groups. Many volunteers and employees said they would benefit from access to shared resources, signposting and guidance that would enable them to upskill and handle specific EDI issues.

LGBTQ+ (particularly trans) inclusion, mental health and SEND were commonly felt to be gaps in current awareness/training, particularly given the high number of Cadets with additional needs. However, the audit revealed a lack of awareness around most areas of diversity (including faith, ethnicity, gender) as well as on how to create an inclusive environment and identify EDI gaps.

The level and quality of training that volunteers currently receive is patchy and appears to be dependent on their specific role/unit or the courses that they take. However, it is generally minimal, with most participants referencing induction training. Some volunteers had undergone no training at all despite being long-serving volunteers. Others however did identify good practice/training that could be applied more broadly. Some volunteers have particularly strong knowledge based on their professional roles, or workplace EDI training. This is a great asset to MSSC.

Suggestions for volunteer training shared during the audit included:

- Access to signposting as well as training
- Regular refresher training, information and updates on EDI guidance
- Hearing from other units how they have dealt with inclusion issues in practice
- Training that is relevant to the local area and make-up of the local community
- Differentiated levels of learning/awareness for volunteer leadership teams
- Simple, practical guidance on policy implementation
- Embedding EDI in other aspects of volunteer training, rather than just a one-off or standalone EDI module
- More informal awareness and learning opportunities, including at convenient/regularly attended events e.g. regional conferences, MAST

Many Cadets and volunteers referenced informal EDI learning or discussions they'd taken part in. In relation to cadets, some participants spoke about SHOUT lessons, and several described more consistent EDI content for Junior Cadets, compared with older Cadets. Cadets generally described limited opportunities to learn about EDI and said that EDI could be more clearly and consistently included in their own formal learning. This included opportunities to learn more about how to support other Cadets, about other Cadets' communities and about more diverse role models within 'the sector'.

> Quotes from participants
>
> A few times when teaching juniors for some of their modules they had to learn about the lunar new year and Ramadan etc. **Cadet (aged 17)**

Other than the Headquarters memos that we see occasionally and the Annex C to chapter 1, which seems to be on the move again, I have not had either the opportunity or the encouragement to learn about this important subject. **Volunteer**

These should be part of every training i.e. the message should clearly be 'this is who we are'. We could have refresher training/communications and this type of survey every 2 years so we can see trends and measure progress. **Volunteer**

Apart from induction training very little is done to teach staff about equality and diversity. Adults that have been in the organisation for a long while are often lacking in the up-to-date knowledge of equality and diversity. **LGBTQ+ volunteer**

[Learnt about EDI] on a variety of progression courses such as the JOSC, Sea Cadet Instructor Qualifying courses and safeguarding refreshers. **Disabled volunteer**

Real life examples of how inequality and injustice manifests - make it tangible so people can relate to it - alongside any theory or policies in place. **MSSC Trustee**

Better training for adults on gender identity and the LGBTQ community. **LGBTQ+ volunteer**

More education and support for staff in dealing with issues of gender and inclusivity. **Volunteer**

We need to cover things like maternity/paternity and breastfeeding - not on the basic safeguarding course but at courses aimed at unit command teams and district command teams. **Volunteer**

A mandatory EDI section included in courses such as command team course, ODP 1 and 2, CPO/CSgt Q, in fact any/all adult career development courses would make sure that a regular knowledge update is available. A module that could be included as part of MAST weekends. **Volunteer**

Recognition of different history months? Maybe we could learn about different people in the past who had a naval background. **PoC Cadet**

I think there should be classes about cadets' mental health. **Cadet**

Include a part of the training programme to be about diversity/equality, even if once a year the whole unit has to go through it. **Disabled cadet**

As a unit we often have to deal with these issues. We have had cadets with learning difficulties and autism. I have spoken to other instructors about autism as I work with autistic adults. **Volunteer**

I've taught a non-CTP themed lesson about mental health and discrimination and support, but aside from the SHOUT book sessions, I know of no CTP that teach the cadets about Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion within the Sea Cadets. There have been opportunities for staff to discuss dealing with cadets with SEN&I during staff meetings and behind closed doors. **Volunteer**

With 3 years of SEN&I training and 5+ years teaching at cadets, I would love to see something more tailored to the specific challenges that cadets can present, especially in relation to behavioural management. Dealing with Cadets from … backgrounds like Foster Homes, and Sheltered Housing and Care-Homes can be especially hard, and there simply isn't enough support to let those kids join our community - we don't know how to deal with them and if we don't have someone with the specific experience to do so, those children have to be kicked out. **Volunteer**

Positive examples shared

I am just completing L3 Teaching and Education through the Sea Cadets….. this is excellent in covering these issues. **Volunteer**

Every few months my unit does lessons on inclusion and equality and diversity and makes sure every cadet feels welcome at Sea Cadets. They also make sure if someone is mean about anything to anyone else there is consequences to their actions. They also make it very clear who you can tell about incidents. We also do Blue Book and SHOUT lessons. **Cadet (aged 13)**

[EDI is] discussed at staff meetings and when we have new joiners, both AVs and Cadets. **Volunteer**

18. <u>AWARENESS AND LEARNING: EMPLOYEES</u>

Most employees referenced a mandatory, introductory EDI course, but no further training or opportunities to develop and update their knowledge. Many welcomed recent informal opportunities and expressed both a need and desire for employees to upskill via informal and formal learning. Some highlighted ways in which current gaps in knowledge limits limitations the delivery of inclusive support and services to members.

Employees would benefit from a more in-depth understanding of EDI and related concepts such as equity, privilege and microaggressions, both in the workplace and in the delivery of work i.e. how to apply EDI principles and impact assessment in practice. Investment in upskilling for those with specific areas of responsibility e.g. line managers, hiring managers, senior leaders, safeguarding and HR is also strongly recommended.

Similarly to volunteers, specific areas of EDI, namely disability, learning differences, neurodiversity and trans inclusion. The audit also suggested that a greater general awareness of diverse communities and lived experiences – including faith and ethnicity - would be beneficial. There is an opportunity to share learning/awareness initiatives across volunteers and employees in this regard.

Quotes from participants:

Lack of understanding of SEN organisation-wide **Employee**

Lack of diversity impact assessments in projects. **LGBTQ+ employee**

Lack of understanding on neuro-diversities and that not all disabilities are obvious. **Disabled/neurodiverse employee**

Understanding of what non-binary means is confused with transgender/transitioning. **Employee**

No training for managers on disability awareness and how to provide support. **Disabled/neurodiverse employee**

Education on how to challenge effectively but sensitively so as not to alienate. **LGBTQ+ employee**

No lead? Point of contact/ specialist for guidance and support to those who may be managing issues relating to LGBT discrimination. **LGBTQ+ employee**

No LGBT awareness training for new employees or volunteers. **LGBTQ+ employee**

Diversity awareness training for all new employees - including those seconded by the Royal Navy. **LGBTQ+ employee**

An EDI mentoring programme (programme might be too official or formal a term) which allows employees, particularly senior leadership to be mentored by someone who can help them understand different points of view, backgrounds, cultures, worldviews etc. **MSSC Trustee**

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19. COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

There are significant opportunities for MSSC to build on existing community engagement to work with more diverse communities. This was recognised to be a key priority for MSSC's EDI work by many participants.

Participants were able to identify positive examples of community engagement at local and national levels, including attendance at Pride events and Remembrance services. However, they also suggested that engagement with a more diverse range of cultural and faith events could be explored.. The recent 'On the Water' initiative was also viewed positively in terms of engaging new, diverse communities.

The existing work of the Growth and Development team in supporting this engagement and providing advice and guidance is positive. Ensuring that guidance is developed with diverse communities and providing specific upskilling or shadowing opportunities for this team to understand diverse communities and lived experiences may be useful.

At a local level, a mix of barriers to community engagement and collaboration were raised including; fear/lack of knowledge, lack of existing connections/networks a lack of time, capacity, willingness or direct pushback from some volunteers.

In line with what MSSC deliver via its Marine Engineering Outreach programme to schools (called MEP), Cadets suggested that working more closely in partnership with schools could improve the diversity of Cadets amongst under-represented communities. At a local level, participants suggested targeting schools with diverse representation while at the national level, it was suggested efforts be focused in regions with higher representation of communities that are lacking at MSSC.

Developing long-lasting relationships and partnerships with EDI charities (local and national), community-led organisations, faith leaders and community leaders was also raised. It is suggested that initially this should be as much about building understanding, trust and connection with local communities as actually recruiting to MSSC. Working with disability charities to design opportunities and interventions was also suggested.

New 'taster' opportunities for currently under-represented communities to better understand what Cadets is all about and tto break down misconceptions were suggested. This idea could be extended to encompass a mutual exchange of learning and experiences with other community groups.

Quotes from participants

A lot of people don't know if Sea Cadets is for them so maybe there could be taster days at units for people who can't decide if they want to join. **Volunteer**

Whenever we go out of the unit it is all about show and/or fundraising. This can be a bit scary to young people and it may seem like it is not fun but just extra school. Show people some of the opportunities. **Cadet**

Work directly with the communities we wish to encourage to apply to make sure the opportunities are right and that they are well advertised. **Employee**

Physical disability clearly can have a restrictive effect on activities. It may be that other organisations have this covered (e.g. Ellen MacArthur Trust). If it is thought we do not have the resources or capacity to involve people with disabilities, signpost applicants to the organisations which do offer this opportunity. Perhaps we should even come alongside such organisations as a supporting group. **Volunteer**

Advertisements showing the benefits of joining, showing a group of diverse cadets engaging in an activity and having a good time. **Cadet**

20. MARINE SOCIETY SEAFARER APPRENTICES

A limited amount of specific, qualitative data was captured in relation to apprentices, and particularly apprentices from marginalised backgrounds. Positively however, those apprentices who took part in the survey felt very confident to talk about EDI in progress reviews and did not report discrimination or any barriers to inclusion and belonging at the Marine Society or with apprenticeship providers.

There were some suggestions as to how maritime employers could attract more people from diverse communities and backgrounds:

Advertisement in different areas.

Advertise more on job boards to reach more diverse communities.

Have minorities who already work in the industry go and give talks to schools with a high ethnic minority.

Suggested next steps are:

- Incorporate EDI questions into regular feedback mechanisms for apprentices
- Require apprentice providers to demonstrate adherence to MSSC's EDI policy/values
- Consider how EDI in the selection of workplace providers
- Working with SeaRegs, set guidelines on inclusive learning environments, drawing on existing best practice from within and outside of Marine Society
- Monitor the diversity of apprentices through recruitment, retention, selection and progression to identify trends/gaps/challenges

Moreover, the approach & steps taken in MSSC's EDI strategy should be applied to the Marine Society context as appropriate.

21. <u>RECOMMENDATIONS</u>

The recommendations below are designed to address key issues raised in the audit, and to reflect wider best practice on EDI. Recommendations that apply to the employee context only have been separated. The recommendations should be developed, refined and implemented through an EDI vision, strategy and action planning process that continues to involve stakeholders from across MSSC, and which centres those with lived experience.

CULTURE AND BELONGING

1. Develop a robust EDI vision statement and policy, underpinned by behaviour frameworks for managers, employees and volunteers and linked to existing codes of conduct. Explain and include examples of inappropriate discriminatory comments/humour and their impact.

2. Create short, simple guidance on creating an inclusive and accessible environment at local units and events across Sea Cadets. Identify key contexts for differentiated guidance e.g. national/district events, training courses, local unit 'ward rooms'. Include this during volunteer induction.

3. Develop ways to source, share and celebrate diversity and inclusive practice at unit, area and regional levels.

4. Proactively encourage teams at all levels across MSSC to make EDI a regular agenda item, in order to foster ongoing conversations around EDI issues and priorities

Employees

5. Embed individual EDI objectives into 121s and performance review processes, based on the organisational EDI strategy and action plan

6. Invest in line management skills and guidance on creating an inclusive culture, so that employees from marginalised backgrounds are equally valued, supported and able to thrive

SUPPORT AND NETWORKS

7. Provide signposting to local and national charities and resources across a range of EDI issues that can provide support for cadets, volunteers, employees and apprentices from marginalised backgrounds

8. Explore opportunities to establish EDI and identity-specific networks for employees, volunteers, cadets, seafarers and apprentices

9. Create informal and safe discussion spaces for people from marginalised groups to share experiences, ideas and provide feedback

DIVERSE REPRESENTATION

10. Review demographic data collection processes and systems. Collect further diversity data at national/regional/local levels to build a clearer picture of gaps in representation.

11. Develop simple EDI self-assessment tools (e.g. a series of questions for units to ask themselves about EDI) to support the development of EDI action plans at unit, area and regional levels, supported by local EDI data for comparison.

12. Address barriers to inclusion and belonging for marginalised groups *before* pursuing or setting diverse recruitment targets, locally and nationally

Representation in communications

13. Develop simple inclusive communications guidance (i.e. a set of do's and don'ts) including EDI terminology, that is relevant to stakeholders at local and national levels.

14. Develop communications plans in consultation with EDI working group(s), diverse employees, volunteers and cadets, particularly on key events and issues.

15. Develop an EDI comms calendar covering key EDI events, good practice, profiles of diverse members, examples of programme/volunteer role flexibility etc.

16. Continue to review and further develop banks of inclusive images and content taking care not to overstate the diversity of MSSC locally and nationally. Provide simple guidance on using inclusive imagery to reflect local contexts.

Representation in decision-making

17. Establish and resource a diverse, cross-organisational EDI working group(s) to support the EDI strategy and action plan. Identify any supportive training. Adequately recognise time and contributions from employees, volunteers, cadets, apprentices.

18. Proactively recruit Cadets, volunteers, employees and MSSC trustees of diverse identities to existing decision-making groups and roles at all levels in order to shape inclusive outcomes

19. Incorporate EDI questions into informal feedback routes e.g. employee, volunteer and Cadet surveys to pre-empt and better understand emerging or persistent EDI issues.

20. Continue to build on good practice in employee data and insights teams on specific community experiences. Translate findings into tangible actions for local teams.

LEADERSHIP

21. Develop a cross-organisational EDI vision, strategy and action plan with clear, tangible goals that are adequately resourced. Coordinate by an experienced EDI lead/team, and supported by upskilling organisation-wide.

22. Review engrained, structural barriers to diversity in leadership across the whole of MSSC. Develop short/medium/long term actions.

23. Set targets for a more diverse leadership team (volunteers, SMT and MSSC trustees Council) across the whole of MSSC. Develop recruitment strategies to address current underrepresentation.

24. Establish a senior accountability structure for the EDI strategy, vision and action plan across volunteer leadership, SMT and MSSC trustees. Consider establishing senior EDI champions and/or dedicated sub-committee of the Board. Include in EDI policy.

25. Deliver tailored EDI/cultural change learning and awareness programmes for senior leaders, particularly on inclusive decision-making, power dynamics and diverse lived experiences - rooted in real-life examples. Consider complementary coaching or reverse mentoring opportunities.

Employees

26. Identify and set behavioural objectives for senior leaders to role model inclusivity. Review these through appraisal and 360 processes.

POLICIES AND PROCESSES

Please also see [Annex A: Document Review] for detailed recommendations on policies, processes & incident handling.

27. Develop anonymous mechanisms for people to report rules, regulations or processes that are not inclusive, or which negatively impact on marginalised communities

28. Standardise and update diversity monitoring categories on forms and systems for employees, volunteers, cadets and apprentices to reflect best practice

29. Develop a trans inclusion policy that applies to all MSSC stakeholders, with supporting guidance tailored to each audience

30. Review disability/reasonable adjustments policies and processes. Provide practical, supporting guidance for employees and volunteers.

Employees

31. Develop a regular review process for all HR policies,and incorporate best practice on EDI. Proactively consult and invite employee feedback through an EDI lens.

HANDLING AND REPORTING INCIDENTS

32. Develop a clear policy, process and point(s) of contact for reporting and handling discriminatory incidents (and/or update existing grievance, complaints and disciplinary policies) for employees, volunteers and cadets to explicitly include discriminatory incidents.

33. Develop supportive guidance for reporters. Explain what to do when incidents occur, how to raise concerns when inclusive cultures are not created, what to expect and what support is available. Include anonymous reporting mechanisms. For volunteers/cadets/apprentices, there should be a clear option outside of local structures.

34. Monitor EDI incidents by type (i.e. nature of the incident and area of diversity) in order to identify trends. Report on the outcomes and actions taken in order to shape strategic solutions, organisational learning, greater transparency and confidence in reporting.

35. Train managers, employees and volunteers across the board on handling different types of discriminatory incidents

AWARENESS AND LEARNING

36. Develop an evolving suite of resources and online training that cover key areas of EDI and are available to all stakeholders. Priority areas: disability/neurodiversity, gender identity and race/ethnicity.

37. Develop 'bitesize' EDI training videos and tips that can quickly and easily feature in meetings, training weekends or other events. Integrate EDI into the Cadet Training Programme (CTP), Royal Marines Cadet training programme and Junior Sea Cadet training programme.

38. Explore mechanisms to recruit volunteers with professional and lived experience to act as peer-trainers or in an advisory capacity across MSSC. Consider a formalised structure for this over time.

39. Develop a mandatory EDI module as part of the volunteer induction, that signposts MSSC's online guidance and future learning opportunities

Employees

40. Develop a rolling, mandatory EDI learning and development programme for employees that includes training, reflection session and action learning sets to support practical implementation.

41. Develop and train employees to use a simple equality, diversity and inclusion impact assessment tool in the development of projects, programmes, services and communications.

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND PROGRESSION

42. Review joining and induction processes to capture reasonable adjustments and inclusion needs, as well as processes to transfer information as appropriate.

43. Develop and undertake accessibility audits for sites, programmes and activities at national and local levels

44. Provide supporting guidance, resources and training on how to adapt activities and learning environments to meet different needs and abilities. Actively promote flexibility and adaptations.

45. Consider a mentoring programme for Cadets, with the opportunity of selecting mentors with shared identities and lived experiences

46. Identify avenues to better advertise the bursary programme, inviting feedback on further financial barriers as part of the process. Review the programme to ensure it covers all aspects of affordability and accessibility to Sea Cadets, including all beyond unit training course contributions.

Employees

47. Review the recruitment and selection process from start to finish looking at job design, advertisement routes, selection processes and panels, supported by inclusive recruitment guidance/training.

48. Collect and monitor employee diversity data in relation to recruitment, retention and progression to identify gaps and barriers. Set diversity targets overall and at departmental levels where possible.

49. Consider reporting on ethnicity and disability pay gaps, alongside the gender pay gap.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

50. Build genuine, long-lasting collaborations with community leaders, groups and networks at local and regional levels. Equip volunteers with practical ideas and support to build their awareness and confidence.

51. Create new and develop existing 'taster' opportunities for diverse communities to experience MSSC and consider exchanges, shared learning and joint events with other community groups and organisations.

52. Identify partnerships that will foster diversity in identified areas of underrepresentation. Pilot outreach programmes regionally, building on the *'On the Water'* initiative.

22. <u>**ANNEX A: MSSC EDI DOCUMENT REVIEW**</u>

Please note that this document review is not exhaustive. Documents are separated into **a. MSSC Charity and Employee policies** and **b. Sea Cadets policies.** The general recommendations below may be applied across all EDI policies and processes at MSSC.

General recommendations

- Update and review policies to better define MSSC's approach to EDI, underpinned by a clear EDI vision statement
- Embed policies and processes into induction/joining processes
- Provide support training/guidance on using policies/processes
- Establish regular monitoring, review and consultation cycle for policies/processes. If in place, adapt existing cycle to include EDI lens and to proactively invite feedback from underrepresented/marginalised groups.
- Embed advice/support for users of the policy
- Draw out any managerial responsibilities for implementing the policy more clearly, and separate from the users of the policy.
- Use opportunities to signpost between policies in relation to EDI

a. MSSC Charity and Employee Policies

Document	Comments	Opportunities
Appraisal Form and Guidance	Exploration of values/behaviours is positive	Link EDI to the values more explicitly (particularly 1, 5 & 6) and support managers to explore this effectively Consider adding a space to discuss how the year's gone and wellbeing, that is not recorded Once EDI vision & action plan is agreed, develop individual EDI objectives for employees
Aspirational Culture Statement	Positive that this has diversity and aspects of how to develop inclusive culture	Referring to inclusion specifically & a commitment to equity i.e. proactively identifying and redressing inequities in MSSC's systems and structures. Link to tangible, practical behaviours expected from employees/translate into behaviour frameworks.

MSSC Bullying and Harassment policy (applicable to all)		Include and define other forms of identity-based bullying (extended protected characteristics) and provide examples. Separate out identity-based bullying from type of bullying type e.g. verbal/cyber. Amend wording around reporting sexual harassment. This currently takes a gendered approach, implies same-sex harassment isn't possible and has limited reporting options. Expand on next steps such as *"Adults and Cadets who are displaying bullying behaviour should learn to develop more acceptable behaviour."* Reporting Procedures Make clear what applies to Cadets/volunteers/employees Adopt a stronger focus on support & guidance for victims of bullying/harassment. Improve clarity around each of the reporting routes and courses of action. Consider different routes for reporting informally. Consider whether investigators and those providing support have adequate expertise, knowledge and training around EDI
Capability Policy and Procedure		Reword 1.4 relating to poor performance and disability. Expand what is covered here (i.e. different forms of disability/mental health/learning difficulty) and signpost to disability/reasonable adjustments policy.
Code of Conduct for employees		Rebalance the emphasis on describing diversity as an asset, with a commitment to tackling inequity. Signpost to relevant policies e.g. bullying/harassment.
Disabled employees		The tone and approach could be more supportive overall. Consider explicitly acknowledging the social (rather than medical) model of disability.

		Provide an expansive definition of disability, using examples.
		Incorporate examples of reasonable adjustments and support available. Consider providing more detailed guidance for line managers.
		Differentiate which info is **for disabled employees** and **for hiring/line managers** and signpost to relevant policies e.g. recruitment
		Amend language around obligations to incorporate values and recognise structural barriers/inequities.
		During employment – add relevant support e.g. line manager 121s and process if any changes to employment (rather than may be retrained/redeployed)
		Regarding the notification of disability, provide different ways to disclose and encourage this for positive reasons – MSSC wants to support employees to thrive.
Discipline		Provide examples of misconduct alongside gross misconduct
		Include provision of reasonable adjustments throughout the process.
		Recommend linking to the ACAS helpline and including a commitment to the ACAS Code of Practice
		Link to the grievance policy
Equality, diversity and inclusion policy	Positive commitment to removing barriers in places (this is equity) but this is not consistent e.g. we will treat anyone unfavourably is 'equality' No trans policy	Throughout the policy, consider changing the language and focus from equality to equity. There is also a focus on the 'power of diversity' and impact over inclusion and equity. Note that diversity doesn't make an organisation inclusive. Recommend rewording to show that you *aim* for EDI to become intrinsic, rather than having already arrived.

	Intranet version refers to annual review L&D needs but the other doesn't	Consider adding 'extended' characteristics, some of which are not directly covered by the Equality Act but can still form the basis for discrimination e.g. paternity/second parent, gender expression, trans status. Acknowledge intersectionality. Include/signpost to any support, advice and adjustments that are available in this, and related policies Consider including EDI advisers that can facilitate informal resolution and are upskilled on specific EDI topics. Consider translating responsibilities into behaviour frameworks for employees (linked to appraisal process) and provide clear examples for other stakeholders Reframe the reference to not focusing on outcomes of negative behaviour as may dissuade reporting of bullying/harassment. This can still focus on positive outcomes for all both perpetrators and reporters. Expand on where and how the policy applies to external partners/contractors Add commitment to pay gap data monitoring
Flexible working policy		Include info on flexible working requests being made as reasonable adjustment requests Consider defining different aspects of flexible working. Acas provides a useful breakdown. Consider a commitment to reducing the decision-making period where feasible. Add a clear appeal/complaints section. As part of this, make clear that MSSC is opposed to any victimisation/unfavourable treatment towards employees who work flexibly.

Grievance policy & procedure		Include EDI statement/link to EDI statement (e.g. this policy relates to commitment to fair, supportive & inclusive w/place and includes tackling forms of discrimination) Define what a grievance is, using examples. Adopt a person-centred approach, including provision of support/advice. Recommend linking to ACAS helpline/CAB/trade unions/legal aid info. Clearly set out who will assume which roles and responsibilities during formal *and* informal processes (e.g. employee/respondent/Grievance Manager/Witnesses/Appeals Manager/Companion) Outline informal grievance procedures and processes clearly. Include anonymous reporting, with reference to how this may delay or hinder outcomes. Include a positive statement re providing reasonable adjustments throughout the process rather than 'may allow at its discretion' Consider including a positive and active stance on learning from grievances e.g. We commit to taking steps to learn from grievances to ensure we are a better employer. Include a commitment to the ACAS Code of Practice. Consider use of external EDI advisers where appropriate
Induction and Probation policy		Add a positive statement in the introduction about 'identifying support and ways of working' rather than just 'addressing problems' before the full contract. Consider including some examples of support/adjustments here, and/or reference to reasonable adjustments policy. Checking in on employee wellbeing could also be added.

Induction guide for line managers		Include more explicit references to exploring any reasonable adjustments, support needs working styles and employee wellbeing during the induction period and beyond. Consider who/how buddies are allocated, as EDI *could* be a helpful or relevant consideration here. Include info on Culture working group or other employee networks/support
Induction plan template		Intro to longer term individual/company L&D opportunities Consider how you ensure understanding and commitment to HR policies & processes, for all employees but especially for line managers and their responsibilities
Learning and development guide		Outline commitment to and ongoing EDI learning opportunities (once available)
Maternity, Paternity, Parental and Adoption Leave Policy		In many places, the policy uses gender-neutral language & approach, but some amends required for consistency. Mostly refers to 'the (pregnant) employee' but remove one reference to 'the woman' Amend 'fathers or partners' to partners Review with employees on moving beyond statutory obligations
MSSC Employee Handbook		See earlier comments re Code of Conduct. Emphasise commitment to ensuring employees feel fulfilled, supported, sense of wellbeing alongside diversity for charitable impact/output. Social events refers to Christmas – consider if any others could be added or if that specific is needed

		Dress code – perhaps encourage people to speak with HR/managers if unclear. Clean/smart/professional can feel like 'loaded' terms. Wellbeing/sick leave – consider a positive statement about regular line manager support alongside more formal policy and steps Generally, a lot of focus/quotes on outcomes for seafarers & cadets, which could be balanced with a little more focus on employee experience, wellbeing and development Consider including staff survey stats and diversity data
New Starter Welcome Email		Consider introducing reference to reasonable adjustments/accessibility/support via HR and/or line manager. Here or at another stage during the induction process, name who to go to for EDI-related areas e.g. reporting/reasonable adjustments request etc. (unless it's everyone for everything)
Employee recruitment page on website		Opportunity for a stronger EDI statement In the longer term, consider sharing diversity data, transparency about gaps, and profiling diverse staff members/quotes
GDW recruitment pack	Positive essential requirement around practical EDI implementation – are panels equipped to assess this effectively? And recommend this is consistent across all roles?	Opportunity to outline EDI as a cross-cutting theme on the values page This pack does it well, but in general avoiding unnecessary qualifications, excessive list of essential skills is preferable. Offering informal conversations about roles ahead of application is preferable if possible
Trustee recruitment pack	Clear reasonable adjustments offer	Experience around EDI is there in principle but equality and fairness feels a minimum and could focus on experience/commitment/understanding of promoting equity and diversity

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		Also opportunities to acknowledge any under-representation and outline lived experience the Trustee Council is looking for and why it would be valued. In future, consider experience around shaping EDI strategies/opportunity to be a part of this at MSSC Imagery is not particularly diverse
Safer recruitment policy		Opportunity to add robust guidance around inclusive, accessible and welcoming interview process, diverse panel composition, appropriate questions on EDI, unconscious bias nudges (e.g. scrutinising decisions, challenging each other, avoiding 'the best fit' for the team pitfall) Offer to repeat questions/reiterate offer for anything to support accessibility Reconsider the rationale for asking current salary if it is being used to determine the salary offer or to determine the skills of the applicant. This can exacerbate pay inequalities that are systemic in wider society. Consider instead offering the salary appropriate to the required skills/experiences of the role and candidate.
Special leave policy		Expand compassionate leave beyond immediate family to make clear for anyone in non-traditional/chosen family structures. Consider guaranteeing XX days pay rather than providing at discretion. This would be a difficult point for an employee, particularly on lower income, to broach this. Include process for requesting other types of leave listed. Recommend a clearer policy around religious holidays, to avoid ad hoc approaches developing.

Training, development and performance appraisals		Opportunities to include/signpost to EDI training/development, and to embed EDI in the appraisal process Opportunity to include coaching/mentoring options, with options for people to learn from those with shared backgrounds/experiences

b. Sea Cadets Document Review

Document	Comments	Opportunities
One page profile	Positive that a process exists. Potential for a separate process/part of this process to captures additional needs that aren't shared with everyone.	Potential to include a more specific nudge around additional needs, and useful info around other inclusion requirements, cultural background e.g. about my home/who I live with. Potential to supplement this with guidance on individual/group 'getting to know each other' conversations
Sea Cadets Ethos – How To Guide	Positive references to EDI throughout. Overall quite lengthy, so translating some of the ethos around EDI into practical examples and/or behaviour frameworks would be helpful.	Sea Cadet Promise – God is unlikely to feel equal to those of all faiths/beliefs and none. Potential to translate some of this ethos into practical guidance/tips on expected behaviours or actions and signpost to this *Humour* in mindset may need particularly unpicking, using examples rather than theory of what is acceptable and what is not.

| | | 'Slaves to our history' is not a great turn of phrase.

It is often & positively referenced that it may be necessary to do things differently – some examples of what this means in practice would be helpful. Else, people may feel inclined to keep to rules/traditional RN approach, rather than making adjustments as needed.

Language – is there potential for short explainers/supportive guides (online) for new joiners.

Recommend reconsidering some elements of the uniform section, particularly: 'everyone wearing the same makes everyone equal' and what it means to 'dress correctly'.

Support and welfare section provides an opportunity to reference inclusion/discrimination.

Our identity section – reference to RN ships and that people should feel proud using the names. May be a challenge here re young people from minority ethnic backgrounds? Pride in history will also need to come with acknowledging our full history, injustices and all, to feel truly inclusive for everyone. |
| Anti-bullying policy | | Include and define other forms of identity-based bullying (extended protected characteristics) and provide examples that are relevant to the different recipients the policy refers to. |

		Separate out identity-based bullying from type of bullying type e.g. verbal/cyber. Lessen the emphasis on trying to ignore and shift the balance to reporting and available support. Provide detail on prevention/how to proactively create an environment free from bullying, how to check in with and how to recognise the signs with young people Clear reporting routes beyond local options https://prod-cms.scouts.org.uk/media/7015/anti-bullying-guide.pdf
Complaints Handling Policy		Explicitly reference EDI/discrimination There is no process set out in the policy
Sea Cadets Disability Policy	Commitment to involving disabled people in decisions that affect them is positive and would be useful to reference how this will happen in practice. Ditto for commitments to training/upskilling people within MSSC	The Equality Act 2010 has replaced the DDA 1995. Consider acknowledging social model of disability. Remove gendered language (replace he/she with they)
Enrolling and inducting volunteers	Volunteer eligibility - review restrictions in relation to nationality. Consider content of volunteer EDI induction.	Medical standards – recommend more inclusive language and approach e.g. positive effort to identify alternative roles and valuing contribution.

		Interviewing applicants – include info on removing bias from the recruitment process/panel and consider EDI in personal values questions more explicitly DBS recommend at least briefly referencing process for sensitive disclosures e.g. for trans applicants
Gender Identity Guidance		Recommend a full re-write of this guidance, in consultation with trans young people and volunteers. Overall, shorten and add more straightforward, practical steps/real-life examples specific to MSSC. A significant amount of the information is outdated/problematic. Signpost to other relevant policies/processes and embed the guidance there too e.g. sensitive DBS, safeguarding, competitions. Place the info where people will find it.

Marine Society College Disability Policy	Positive commitments to disability training/awareness & monitoring/evaluation here if carried out in practice.	Language could be more inclusive in places (e.g. rethinking phrases such as 'how to deal with' people who have disabilities) to reflect social model of disability. Signposting to any support routes/questions/concerns may be useful for disabled students