

**A4: Changing Faces Proposal for the Global Equality and Diversity Conference 2017 – Building Growth through Inclusion and Diversity**

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**Managing the negative impact of implicit (unconscious) bias in the workplace**

**Background**

At Changing Faces we support and represent the estimated 1.3 million people who live with disfigurement in the UK. Severe disfigurement is included within the Equality Act as a protected characteristic within the disability strand and yet in major new ground-breaking new research on the everyday lives of people who have a disfigurement *Disfigurement in the UK* which we published recently there is a evidence of a vastly unequal playing field in almost every aspect of life including the workplace. This leaves people who have a disfigurement to have lower aspirations and expectations, be under or unemployed and where they are resigning themselves to the inevitability of bullying, abuse and injustice. The headlines in the workplace are:

- ☒ Four-fifths have avoided applying for a job because they thought their appearance would hinder them at interview, or because new colleagues would make them uncomfortable
- ☒ More than half think their condition hindered their career in some way, and 17% had left a job – or felt forced to leave – because of reactions to their appearance

**An overview of what we mean by ‘discrimination’**

This talk will address how HR managers, recruiters and line managers can maximise their talent pool and improve their people-management skills by addressing unconscious barriers that exist in the workplace for people with disfigurements. The speaker will ask: what is bias - is it a good or a bad thing? Can it aid decision-making? When does it become problematic for managers and staff, and why? What are the legal implications in the context of the Equality Act?

**An opportunity to reflect in detail on our responses to difference**

The session will provide delegates with an opportunity to reflect on how they react when faced with disfigurement. What impact does it have on feelings, thoughts and behaviour? What is the neuroscientific explanation for this? We will explore how this affects workplace dynamics, decision-making and productivity. The speaker will encourage delegates to go beyond their guarded responses and consider their reactions in an honest, non-judgemental way.

**Guidance on how to manage our responses**

The talk will focus on normalising the reactions delegates may have to disfigurement and difference generally in order to unlock potential in the workforce. How can they manage the physiological impact of surprise in order to remain open to new talent and avoid closing down opportunities? Challenge the underlying assumptions or ‘heuristics’ that influence premature or inaccurate decision-making? Adopt behavioural techniques that will ensure all staff perform to their highest ability?

**Putting it into practice**

The speaker will use real-life case studies, giving delegates an opportunity to reflect on the topic in the context of their own organisational setting and present a good practice case study in conjunction with a leading employer (tbc)

### **Take aways**

At the end of the session the speaker will have provided:

- Specific guidance to help the recruitment process go smoothly for both recruiters and jobseekers.
- An understanding of the neuroscientific impact of bias and how to manage it.
- Behavioural tips for managing implicit bias at work.
- Signposting for further support in all of the areas mentioned.

### **Biography**

Henrietta Spalding has headed up the Advocacy work for the leading UK disfigurement charity Changing Faces for over 10 years. She works closely with HR professionals and public and private sector organisations to create an inclusive business environment where people with disfigurements can reach their full potential in the workplace. She also works with healthcare professionals, the media, government and educationalists to create a society where face equality is the norm and everyone can live the life they want, free from facial prejudice.

Henrietta spent her early career working in education both in the UK and Spain, where she set up and managed a language academy. She taught a wide variety of nationalities and developed a special interest in cross-cultural communication.

### **Changing Faces**

Changing Faces, the UK charity (<https://www.changingfaces.org.uk/>) supports patients and their families living with the psychological and social challenges of burns and other disfigurements and provides training for health professionals to support their patients' psycho-social needs. We are caring campaigners – helping to build people's confidence to live their life on their terms and challenging prejudice, respecting differences and speaking to a world that needs to change.

Henrietta Spalding, Head of Advocacy  
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