

My journey with Diversity and Inclusion

The Swindon
**INCLUSION &
DIVERSITY**
Network

Emma Feltham (Co-Founder of the Swindon Inclusion & Diversity Network;
Head of IT Engagement, National Trust; CITF Gender Balance & Diversity Committee Chair)

Why I first started thinking about diversity

- I've spent my whole career working in male dominated fields – degree in Chemistry, PhD in Atmospheric Chemistry, postdoctoral research in Chemical Physics, managing science and engineering research portfolios, creating partnerships with R&D companies in all sectors of the economy, senior IT leadership roles
- Spent a lot of time being considered very young and the wrong gender for the types and/or seniority of jobs I had – I have many “hilarious” anecdotes I could share:

“There’s a young lady here”, cue everyone in the room turning around to stare at me.

“Do you know where the tea and coffee are dear?”

“So you’ve just got married, errr, how will you manage the commute if, errr...” – “If I decide to start a family? Is that what you’re trying to ask me?”

“This is probably going to sound sexist, but it’s such a turn-on that you have such a senior job and so much power!”

Why I first started trying to help others

- Privileged to have been supported by my parents to do whatever I wanted to do and to have had access to amazing teachers who inspired me to follow my passions
- I never perceived any barriers to doing what I wanted to and wasn't aware that I was "unusual" until people started pointing it out to me
- Got involved in reaching out, visiting local schools and spoke at events encouraging women into Science and STEM subjects

My responsibility as a successful senior leader

- To support talented people around me – to identify people with potential and to lift them up by supporting and encouraging them – so many people hold themselves back as well as experiencing bias from others
- This led to me getting involved in the CITF Gender Balance committee, first as a speaker, then as a committee member, and as Chair since January 2017 – initially this group focussed on improving gender balance in IT (only 17% of specialist IT roles in the UK are held by women), but last year we added a wider diversity agenda to what we're doing as so many of the issues and the things that help are more widely applicable (other diversity statistics for the industry are woeful – 8% disabled, 21% from older age groups and 17% from ethnic minorities) *(source: BCS Diversity in IT 2017)*

From Gender Balance to Diversity to Inclusion

- The more I've learnt the more I've been uncomfortable with labelling people and putting them in boxes - we are all individuals and none of us fits in just one box
- As soon as you try to label people or focus on one obvious characteristic then you exclude everyone else
- We all have many differences – we should celebrate and embrace that – Claire, Nicole and I may seem alike on the surface (we're all white women!) BUT we have different ideas and experience and think differently, and that's a huge strength 😊
- A key thing I'd like you all to take away from this evening – we need to think about **Visible** AND **Invisible** differences – for example, I have some significant dietary restrictions and associated digestive health challenges and that causes me more personal difficulties than being a woman ever has! I'm not being fussy or awkward!

Thank you for being here!

- There's lots to do and we'll get there if we all work together, share with and learn from each other
- I'm so excited that you're all interested in making a difference and making Swindon a more inclusive place to work



The Swindon
**INCLUSION &
DIVERSITY**
Network

Logo designed by artfulbadgeruk.com
(map image © inkdrop-stock.adobe.com)