

CASE STUDY

Culture

Legal & General D&I Reverse Mentoring



At Legal & General we're committed to building a diverse and inclusive culture, with a workplace where we can all perform our best, no matter who we are.

Legal & General has more than eleven employee networks, and sub-groups, each raising awareness of diversity and inclusion topics. These communities of employees from different backgrounds, life experiences and viewpoints, hold regular networking opportunities, events and celebrations, and are open to everyone across all divisions of the Legal & General Group.

At Legal & General, we constantly push ourselves to see our workplace through different lenses, to continue to build a culture where we can all develop, grow and perform at our best. Our workplace will embrace everyone within it, so we all feel like we belong. Everyone will have a voice, with both grassroots and leadership level-led ideas being heard.

The Initiative

D&I Reverse mentoring is a programme in which senior leaders are mentored by team members who have an in-depth knowledge of one or more of the D&I characteristics.

The programme consists of a series of voluntary meetings with a facilitator. In each meeting a senior leader, the mentee, sponsors a particular D&I strand and will meet with a team member, the mentor, who represents or has lived experience of one or more of Legal & General's D&I employee networks, or sub-groups.

The aim of the meetings is to build on the mentee's understanding of working life in the shoes of a person from a particular diversity and inclusion background. Before the mentoring sessions can begin, a 'contact and chemistry' session takes place with the facilitator, mentor and mentee, allowing them to get to know each other and agree principles, the approach and boundaries for their meetings. Two mentoring sessions then follow, more if required, giving the mentor and mentee the opportunity to ask questions, and explore their chosen topic.

The Impact

The D&I Reverse Mentoring programme originated in Legal & General's Insurance division at the time, in 2021, where great success led to subsequent roll out of the programme to other business divisions.

Leadership teams in participating divisions gained insight and greater awareness of the challenges faced by some colleagues. Mentees and mentors expressed how open they could be with their situations and experiences, with mentee's expressing they found the sessions insightful and valuable in helping them to recognise the challenges some colleagues face, both at work and home. The programme was valued by diversity and inclusion minorities for the opportunities to connect and share their experience and views directly with leadership teams.

Participating business divisions reported tangible actions as output, used to further support and drive momentum for an inclusive culture at Legal & General.

Other firms looking to introduce D&I reverse Mentoring

Facilitators were key to successful role out. Selected from the HR community, they helped guide and keep the mentoring sessions on track, ensuring a safe environment for everyone involved, ensuring both mentor and mentee felt supported.

The guiding principles below, will help other companies looking to run a similar reverse mentoring programme within their own companies, ensure success.

- **Confidentiality** with everything discussed in the sessions. Insights and lessons learned from both parties was collated for internal use within the programme, and permission gained before sharing with others.
- **A safe environment**, where both mentors and mentees were considered equal and did not feel unduly challenged.
- **Personal boundaries**, where participants were asked to be mindful of themselves, and avoid any potential discomfort during and post any discussions. The aim was to maintain a comfortable level of self-disclosure for both mentor and mentee.
- **Facilitation** - A facilitator was present to help conduct the meeting and ensure the objectives and principles were in place during the sessions. Participation was entirely voluntary, meaning that if anyone was uncomfortable the facilitator was able to step in or stop the meeting.

"It wasn't just myself interested in this area, and so Ali was lucky enough to have two mentors through this. We both brought different perspectives to the subject of work status. In the initial contract and chemistry session with Ali, I felt that we all established a good rapport very quickly and felt comfortable being open and honest about our different situations. What's so great about these programmes is that you get to see a different side to some of our senior leaders and understand more about them and their life experiences." **Mentor**

"Throughout both mentoring sessions, I felt safe and able to share my story and the challenges I had faced. I received no judgement, just open ears and a willingness to be educated on the challenges I faced." **Mentor**

"This programme has been a fantastic opportunity for our Exec team to walk in the shoes of other colleagues and to really understand the challenges and perspectives of others. I'm extremely proud of the effort from everyone involved; mentors and mentees alike really embraced the programme with open arms and I really do think that everyone has benefited. The work won't stop here - we'll be looking at how to take forward some of the insights and learnings from our work and we'll keep you posted on what's next in terms of focus." **Mentee**