



## What is Diversity & Inclusion?

**Author:** Annie Stone

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I come from a family of medic's so I went to university to carry on the family tradition. However, I knew early on working in the medical field wasn't what I wanted to pursue as a long-term career.

I have always been involved in sport both as an athlete and coach. I was really inspired at how coaches could bring out the best in people, but there was no one that looked like me.

I grew a thick skin from an extremely young age and developed a mindset of "if you can't see it, be it". It was because of that I was fortunate enough to have a 20-year coaching career, working fulltime from grassroots to performance.

I have always been involved in Diversity and Inclusion, from training with the NHS and learning about culture, volunteering for charity projects all over the world, to developing initiatives to diversify the people that would walk through my sports hall doors. Back in the day it wasn't given a fancy title.

Following on from coaching, I have worked for previous National Governing bodies in this space along with supporting the police and local authorities.

Diversity and inclusion to me is more than just ticking boxes and having performative measures. What I love about diversity is that every person is unique and there is real beauty in that. I love learning and seeing things from different perspectives as it brings great richness to life, which to me is important.

I am fortunate to come from a diverse family and I am proud of that. Although it has taken me many years to be proud of that. Growing up I was always 'othered' based on my appearance. I made a commitment that no matter what, I would always try to make sure no one felt like I did.

Sometimes systems and processes that have been left in place for decades can really exclude people in society if no one picks up on it. To put things into perspective. I remember being at a service station trying to dry my hands and the automatic hand dryer wouldn't work for me. I could see it working for everyone else. Baffled I researched and found that in this hand dryers testing phase. It wasn't tested on darker skin, so it basically

couldn't pick up my hands because all the test pilots had the same colour skin.

My role at Table Tennis England is to be a key influencer in the organisation, working internally and externally to gain commitment to initiatives which create long-term value. Being relatively new to the post, I have spent a lot of the time listening and reviewing what we have and proposing ideas via our strategy to make sustainable change. It is not just down to me though, I have had great support from the team.

Our new diversity and inclusion strategy is about creating a sense of belonging where everyone is valued and respected for their own unique identity. I feel it is important our diversity and inclusion strategy goes beyond the basic legislative and compliance requirements; it's more about creating environments where difference is embraced and individuals can flourish. To me the strategy is about recognising that each person is unique and understanding their differences and harnessing these differences positively, along with showing communities how great our sport really is.

I am extremely grateful for the foundations that were put in place before I came into post. Our Insight Executive and other members of the team have really made sure we aren't data rich and evidence poor. There's a great pool of insight that the new strategy, #LevelTheTable is based upon.

The world is dynamic and constantly evolving and moving forward we are ensuring that we open our door a little wider by trying to be proactive in having conversations with as many people as we can. From the Club Audit 2021, one thing that was positive to see was that three quarters of clubs were committed to Diversity and Inclusion. The support needed the most was around funding opportunities. This is a joint effort, and we are looking at ways in which we can unite on this journey which I am hoping our new strategy can do.

There is real value in table tennis, it has worldwide appeal and can be played by all ages, abilities, or impairments. From modifying the equipment used, like polybats or larger balls to the location of tables, which can include a kitchen table! There is lots of fun to be had playing the sport.

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