Dear Convener,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written evidence to your Committee’s inquiry into race, ethnicity and employment in Scotland.

Overview

Asda is Scotland’s second largest supermarket, serving 1.9 million customers every week. We are committed to making great quality goods and services more affordable while delivering investment and jobs across the country. We employ more than 20,000 colleagues in Scotland in our 61 stores and two depots, making us Scotland’s second-largest private sector employer. We support a further 10,000 Scottish jobs through our wider supply chain and invest more than £1.1 billion a year with Scottish suppliers and manufacturers.

Diversity and inclusion sit at the heart of everything we do at Asda and we aim to represent and understand the communities we serve. We recognise the commercial and business benefits of a diverse workforce and an inclusive working environment.

Diversity strategy

We have an overarching strategic framework for diversity within Asda, with a five-pillar plan to support inclusion across the business led by our expert steering groups: Gender; Age; Disability; LGBT and Ethnicity. Each steering group is chaired by a member of Asda’s Executive Board, ensuring business buy-in from the very highest level, and draws expertise from across Asda’s retail, distribution and Home Office operations. This approach means that all elements of diversity are owned and driven by colleagues at every level of the business. We collaborate with businesses from 27 countries within Walmart International to share best practice and new ways of working.

Our Ethnicity steering group includes colleagues from every function of the business who can provide first-hand experience of what it is like to be of ethnic origin in today’s business world and help Asda to drive engagement with our communities. The group sets the strategic direction for Asda’s ethnic diversity agenda.
Data

We capture data on our hourly-paid and salaried colleagues’ ethnicity profile, both at recruitment stage and through regular colleague surveys. Gathering this data allows us to measure our performance on business diversity and informs our diversity policies and programmes.

Our most recent data shows that around 2.5% per cent of our Scottish colleagues are from BAME backgrounds. We recognise that there are significant regional variances, however, and we are in the process of breaking down our data to store and regional level to allow us to benchmark more accurately against the ethnicity profile of local authority areas.

Global Diversity Practice

In 2013 Asda commissioned Global Diversity Practice, an award-winning provider of multi-disciplinary consultancy and learning solutions, for a series of workshops to up-skill our leaders on Diversity and Inclusion. We focused specifically on the potential effect that unconscious bias can have on decision making, with particular reference to recruitment and succession planning. This led to the development of our Ethnicity Strategy 2014 and the subsequent cascade of a Leadership Programme for women and ethnic minority leaders.

Global Diversity Practice designed and delivered an interactive three hour ‘Open Minds’ session for all Asda’s directors and regional teams, including stores and depots, which was cascaded to more than 10,000 managers within the business.

Following the successful cascade of the unconscious bias workshops, we sustained the interest and momentum behind the Diversity and Inclusion discussions by commissioning Global Diversity Practice to design, develop and deliver a number of our Ethnicity Strategy deliverables. These included:

- A Family Engagement Pack of marketing materials for key ethnic minority communities and families of BAME graduates;
- An equality assessment and adverse impact review of the Asda Careers website
- A 'Train the Trainers' session for Asda leaders to allow for cascading Diversity and Inclusion training;
- Reviewing recruitment and progression documents and processes to identify adverse impact, unconscious bias and providing recommendations and solutions to combat these;

Ethnicity in Leadership programme

Asda offers an Ethnicity in Leadership programme designed to help minority leaders to understand the challenges and develop techniques to overcome barriers to their progression, as well as providing mentoring support on a ‘pay it forward’ basis which gives current participants of the programme the opportunity to mentor next year’s delegates. Modules include: Authentic Leadership, Resilience, and Personal Impact & Networking.
Marketing and recruitment

We find that there can be many misconceptions, particularly within ethnic communities, that retail does not offer a stable, professional and financially rewarding career.

With the aim of dispelling these misconceptions, in October 2014 our Ethnicity steering group made a series of short films of our colleagues from ethnic backgrounds talking openly and honestly about their career in retail. These films provide a candid view of the journey some of our colleagues have had so far with Asda and an insight into how their families responded to their decision to pursue a career in retail. We hope that they will help to encourage others to look at Asda as a viable place to fulfil their career aspirations.

The films are available to view on our website at: http://greenroom.asda.com/asdadiversity/ethnic-diversity

Our Ethnicity steering group also commissioned a piece of work from People People Communications to profile colleagues from BAME backgrounds and showcase the roles and careers available at Asda, with the hope of inspiring more people from ethnic backgrounds to join our business. The document is enclosed as an attachment to this submission.

We make particular efforts to ensure that colleagues from ethnic backgrounds are represented in our corporate marketing materials and recruitment documents. Our Investing in Scotland brochure is enclosed as an example.

Our stores also engage with their local communities to encourage young people to consider a career in retail, including delivering presentations at schools and job fairs and running work clubs to give people from all backgrounds an insight into the range of roles available at Asda.

For more information, please contact:

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