

Recognising Microaggressions

A toolkit for recognising and addressing
microaggressions in everyday spaces.



WHAT ARE MICROAGGRESSIONS



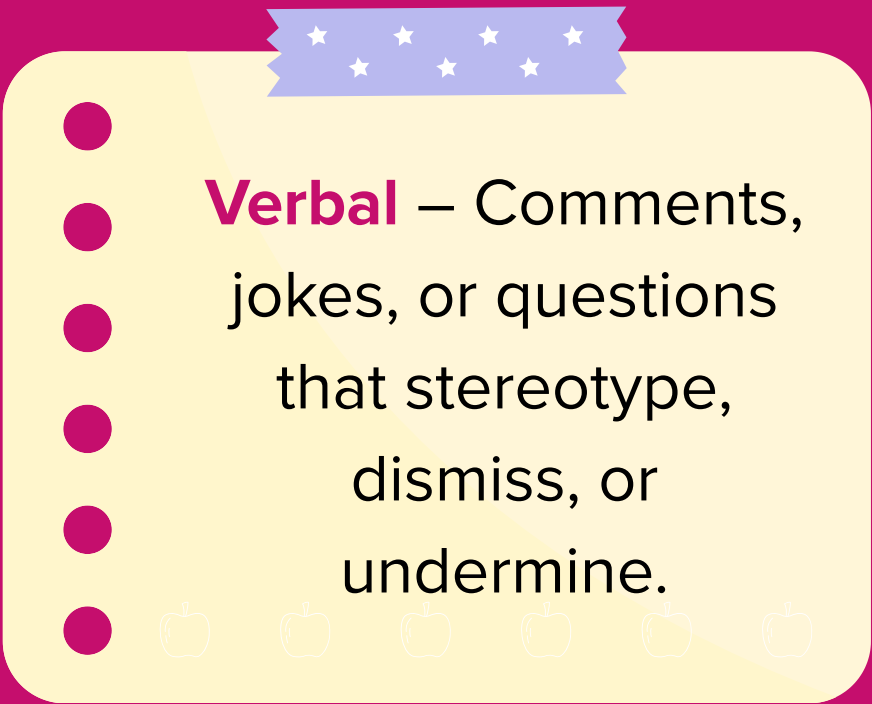
- **Microaggressions are subtle, everyday slights or behaviours.**
- **Often unintentional but harmful**

Microaggressions are not always obvious, but they chip away at someone's sense of belonging. They often appear small, but when repeated, they cause deep harm.

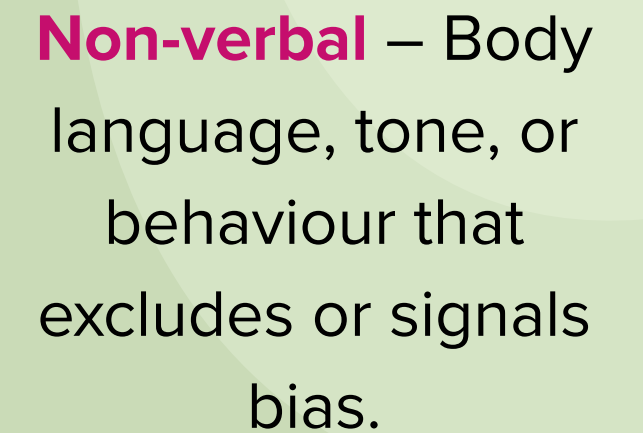


Types of Microaggressions

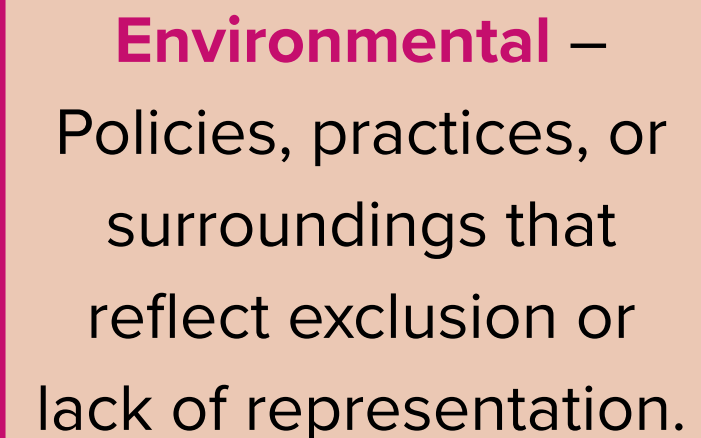
We need to distinguish between these. Sometimes it's a thoughtless comment, other times it's direct exclusion. Recognising the difference helps us respond appropriately.



Verbal – Comments, jokes, or questions that stereotype, dismiss, or undermine.



Non-verbal – Body language, tone, or behaviour that excludes or signals bias.



Environmental – Policies, practices, or surroundings that reflect exclusion or lack of representation.



"You're too young
to lead this project."

"She's probably
better at taking
notes."

"You're too smart to
be autistic."

"You don't look
disabled."

Activity

Classify the following examples as verbal, non-verbal and environmental microaggressions and then into micro-insults, micro assaults and microinvalidations.

Microassaults:

Overt remarks
(e.g., sexist jokes)

Microinsults:

Subtle
stereotypes (e.g.,
“Older people
can’t learn tech”)

Microinvalidations

: Dismissing lived
experiences (e.g.,
“Age is just a
number”)

- *“You speak English so well.”*
- *A colleague repeatedly interrupts a woman during meetings.*
- *A workplace only has stairs, no lift access.*
- *Rolling eyes when a neurodiverse colleague asks for clarification.*
- *“That’s so gay” used as a negative expression.*
- *Rolling eyes when an older colleague contributes in a meeting.*
- *“You don’t look disabled.”*
- *Team posters and office artwork only featuring men as leaders.*
- *A colleague laughs at someone’s accent and imitates it.*
- *Team bonding events are expensive (e.g., ski trips, luxury dinners), unintentionally excluding lower-income staff.*

TIME: 10 MINUTES

Why It Matters

The effects of microaggressions are not minor. People often leave workplaces or disengage in communities because of repeated microaggressions. Addressing them is about both fairness and wellbeing.

Exclusion
and
stress

Impacts
mental
health

Damages
confidence
and
engagement

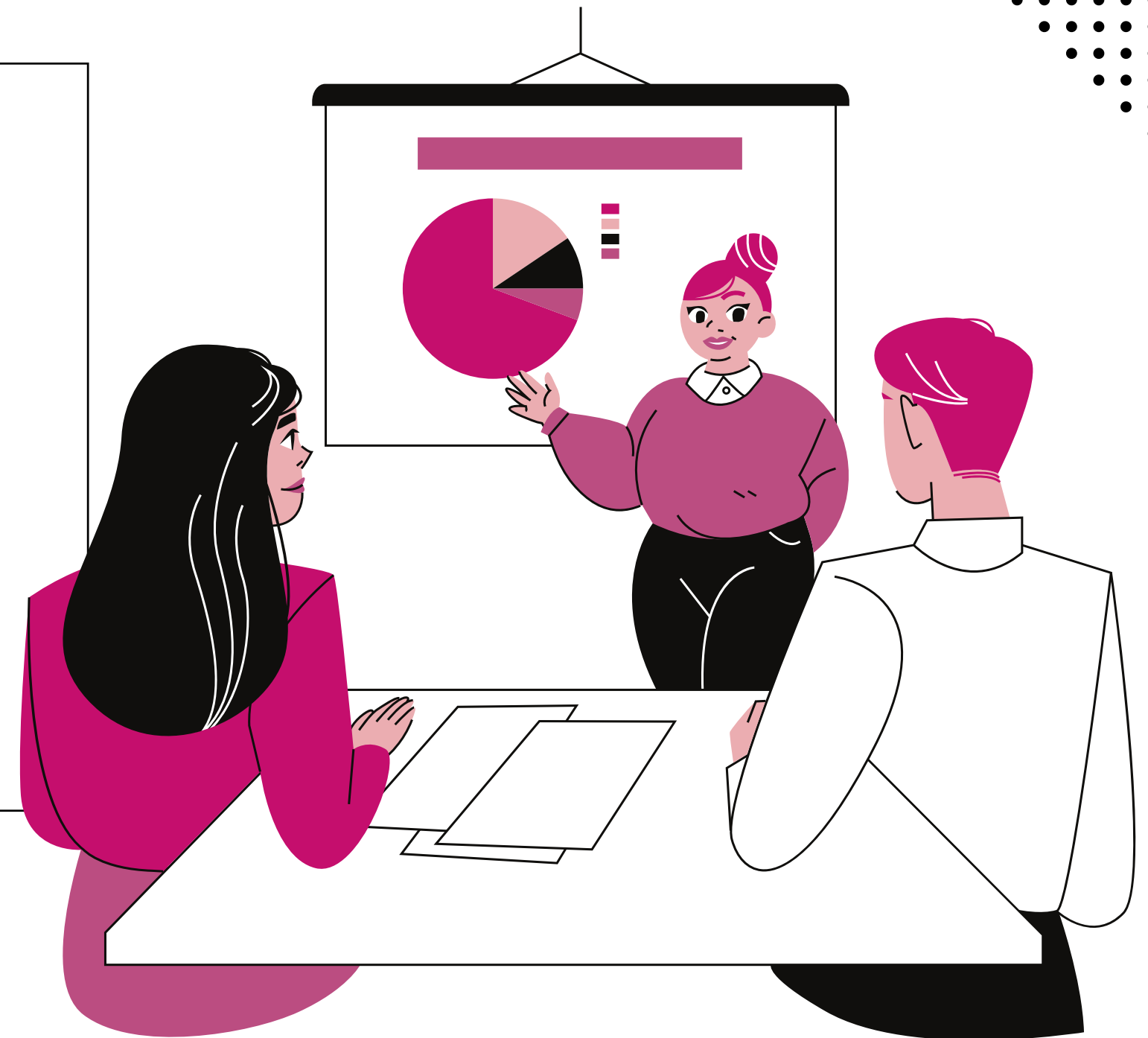
Normalise
Bias

Damage
Workplace
Culture

Legal &
Reputational
Risks

Creating Safe Spaces

A safe space isn't about comfort but about respect and accountability. It's where people feel their voice matters and that harm will be addressed, not ignored.



Inclusive ground
rules

Respectful
language

Active
listening

Reporting
channels

Valuing lived
experiences

Responding to Microaggressions

Call it in /
call it out

Support
the person
affected

Set Clear
Boundaries

Pause
and
reflect

Acknowledge
Intent but
Highlight
Impact

Learn and
change
behaviour



Not every situation requires a confrontation, but silence is never neutral. Choose the response that protects dignity and encourages learning.



Building Long-Term Inclusion





Training & awareness



Leadership accountability



Encourage feedback

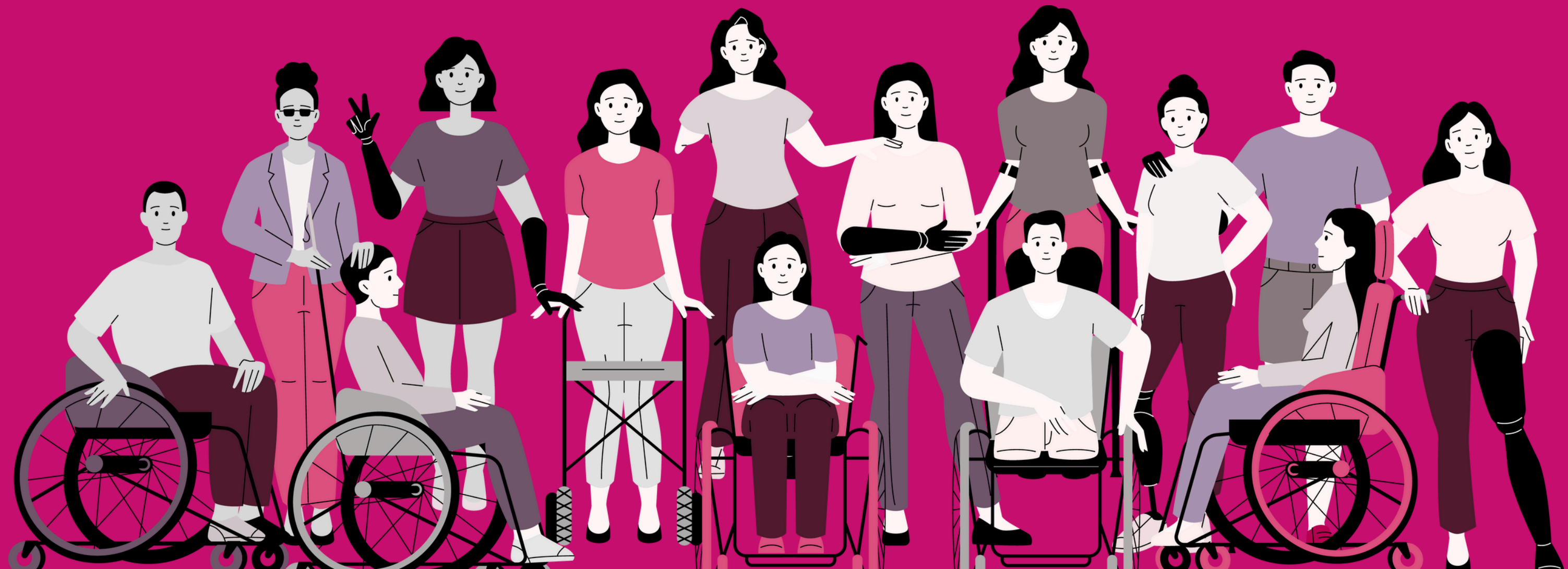


Embed EDI daily

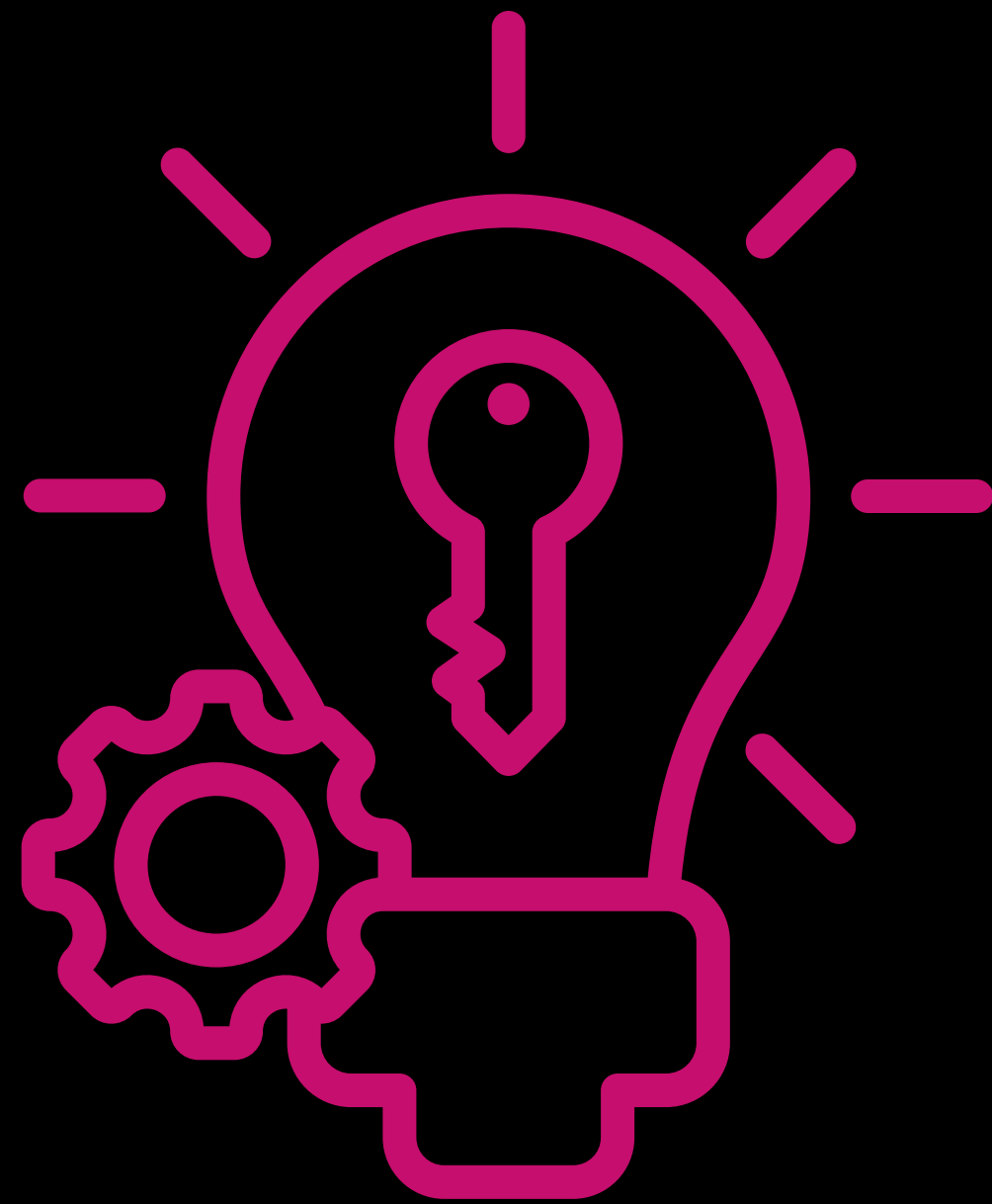
This isn't a one-off. Inclusion requires continuous education, leaders who model fairness, and cultures where people can give feedback safely. Embedding EDI means challenging bias every day.

Activity

What long-term actions could your organisation take to reduce sexism, ableism, and ageism?



Key Takeaways



01

Microaggressions are not small - their cumulative impact can seriously affect wellbeing, confidence, and belonging in workplaces and communities.

02

Awareness is the first step - by learning to recognise and address microaggressions, we create more respectful and supportive environments.

03

Safe spaces are intentional - they require active policies, inclusive behaviours, and a culture of listening without judgement.

04

Everyone has a role - fostering equality and inclusion is a shared responsibility, where small everyday actions make the biggest difference.

Closing reflection activity

Our goal is not to shame, but to build awareness and change behaviour. Small actions add up to big change when everyone commits to making spaces inclusive for people of all genders, ages, and abilities.

What one action will you take after today to challenge microaggressions in your space?



Thankyou!

“Thank you for taking the time to engage with this important conversation. Together, we can build environments where everyone feels respected, heard, and safe to thrive. If you would like to continue the discussion or explore how we can support your work, please feel free to reach out.”

Mahnoor Shakir - Head of EDI

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