

## Activity 2: Beyond stereotypes

### Introduction

The IT industry still struggles to achieve full diversity across its workforce. This activity gives learners the opportunity to explore some of the possible influences at work here. The approach starts from the learners' own experiences of how the world perceives IT workers and then asks them to compare this with reality. Finally, they have an opportunity to suggest ways of changing the situation. The activity requires careful facilitation by the teacher and works best if learners have developed trust and mutual respect.

### Learning objectives

Learners should be able to:

- identify a range of issues relating to stereotyping
- consider why the IT workforce does not represent the diversity within the UK
- identify possible solutions.

### Resources required

- Large sheets of paper.
- Marker pens.
- The **Meet the professionals – audio clips**.
- A means of playing the clips, both via data projection and on individual computers with speakers.

### Starting points

It is essential that groups have agreed ground rules before embarking on the activity. The Co-operative learning area features several ways of doing this. The activity is likely to work best when done by co-operative learning teams who have already developed trust and who are able to run their own discussions effectively.

### Suggested approach

#### Stage 1: Identifying stereotypes

Working in small groups or co-operative learning teams, ask learners to think about the image that the general public has of a person that works in the IT industry. Emphasise that you would like them to think about how IT workers are depicted on television and in magazines and books, rather than their personal view.

Groups discuss the type of image they think the public has, then draw a picture that represents the stereotype. Encourage them to add notes to explain the features they have chosen and to use their imagination. They might give the person a name, age and short CV.

## **Stage 2: Discussing the stereotypes**

Display all the images developed. Ask groups to explain their drawing by asking them suitable questions, such as:

- Why have you chosen these features?
- Why do you think the public has this view of IT workers?
- Where does this view come from?

## **Stage 3: Delving deeper**

If learners have not done **Activity 1: Meet the professionals**, they now need to listen to the **Meet the professionals – audio clips**, where they can hear real IT professionals.

- To what extent does reality match the stereotype?
- Can they explain any of the processes at work here?
- What influences people's career choices?

## **Stage 4: Identifying solutions**

The UK is about to face a new shortage of IT workers. What ideas can learners suggest to encourage a wider range of people to choose a career in IT?

Remind the learners to think about all the different groups within society. Are there groups of people who are unlikely to consider a career in IT? Why? What are the barriers they face? How might those barriers be overcome?

## **What might learners do next**

**Activity 3: Who is the best person for the job?** will enable learners to extend their exploration of equality and diversity issues.