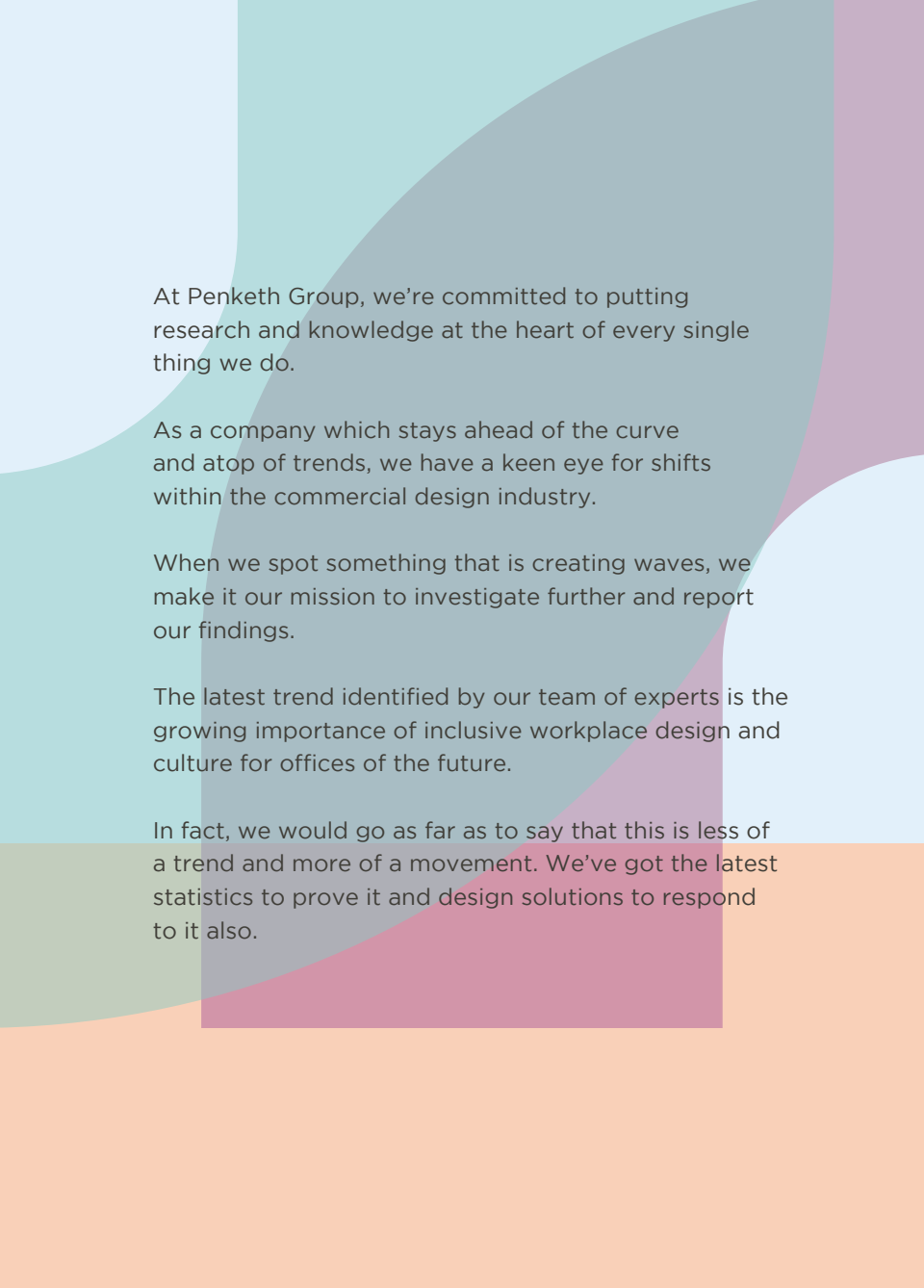# Penketh Group

Inclusive Workplaces:

The Future of Office Design & Culture

At Penketh Group, we're committed to putting research and knowledge at the heart of every single thing we do.

As a company which stays ahead of the curve and atop of trends, we have a keen eye for shifts within the commercial design industry.

When we spot something that is creating waves, we make it our mission to investigate further and report our findings.

The latest trend identified by our team of experts is the growing importance of inclusive workplace design and culture for offices of the future.

In fact, we would go as far as to say that this is less of a trend and more of a movement. We've got the latest statistics to prove it and design solutions to respond to it also.

97% of employers believe expectations around employee experience are changing (Aon)

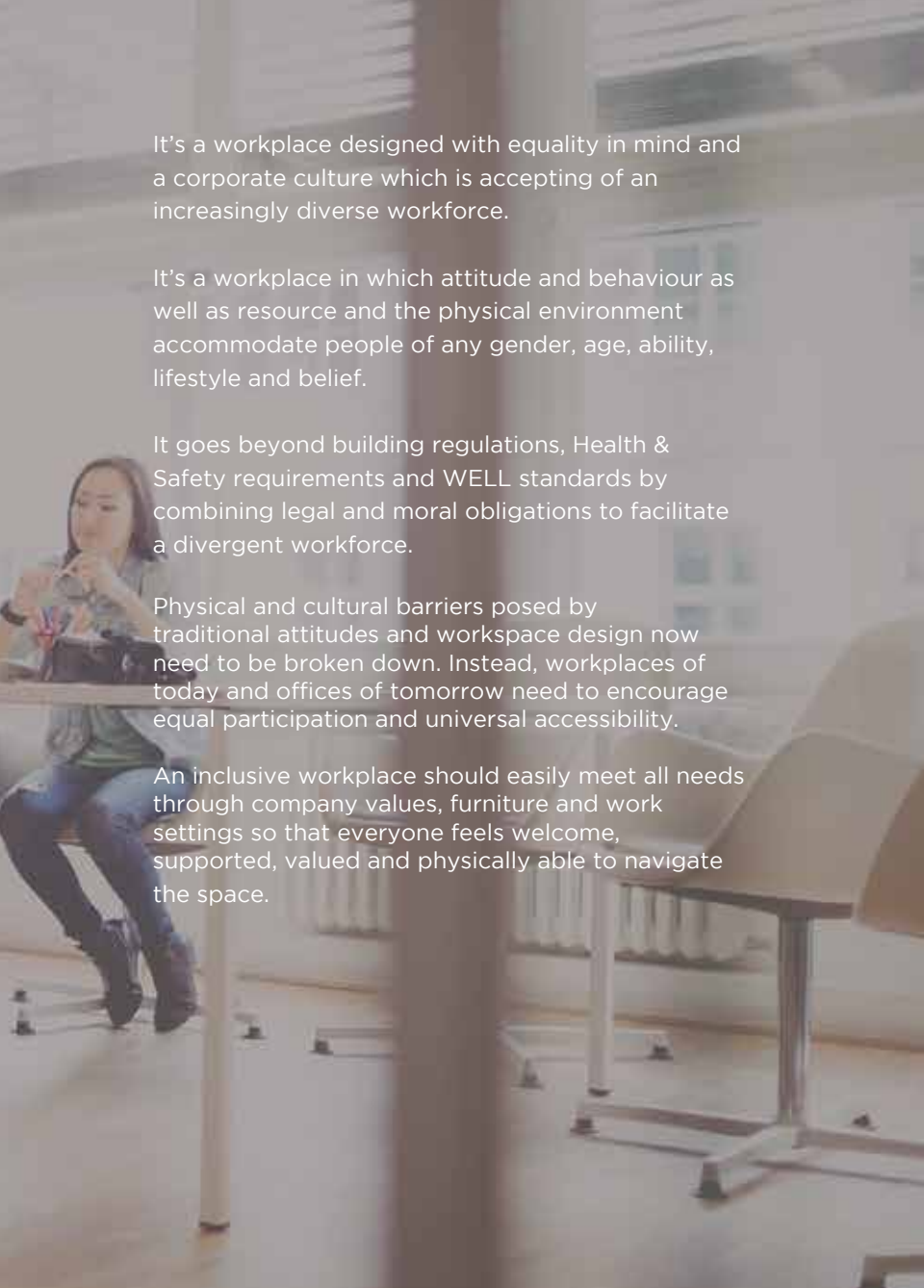Only **15%** of the workforce are currently engaged (Gallup)

It's time to re-engage the modern workforce and it seems that fostering an inclusive workplace is the key.

What is an inclusive workplace?

It's a workplace designed with equality in mind and a corporate culture which is accepting of an increasingly diverse workforce.

It's a workplace in which attitude and behaviour as well as resource and the physical environment accommodate people of any gender, age, ability, lifestyle and belief.

It goes beyond building regulations, Health & Safety requirements and WELL standards by combining legal and moral obligations to facilitate a divergent workforce.

Physical and cultural barriers posed by traditional attitudes and workspace design now need to be broken down. Instead, workplaces of today and offices of tomorrow need to encourage equal participation and universal accessibility.

An inclusive workplace should easily meet all needs through company values, furniture and work settings so that everyone feels welcome, supported, valued and physically able to navigate the space.

More than just a **trend** or a box - ticking exercise

"We've certainly noticed clients now picking up on more workplace issues which lead back to inclusivity – even if they can't explicitly name or identify that that's what it is they're referring to.

It just goes to show that businesses are becoming more aware of the need to provide for staff from all different walks of life and the benefits this brings about."

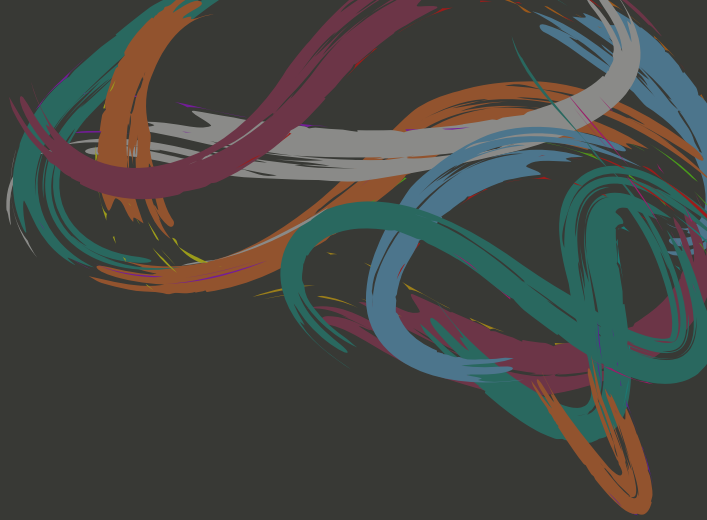**Chris Birchall, Workplace Strategist
Penketh Group**

The facts & figures

We conducted a survey of 1,100 UK office workers to gain insight into how inclusive the country's workplaces currently are.

Wanting to work for an inclusive company was unanimous across all age brackets. However, we identified a clear upward trend towards more diverse design facilities in the younger work generation.

This proves that we're at the very beginnings of a new major milestone in commercial design and company culture.

66%

of those aged between 25-34 want to see more work settings designed to support mental health in workplaces of the future

40%
say their workplace is currently lacking in places to relax and rejuvenate

Above and **BEYOND** the call of regulation

Commercial design now needs to look beyond mandatory rules and regulations in order to become truly inclusive. They need to venture beyond basic industry standard into what might not be a legal requirement but has now become a business' moral obligation.

Doing so will not only directly improve the operability of the workspace for existing staff, it will also help attract a wider pool of talent, boost morale and help you achieve significant advantage over the competition when it comes to retention of great staff.

Physical ability & accessibility

Many of the elements that make a workplace inclusive and accessible to those of all physical abilities are called for by law and have been for some time.

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), for example, has been put in place, alongside things like the Equality Act 2010 to support equal access for all in the modern workplace.

This encompasses various elements already commonplace in non-residential buildings, such as: clear traffic routes, unobstructed corridors of sufficient width, ramps at exits and entrances, reception desks with lower sections and clear marking of changes in floor level.

Should businesses fail to meet legal obligations and industry standard Building Regulations, they risk being guilty of – and penalised for – disability discrimination.

The **Equality and Human Rights Commission** outline one particular element of this discrimination as being "the existence of physical […] barriers which make accessing something difficult or impossible".

It also explains how "this discrimination does not have to be intentional to be unlawful".

27%

More than a quarter say their workplace is currently lacking in any wheelchair access

31% would like more multi-height surfaces in offices of the future

33% say that their workplace is lacking in ergonomic furniture

30% of 18-24-year olds say their workplace doesn't cater for varying physical abilities

The work lifestyle balance

One of the other main points we want to bring to light is how inclusivity and diversity in the workplace now needs to extend beyond physical and mental health conditions.

Today, creating an inclusive workplace is also about lifestyle diversities such as age, gender identity and religion, and building an environment which is accepting and supportive of all variants.

balance
balance

It's also vital to realise how closely lifestyle is connected to mental wellbeing and therefore, how direct the impact can be on professional performance and employee experience.

So, as the line between personal and professional lives continues to blur, work-life integration becomes increasingly important and something business owners now need to address in order to foster a welcoming and inclusive workplace.

89%
would consider leaving or have left a job due to a lack of inclusive culture and/or facilities

What's also clear is that acceptance of lifestyle choices and personal diversity is increasing in priority as we move through the workplace generations and welcome the new era of young professionals.

When we surveyed our respondents, we found that forward-thinking design elements such as prayer rooms, gender-neutral toilets and facilities for new mums (e.g. space to express milk in private) were far more important to younger UK office workers than their older counterparts.

Provision for new parents is a growing priority in workplaces of the future.

This was clear in our survey results when we asked respondents if this is something they would like to see more of:

Ages 45-54: 24%

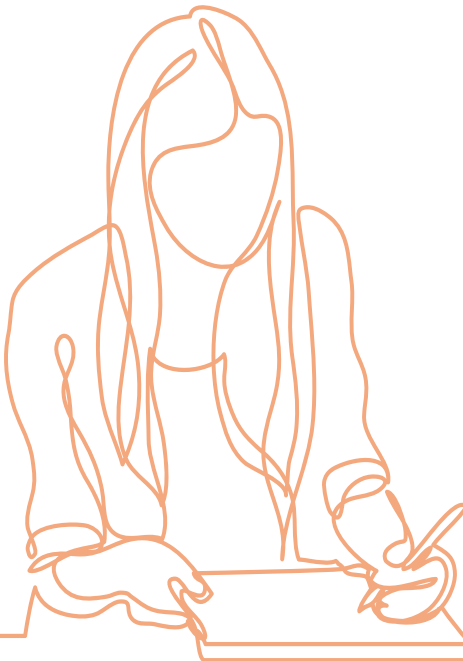## Ages 35-44: 27%

Ages 25-34: 40%

81%

Of 18-24-year olds want to work for an inclusive company

Introduce a minimal, private space within the workplace which can be completely shielded and acoustically enhanced for total privacy.

This space should provide soft, modular seating which means it is a comfortable, inviting space and can also be easily cleared or reconfigured according to requirement.

Designed like this, the space then becomes multifunctional and can be utilised by a variety of people including new mums (to express milk), staff who want to meditate during their rejuvenation periods, or as a prayer space for employees following religions which call for prayer during working hours.

Bridging the age...

...gap

As the retirement age continues to rise and the modern workforce spans more generations, the era of unprecedented technological advancements also continues to build momentum.

Workplaces today employ more older staff than in previous generations of work and currently, a significant percentage of these are feeling isolated and marginalised by a lack of experience or confidence with new technology.

Almost a quarter (24%) of our survey respondents agreed that their workplace is lacking in training in new technologies which helps them feel included.

The benefits of Blended Learning

Steelcase's understanding of Blended Learning describes "an approach to teaching which combines online and face-to-face learning" and means traditionalists (and those who feel outside of technological evolution) can still participate equally.

There are a number of products on the furniture and tech market which combine multiple elements in order to accommodate different learning styles in one connected work setting.

31% aged 55+ feel excluded due to a lack of training in new technology

Why should you **invest** in inclusive design?

54%

Are more likely to accept a job off a company with an inclusive design than one without

69%

Would turn down a job opportunity due to a poor working environment and/or facilities

40%

Agree an inclusive culture is important when considering job opportunities

Thoughts?

Now we've shared our research, knowledge and insights with you, we'd love to hear what you have to say on the topic of inclusive workplaces and the future of commercial design.

🐦 **@PenkethGroup**

f **facebook.com/penkethgroup**

📷 **@PenkethGroup**

in **linkedin.com/company/penkeths-limited**

A word to the wise:

This guide has been created through extensive research, expert opinions and the guidance of organisations and official documents. Please be aware that it does not reflect the full requirements of the law; nor should it be used as a source of legal advice.

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc.

Total sample size was 2045 adults of which 984 were employees. Fieldwork was undertaken between 1st-2nd May 2019. The survey was carried out online.

The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).