

I'm In! *This is my story*



‘*I come from a tiny village in Spain. 17 years ago I did not speak any English. I now manage a team of 25 cleaners to ensure Cannon Place is spotless’*

Celia Izcara
Cleaning Manager

Q: Tell us a little bit about yourself

A: I am from a tiny village in the North of Spain called Villanueva de Gumiel, which has a population of 150, so it is one of those places where everybody knows everybody. I am the youngest of five (three brothers and one sister) and I arrived in London 17 years ago when one of my brothers was an English Teacher in Oxford. I made the decision to come to London to learn English as I found it very difficult to learn English studying in Spain, and I started working as a cleaner for a hotel. It was after this that I realised that I found cleaning to be a very meditative job and I was very good at it, and was quickly promoted to Cleaning Supervisor. Over the years, I have found the cleaning industry to be more and more interesting, there is a common perception that cleaning is a simple job, however I have found that it is one thing for something to be clean and it is another for it to be cleaned properly. In my current role, I supervise 25 people in London and support the rest of the UK locations, which is not easy, although I do make sure that I work with all the cleaners and provide them with the example of my career going from Cleaner to Cleaning Manager to give them the aspiration to progress.

Outside of work, I like to go to the gym and travel and have had the opportunity to visit many countries and cities, including Ghana, Miami, Venezuela, Brazil, Singapore and countless others. The next trip I am planning is to India.

Q: What does diversity and inclusion mean to you?

A: It means that every employee's background and culture is not only accepted but is also respected.

Q: What challenges have you faced in your career?

A: One of the biggest challenges I encountered was moving from my small village in Spain to London, which was a huge transition. Life in London as a successful Spanish woman can sometimes be lonely, as the majority of Spaniards who come to London only do so for a short period of time to earn money and then go back to Spain. It is rare that I get to meet Spaniards who come to London to stay here permanently. One of the most significant challenges I faced was learning how to speak English well, not having English as a first language has on occasion knocked my confidence, although nowadays I try not to let it. However, learning English has also driven me to encourage others in the Spanish community to learn, which has been a challenge but one that I believe has greatly benefitted me.

Q: How do your colleagues perceive you, and how would you like to be perceived?

A: I believe that I am perceived as a passionate and professional individual who is accommodating, understanding and diligent in my role as Cleaning Manager. Generally, I feel that I am perceived the way that I want to be perceived and while I may have been on the receiving end of some silly jokes from time to time, I am not easily offended. The way I see it, my English may not have been the best but I am bilingual.

Q: Do you think that CMS is a diverse firm, and how could it improve?

A: Yes, I do think that CMS is a diverse firm and that it has an inclusive culture, efforts are made to ensure that all cleaning staff are respected and included by all people in the firm including fee earners. For example, putting out chocolates for everybody, not just for other fee earners. However to improve, Interserve (cleaning contractor and my employer) and CMS should be more transparent not only with each other, but also with employees. I think that there needs to be more trust and support between lawyers and other staff in order for diversity and Inclusion to improve even further in relation to how non-lawyer staff are treated.

