



GOVERNANCE FACTSHEET – THE BASICS

Equality, diversity and inclusion at Board level

- **What is EDI?**
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Making sure your charity takes steps towards equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is a core responsibility for any board. Doing so contributes to good governance as set out in the EDI principle as part of the Charity Governance Code.

What is EDI?

There's no one complete set of agreed definitions for terms like equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), and your organisation will create their own definitions which are relevant to your context and activities.

A starting point for defining the areas of EDI are included below.

- **Equality:** Equality means making sure that every individual has equal opportunities. By being conscious of and actively challenging bias or prejudice we make sure no one is treated less favourably because of who they are or what makes them different from other people. This requires a proactive approach to make reasonable adjustments that address the visible and invisible barriers people face.
- **Diversity:** Diversity means having differences within an organisation or setting. Diversity recognises we are all different in many ways. People with differing identities, backgrounds and experiences should all have equitable access to resources and decision-making. Some people prefer to use the term 'representation' to focus on how organisations should be reflective of the society we live in and the communities we serve.
- **Inclusion:** Inclusion means being proactive to make sure people of different backgrounds, experiences and identities feel welcomed, respected and fully able to participate. It is not only about creating a diverse environment but also about making sure that a culture exists where individuals can be their full selves.

The voluntary sector with and for a broad range of people. Trustee boards make strong decisions when they understand the range of the experiences in their community and reflect this through authentic representation in all decision-making processes.

Thinking about and meaningfully exploring EDI and taking action to create a board which works to embed inclusive practices helps a board to make better decisions. This requires commitment and it means a charity is more likely to stay relevant to those it serves and to deliver its public benefit.

Charities can work to achieve their aims when recognise and work to:

- address any imbalances in power, perspectives and opportunities in the charity
- examine the attitudes and behaviour of trustees, staff and volunteers.

All trustees have the same responsibility for the charity, so they must have equal opportunities to contribute to decision making. Board diversity, in the widest sense, is important because it creates more balanced decision-making. Where appropriate, this includes and centres the communities and people the charity serves. This increases the charity's legitimacy and impact.

Equality and diversity are only effective and sustainable if the board works to be inclusive, making sure that all trustees are welcomed, valued and able to contribute.

Boards that commit to equality, diversity and inclusion are more likely to set a positive example and tone for the charity by following an appropriate strategy for delivering its purpose and setting inclusive values and culture.

IMPORTANT

Principle 6 of the Charity Governance Code, [Equality, diversity and inclusion](#), sets out the importance of EDI in the context of your whole charity.

The facts on trustee diversity

Trustee diversity provides one way for your board to think about its EDI journey. In general, charity boards are less diverse than the general public and they also tend not to reflect the communities they serve. According to the Taken on Trust research by the Charity Commission:

- only 8% of trustees are Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic compared with 14% of the UK population (source: 2011 census)
- seven out of ten trustees are men
- the median age is 61 years.

The Charity Commission estimates that only 0.5% of the trustee population is made up of 18-24-year-olds.

This data is based on the public register of trustees held by The Charity Commission which only collects limited demographic information. Unfortunately, this means there are other important elements of diversity, including some protected characteristics, which were not covered in the research.

Other characteristics are important to account for as it acknowledges the many ways diversity exists. Reporting on such evidence sets a tone in the importance of valuing inclusivity as widely as possible.

This is particularly important for junior staff, as trustees can forget how much of a role model they are for the wider organisation. Seeing their identities represented at board level signals to them, alongside a wider shift in culture, as a meaningful way of furthering inclusion.

The issue of board diversity is furthered by the fact that 81% of charities recruit for trustees by word of mouth or personal recommendation, according to The Charity Commission.

This results a much higher possibility of trustees hired having similar experiences and perspectives which can limit discussion and harm well-rounded and balanced decision-making and result in a more homogenous group of trustees.

NCVO worked with [Impact Culture](#) to create this guidance.