

# Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:

## Governance and strategy

### Note of breakout session

#### Lucy Horitz, Homeless Link

The group heard from **Malcolm John**, Founder of Action on Racial Diversity and trustee of the Association of Chairs - the membership organisation for charity Chairs in England and Wales, who spoke about his experience of increasing racial diversity on Boards. The group then had a Q&A and open discussion on the topic.

#### My campaign to increase the racial diversity of Boards - why I started it

I've been campaigning for over four years now.

I decided to start the campaign when I left a previous charity - a key international development charity - after seven years as a trustee and three as vice chair. There were then no Black and Asian trustees left on the Board - an unacceptable situation for a charity set up to tackle social injustice across the globe.. I therefore offered as a parting gift to help them recruit up to three new Black and Asian trustees. My offer was accepted but not without some challenging internal discussion about the legitimacy of only recruiting Black and Asian trustees. However, by framing the trustee vacancy specifically to encourage applications from Black and Asian candidates - and with the strong and necessary support of the Chair and the CEO - we were successful in recruiting three high quality Black and Asian trustees.

Crucially this proved to me that effecting a significant increase in the numbers of Black and Asian trustees was eminently achievable with the right organisational focus and commitment. However it also brought home to me - very starkly - the enormous gap between the prevailing rhetoric and the shameful numbers on the ground. So, I decided to draw on my own experience, networks and personal commitment to try to redress the imbalance and explore some practical solutions.

So briefly, our mission is to work with partners to bridge the woeful 40% under-representation gap on trustee boards - to raise it from the current 8% to 14% which is the percentage of Black and Asian people in England and Wales. Our aim is to make it easier - and importantly more affordable - for those organisations who genuinely want to recruit Black and Asian trustees to do so.

A mapping survey we carried out to understand better the barriers to the lack of racial diversity on charity boards showed that on Boards made up very largely of white, middle class and university educated men and women - though still largely men - that there was an overwhelming need for more access to, and indeed knowledge of, Black

and Asian networks. It also showed a serious lack of knowledge and awareness of the huge pool of unused talents, skills and experience within Black and Asian networks and individuals.

So we set about addressing these barriers by developing three key resources

**One**, we produced in 2021 a practical guide for charities - *From Here to Diversity - How to recruit and retain Black and Asian trustees*. This reflected that whilst an increasing number of organisations in light of events in 2020 - Black Lives Matter and the horrific murder of George Floyd in the US - are keen to take active steps to address racial inequalities, more often than not they don't know how to go about doing it. The Guide is available to download from our website or you can get print copies for a bargain £9.95 from the Directory of Social Change

**Our second resource is** a unique database of currently over 550 Black and Asian network organisations across sectors and across the UK to address the major issue of charities' lack of access to and knowledge of more diverse networks. We capped it at 500 but there are so many more. The database highlights the thousands of Black and Asian individuals out there with the skills, experience and commitment to be effective and valuable trustees. We've drawn up the list largely through our own online research. So, if we can do it, anyone else can with the right resources and commitment.

Our **third resource is** a unique peer support online network - ATRD Connects - solely for aspiring and current Black and Asian trustees. It would be true to say that trusteeship is very largely another country for those of us who are not white, are younger and are below average income and education. Significantly more so, if you're young, Black, Asian or working class as I touched on earlier.. A questionnaire survey which we carried out last year for aspiring Black and Asian trustees revealed a considerable lack of awareness of the role of trustees. Many - where they'd heard of trusteeships - did not think that it was a role for them. Many were at a loss at how to go about finding trustee vacancies or even if they found them how to apply successfully. Even when they got to the application stage, they would look at the website profiles of existing trustees, and would rarely ever see anyone who looked like them. The network seeks to address these challenges. It only started at the beginning of 2021 and now has over 500 members.

This year - in the spirit of adventure and in the firm belief that diversity and inclusion starts at the top - we launched a new initiative - **Black and Asian Future Chairs' Academy** (abbreviated as BAFCA 😊) and not to be confused with the high profile and historically undiverse film and theatre award. Through BAFCA, we are seeking to develop a pipeline of Black and Asian chairs who would - we hope - present a more diverse, a more inclusive, and more representative face of charity leadership.

## **Steps to Board Racial Diversity**

### **Understanding Diversity and the Organisational need for Board diversity**

Have an internal discussion ideally facilitated by an independent consultant about why you want to increase the diversity of your Board, and how a more diverse Board would increase your organisational effectiveness. More often than not, this is to reflect the people you support and hear their voices at Board level.

### **Inclusive Recruitment - Nine steps**

1. Recruiting specifically for the skills and experience your charity needs; skills and diversity audits
2. Reflect in your advert the type of diverse applicant you want
3. The language of your recruitment pack; not asking for previous trustee experience; not asking for senior management experience; get someone to proof for EDI
4. Don't highlight the glittering profiles of your current trustees
5. Don't just recruit one person from a Black and Asian background; might appear as tokenism; ring-fence trustee positions for people from Black and Asian backgrounds
6. Advertise in more inclusive, not exclusive way; don't ask for experiences which many potential trustees particularly from Black and Asian communities might not have
7. A diverse recruitment panel; find an independent panelists if you need to
8. Offering different ways of applying for different types of applicants; Inclusive interviewing; questions in advance; zoom or face to face
9. Give feedback to unsuccessful applicants

Recognise a proper inclusive recruitment process takes twice as long as you originally plan. Accept it's not a quick fix but requires attaching high priority to the time, effort, resources and commitment to do it properly.

### **Inclusion**

The challenge of achieving more racially diverse trustee Boards does not end with recruitment. It extends to charities making sure that, once Black and Asian trustees are recruited, they remain with the charity for their full term of appointment. This means that charities must develop, maintain and monitor inclusive policies and practices at all levels to ensure that new and existing Black and Asian trustees do not feel excluded or marginalised.

A few of the key actions are

- Ensure that the views and reflections of new Black and Asian trustees are proactively sought both at and outside of Board meetings, and not just on diversity and inclusion issues.
- Chairs and other trustees must ensure they provide support to new Black and Asian trustees and behave in a way which helps to lessen any feeling of “imposter syndrome” for first time Black and Asian trustees.
- Board diversity champion; definition of role; publicly supported by Chair and CEO.
- Get regular feedback from the new trustees on the inclusiveness of the charity; not just after a few weeks but also a few months after!
- Plan continuous development, training and mentoring or offering a “buddy” from the Board to support and enable new Black and Asian trustees to carry out their roles effectively.
- Most importantly, think how your governance arrangements might need to change to include a new trustee, who is young and in full time employment as opposed to the older retired or partly retired trustee or freelancer. For instance, hold Board meetings in the evening not during the day.

### **Succession Planning; developing a pipeline**

Don't think the job is done when you've successfully recruited your first Black and Asians trustees. Just one Black and Asian trustee on any Board is not enough and often looks like “tokenism”.

- Build in racial diversity recruitment into your future trustee recruitment plans.
- Continue to develop and maintain your links with local, regional and national Black and Asian network organisations and potential Black and Asian trustees.
- Think about setting up board advisory groups which would include potential Black and Asian trustees particularly people with “lived experience”
- Consider developing trustee apprenticeships or “shadowing” programmes for potential Black and Asian trustees.
- Engage and attract Black and Asian individuals as volunteers as a first step to raise their awareness of and develop them into trustees.
- Connect to ATRD Connects, the peer support social media network of potential and existing Black and Asian trustees which ATRD has set up in 2021
- Ensure that next time you're recruiting Black and Asian trustees, you already have a pipeline of potential trustees to choose from in addition to open recruitment.