



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in School Trusts

Creating sustainable change

February 2023

ABOUT TRUST INCLUSION

Trust Inclusion comprises three skilled consultants all experienced in working with Trusts, school leaders and Leadership Teams. The collaboration that is **Trust Inclusion** is in its third year and between them, Mandy, Johan and Linbert bring nearly one hundred years' combined experience of helping organisations to be more effective at identifying and achieving their equality and/or diversity and/or inclusion objectives.

Trust Inclusion is well positioned to help Multi-Academy Trusts and other education providers, to be more effective regarding their equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I) work – and by extension to be consistent in achieving their wider educational purpose.

Trust Inclusion offers a range of support for Trusts with a clear focus on working with Boards, Chief Executives and top teams to develop Inclusive Leadership alongside a realistic and focused ED&I strategy. We believe that to be impactful long term, this work must be led from the top of the Trust and be rooted in culture and purpose. For sustainable change, ED&I cannot simply be 'another thing to do' but must be integrated into and inform the strategy and day to day working of a Trust and understood as relevant during turbulent times. This was never truer than in the economic climate and challenges faced in 2022/23.

Our work delivers this, avoiding fads and ad hoc initiatives that, although well intended, can detract from impact and be high cost. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is not a singular concept, but in fact three different concepts. Our work focuses on building an inclusive culture that attracts and retains greater diversity.

Trust Inclusion has worked with many Trusts including Oasis, Dartmoor, Compass Partnership, GLF, Dixons and Ebor. We have worked with the Confederation of School Trusts and Ambition Institute.

Our Co-Founders have very rich and diverse backgrounds with in-depth experience in the areas of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, HR and the School sector. **Mandy Coalter** is the Founder of Talent Architects, former Director of People at United Learning, Trustee at both the Diocese of Coventry Multi Academy Trust and The National Teaching Awards and is the leading HR expert working within the school and Academy sector. **Johan Jensen** is the Founder of All-in Education, with an impressive ED&I background including with Ambition Institute, EHRC and Stonewall, and in-depth experience working with schools. **Linbert Spencer OBE** is the author of The Diversity Pocket Book and How to Create Inclusive Environments and has decades of experience helping organisations across all sectors with their ED&I strategy. He is also a Trustee at both the HEART Multi Academy Trust and the Harper Trust.

As well as a wealth of professional expertise to support teams and individuals seeking to lead more inclusively, **Trust Inclusion** brings to the table the lived experience of different aspects of diversity, including accent, age, colour, disability, ethnicity, gender, marital status, nationality, parental status, religion, and sexual orientation.

A few words from those who have supported this work:

brownejacobson^{LLP}

As a firm Browne Jacobson is renowned for both being passionate about Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and being passionate about education. We are supporting this important work in the hope that sharing it inspires and supports schools and Trusts to take ever more effective and meaningful action in regard to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many Trusts are highly committed to taking forward work in equality, diversity and inclusion but struggle to get started in a meaningful way. This matters more than ever right now as we know equality is vital to attracting talent in a recruitment crisis, increased diversity will provide more role models for pupils and inclusion will ensure we take our workforce with us during turbulent times.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are not one singular concept; they are three different concepts. Equality is about providing equal access and protecting against discrimination; it is underpinned by legislation. Diversity is simply difference, and we are all different from each other. Inclusion is a *feeling*, an *emotion*; it is affected when people feel safe, trusted, valued, respected, and have a sense of belonging. We will only be able to reap positive benefits from greater diversity if we build inclusive cultures first.

Building an inclusive culture starts with developing inclusive leaders at all levels. It takes leadership and commitment from the Board, Chief Executive, Executive team and school leaders. It is not 'another thing to do' but is about 'all we do.' In our case studies, all the organisations have begun their work with development for their top leaders and focused on inclusive leadership.

Creating greater diversity in our workforce must start with building inclusion if we want it to stick. There are some actions Trusts can take to enhance diversity and inclusion, including curriculum review, recruitment, talent management, staff networks and campaigns. Tracking data on both diversity and inclusion is vital to measure impact. Alongside workforce profile data, this includes understanding how it *feels* to work in your Trust.

No Trust claims to have this work in a perfect place. All are on a learning curve. Some have been working at this for some time and have generously agreed to share their story to date. We hope to add to these case studies over time to build the learning in the sector.

There is much that Boards, Executives and school leaders can do to take forward this agenda. At the outset, seeing it as a whole Trust agenda that everyone has a role to play in is an important first step. The HR team have an important role, but too often we see ED&I side-lined to a few HR initiatives. This will not build the inclusive culture Trusts need to reap the benefits of diversity. We strongly recommend the work starts with Inclusive Leadership at the top of the Trust.

From Confederation of Schools Trust:

We are very pleased to support this report on equality, diversity and inclusion in school trusts. Trust Inclusion is doing fundamentally important work in helping school trusts to develop their approaches to building stronger and more inclusive cultures. Some of the reasons that this work is important include:

- Building a more diverse and representative school workforce
- Responding to the current recruitment and retention crisis
- Deeply understanding what it means to be a good employer and to create the conditions for staff and pupils to flourish

In our work on equality, diversity and inclusion, CST seeks to build bridges in the creation of a better and more equal society. We draw on the theory of 'bridging social capital' - a type of social capital that describes the connections that link people across old social cleavages that typically divide society, such as race, gender, class, or religion. It is these associations, norms of trust, and generosity that create 'bridges' between communities, groups, and organisations.

The wonderful case studies in this report, and its overall message of discovering and encouraging potential, should help us to create schools and trusts as places where all adults and children can thrive. That should be the aim for all workplaces, but for the formative environment of schools it is even more crucial.

Leora Cruddas CBE
Chief executive, Confederation of School Trusts

WHY ARE WE PUBLISHING THIS WORK?

The school sector has transformed dramatically in recent years with the Academy Trust movement, and this is likely to expand much further in the future. We face unprecedented challenging times as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and grapple with the educational impact on young people alongside huge challenges for the economy, recruitment and retention and school funding.

Many schools and Trusts have recognised that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are central to their work for pupils, parents, communities and staff. Global and national events have shaken the sector to change, including the tragic murder of George Floyd, the Black Lives Matters movement, the stories of sexual abuse and harassment from the Everyone's Invited campaign, and subsequent Ofsted review changes and changes to Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE).

By definition, all schools serve diverse communities – but, as we know, the diversity of every community, and by extension every school, will differ enormously from Trust to Trust and area to area. For some time now, the school sector as a whole has not always tackled ED&I in a strategic way. We see a lot of initiatives in reaction to events; some have impact, and all are well intended. We see fantastic grass roots organisations challenging the status quo and building momentum for change. However, we see few Trust Boards and top teams take responsibility for ED&I and truly integrate it into all they do.

Trust Inclusion have worked with a range of Trusts, some more diverse than others, to support top leadership teams to do just this. We are passionate about helping the sector to take a meaningful approach to ED&I that will transform our schools and have long lasting impact. We believe this starts with Inclusive Leadership from the very top. Building inclusive leadership has never been more important in our sector than right now, given the size and scale of the challenges we face and the need to take all our workforce and other stakeholders with us on the journey.

Having worked closely with the sector for many years, and with our overall ED&I and HR experience, we wanted to share our insights with Chairs, CEOs, HR Directors and other Trust and school leaders as to how to begin on this journey. We are incredibly grateful to [The Confederation of School Trusts](#) and to [Browne Jacobson](#) for supporting this work.

We are delighted to be able to share a range of case studies from different Trusts. We are grateful to them for being prepared to share their stories. All these organisations acknowledge that this is still very much work in progress and there is still a great deal more for them to do. All have made a deep and long-term commitment and have led this agenda from the very top, viewing it as central to their educational goals for children and young people. We acknowledge that the Trusts are all led by white men. Whilst there is no published data on leadership of Trusts, we know from individual surveys that there is significant work to do to increase gender and minority ethnic diversity in CEO roles. However, it is positive to see white men in positions of power and authority leading this agenda. In all these Trusts, the CEOs and other leaders are working hard to build an inclusive work environment and to increase the diversity of their teams.

This paper aims to give a steer to Boards and Executives on how to begin, or indeed continue, an impactful and sustainable ED&I journey and to share the lessons and learnings from some of those who are pioneering the way.

WHY DO EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION MATTER TO SCHOOL TRUSTS?

Distinguishing the terms

As we have said in the introduction, ED&I, or D&I, is not a singular concept or 'a thing'; they are three different concepts. The fact is, the more we understand the differences, the more progress we are likely to make towards achieving and maintaining the educational outcomes we desire. Distinguishing the terms will enable us to be more successful, in a sustainable way, in our efforts to become more inclusive communities and to increase and get value from the diversity of the wider community, our pupils and our staff.

Equal Opportunity

For institutions, Equal Opportunity is a concept underpinned by legislation and organisational codes of practice. It requires organisations to provide relevant and appropriate access for the participation, development, and advancement of all individuals and groups, and to take action to protect them from unlawful discrimination; and to ensure that individuals in their organisation conduct themselves in particular ways when interacting with others to avoid making themselves liable to disciplinary processes.

For the individual, Equal Opportunity means not being discriminated against; experiencing access to, and real choice to participate in, or contribute to, all relevant processes and activities of the team or organisation; and receiving appropriate treatment in relation to their ability and circumstances. We would want to stress that the fact that organisations may fully adhere to the law and their codes of practice does not, of itself, necessarily result in all their people experiencing equal opportunity as defined above, and certainly does not guarantee they will feel included!

For ease of reference, Equal Opportunity means treating everybody equally well. Treating people equally well is NOT treating everybody the same, and it's NOT treating others how you would want to be treated, BUT it is treating every individual how they need to be treated.

Diversity

Diversity is simply difference. It seems many organisations expand the definition, but in our view, this only serves to complicate matters. It is a simple truth that all human beings are different from each other in very many ways; no two of us are the same. Our differences include, but are in no way limited to, our interests, physical abilities and qualities and appearance, ethnicity, life and work experience, the way we think, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, personality and the myriad experiences that have touched our lives and affected our perspectives or influenced our world view. Diversity is difference and goes way, way beyond the nine protected characteristics identified in UK 2010 Equality Act [only some sections apply to Northern Ireland].

Inclusion

Inclusion is an emotion; it's not just about being present in the room or being a member of the group, or even a team. Inclusion is affected when people feel respected, valued, safe, trusted and have a sense of belonging. And it's that emotion – inclusion, which enables people to be their best selves, do their best work, and add value to the team or group.

So, diversity is **difference**, anti-discrimination legislation protects our right to **be** different, but it's a culture of inclusion that enables our difference to **make** a difference. We believe that a key leadership function therefore is to create and maintain inclusive communities.

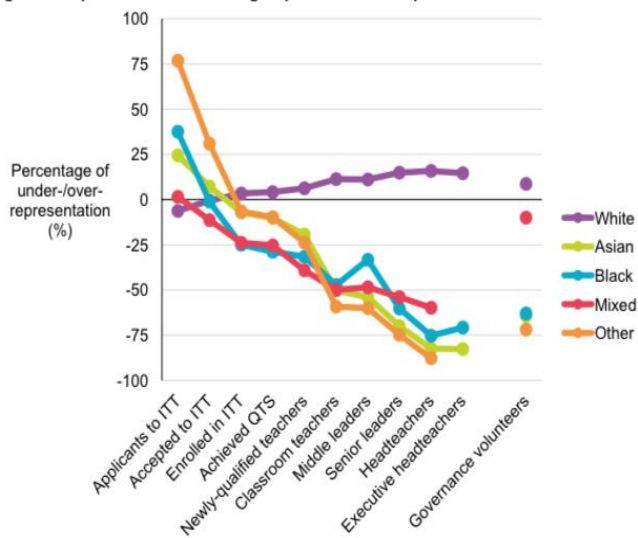
Having equal opportunity means **we get invited** to the party. When we attend, **we add more diversity** to the party. **Inclusion is feeling free and comfortable** to dance at the party, to invite someone else to dance, or indeed, not to dance at all: that is inclusion.

WHY DO EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION MATTER TO SCHOOL TRUSTS?

Attracting talent and role models

In 2022, the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) published a report¹ that explores racial equality in the English teaching workforce. The report findings paint a clear picture of minority ethnic underrepresentation at virtually every staff level, most notably at senior leadership and headship levels. Importantly, the report also found significant disparity at initial teacher training (ITT) stage where minority ethnic groups are overrepresented at application stage but quickly become underrepresented at enrolment stage, as shown in the diagram below.

Figure 1: Representation of ethnic groups in the teacher profession in 2020/21



What we take from this report and the data is that the diversity in our sector will not change significantly over time without intervention and collective effort. We live in a diverse world, and increasingly so. We find diversity in our pupil and staff body, and the school community as a whole. As we face mounting teacher and leadership shortages², schools must attract talent from all sections of society and retain the talent that we've already got. This will require new and bold measures and we argue that diversity and inclusion sits at the heart of this. In an interview with 20 out of the 25 black female professors in the UK, they said "low levels of diversity and representation have serious implications for BAME students' sense of belonging, and their perceptions of the possibility of pursuing a career in academia"³.

Recent Initial Teaching Training data emphasises just how crucial it is for us to tackle this issue as we need talent in our sector. There has been a 20% drop in placement numbers in 2022 compared to 2021, with some subjects such as Physics missing target by 80%. The drop is acute for Secondary subjects, but even Primary fell short of target. Commentators have called this 'catastrophic' for teacher supply.

The NFER research focused on minority ethnic talent, which is a significant issue for many Trusts. There is evidence elsewhere that we have challenges in other areas of diversity too. Despite an overwhelmingly female workforce, it is still the case that Secondary Headship roles and Trust leadership CEO roles are dominated by men. We also know that women in their 30s are leaving the teaching profession in significant numbers due to a lack of flexible working, and this is a barrier to returning to teaching. In a recent survey, less than half of LGBTQ+ staff in school are out and a third said their colleagues are a barrier to them feeling included. We still have gender stereotypes in roles, with few men in early years or teaching assistant roles.

To avoid missing opportunities to attract talent into education and provide progression opportunities, it is therefore in our collective interest to ask questions about barriers to entry and progression by minority ethnic and other groups and how we can remove these. A key barrier to consider is that as human beings we tend to naturally gravitate towards sameness – homophily, the love of same – and how this can affect who, and how, we attract and recruit and who we progress.

¹ [Racial Equality in the Teaching Workforce, 2022, NFER](#)

² [Nottingham and Oxford academics Toby Greany, Pat Thomson and Nick Martindale surveyed about 1,500 members of the National Association of Head Teacher \(NAHT\) and the Association of School and College Leaders \(ASCL\)](#)

³ [BAME Students Attainment at University, 2019](#)

WHY DO EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION MATTER TO SCHOOL TRUSTS?

Organisational performance

There is mounting evidence to suggest that diversity is good for organisational performance. If we look to evidence in the business sector, we find that companies that are diverse, and in particular those that have ethnically and gender diverse executive teams, are more likely to significantly outperform their industry peers on profitability. Over time the likelihood of this has only increased ⁴. This evidence, which has been collected by McKinsey&Co on three different occasions over the past decade, should act as a catalyst for change.

We believe there's transferable value for the education sector to consider this evidence when setting out the performance case for why ED&I matters alongside the moral and social justice case.

However, setting out the case for greater diversity is only part of the picture for building a high performing organisation. For our organisations to reap the benefits of diversity, we also need to take action to create a strong culture of inclusion in relation to the staff, pupils and the communities we serve.

Evidence from a previous study into experiences of LGBTQ+ employees shows us that organisations that foster a working environment which values people's differences and actively support their staff to be themselves and support individual needs leads to greater job commitment, increased job satisfaction, improved workplace relationships and improved health outcomes ⁵.

Both in and out of education, we see a difference in the way in which staff experience the workplace depending on their different characteristics and their seniority. Research conducted by Edurio in 2021 of more than 16,000 school staff found that minority ethnic staff are less confident than their majority ethnic counterparts about staff in their school being treated equally in the workplace. The research showed that this is also the case for women compared to men and those with no leadership position compared with those in a leadership position. Staff who reported having a disability had the lowest score of all.

Just because we have different aspects of diversity in the workforce does not mean we necessarily have inclusion. We worked with an organisation in which men and women were well represented at every level and on the face of it, they did not feel gender was an issue. Our Truth Sayers Inclusion and Diversity survey tool, however, found significant differences as to how the women felt compared to their male counterparts. They did not feel as respected, valued, trusted and safe, nor the same sense of belonging – and thus gender inclusion was a significant issue. It is important to remember that we will not get the positive value from diversity without an inclusive culture.

Feeling trusted by your manager is fundamental to a culture of inclusion. It is therefore of significant concern that in the Teacher Well Being Index 2022, less than half of staff reported feeling fully trusted by their manager. 93% of those who felt they were not trusted reported that this has a negative impact on their well-being.

As this report sets out, creating a culture of inclusion and a more diverse workforce can offer significant benefits to schools and multi academy trusts. It will require careful thought, purpose and action in order to get there.

We are not alone – these are questions all sectors are asking themselves and, as educationalists, we certainly don't want to be left behind and lose out on the benefits that diversity can have if we cultivate the right conditions for it - that is, a culture of inclusion.

⁴ [Diversity Wins, 2020, McKinsey&Co](#)

⁵ Bagett, Durso, Kastins, Mallory, 2012, The Williams Institute.

OUR FOCUS ON INCLUSION

Inclusive Leadership is an intentional relationship of influence, the purpose of which is to cause people to consistently experience a sense of inclusion - feeling respected, valued, safe, trusted and having a sense of belonging.

The Inclusive Leader consciously manages inclusion. This is not to be confused with managing diversity. The term 'managing diversity' often conjures images of difficulties and problems that must be dealt with – yet another thing to do. Policies, courses, and programmes called Managing Diversity are sometimes perceived, and frequently subconsciously received by the participants, as addressing the 'problems' of, rather than the 'opportunities offered through' diversity.

Apart from the disadvantages suggested above, managing diversity is simply not possible. Diversity is like time - we have it whether we like it or not. We can use it well, or abuse it; make the most of it, or waste it; what we cannot do is 'manage' it. Let's continue to think about time. When we're seeking to use our time more productively, we work on *managing ourselves* better. When our focus is diversity and our intention is to increase the benefits we derive from diversity, our task is to *manage inclusion*.

Talking about managing diversity is not just an inaccurate statement of intent, for the reasons stated above; it will likely slow Trusts down in their endeavour to get more value from the diversity of their people.

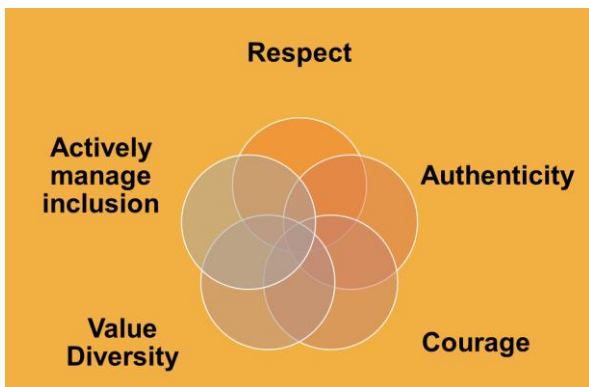


WHAT TRUSTS CAN DO TO BECOME MORE INCLUSIVE AND MORE DIVERSE

Trusts that want to maximise the quality, and sustainability of their work need to take action to engage fully the commitment, abilities, energy and diversity of perceptions, beliefs and approaches of all their people all of the time. To achieve this, Trusts need to better understand the critical importance of managing inclusion, and then invest in developing the skills of all their leaders at every level, to be competent managers of inclusion.

In our work, we have identified five qualities of inclusive leaders and actively work with leaders to consciously develop these.

Five Qualities of Inclusive Leaders



Inclusive Leaders:

- Actively seek ways for the team to benefit from the differences each member brings
- Listen to understand! Check that what they've said, and/or asked someone to do has been understood
- Consistently invite, and expect feedback from everyone in the team; and in response, demonstrate behavioural change, or communicate their reasons for not changing
- Praise colleagues publicly and critique performance or behaviour in private. They 'think slow' to check themselves for any criticism that they know is not intended to be constructive, and if it is, they don't give it
- Coach, support and encourage their direct reports to do all the above and, recognise and reward them for it

- Consistently ask themselves whether all their people are treating each other equally well, fully understanding that this does not mean treating them the same

They also:

- Know their people - they find out about the knowledge, skills and interests of their team and they encourage them to share them with others
- Show their people – they consistently model inclusive behaviours and practice being the change they want to see
- Challenge their people – they call out biased, stereotypical, or prejudiced language or actions every time they observe it and make sure their people understand that excluding behaviours are 'off limits'
- Support their people – they regularly ask their people what they want them, as a leader, to do differently, to help them be their best selves

We support leaders with simple and practical feedback from staff as to what to focus on to foster a sense of inclusion:

Casual Factors of Inclusion



WHAT TRUSTS CAN DO TO BECOME MORE INCLUSIVE AND MORE DIVERSE

According to [McKinsey research](#), such a capability building programme must directly engage 25% of the workforce in order to create a new cultural norm; it takes effort, investment, time and, importantly, courage to sustain commitment for the long haul. Where ED&I agendas are concerned, many organisations lack the conviction and buy-in this requires.

In our work, we became aware of a commercial organisation doing deep work to embed an inclusive culture, delivering workshops over a six-week period to equip participants to change their behaviours from habits that damage relationships and create exclusion, to habits that strengthen relationships and create inclusion.

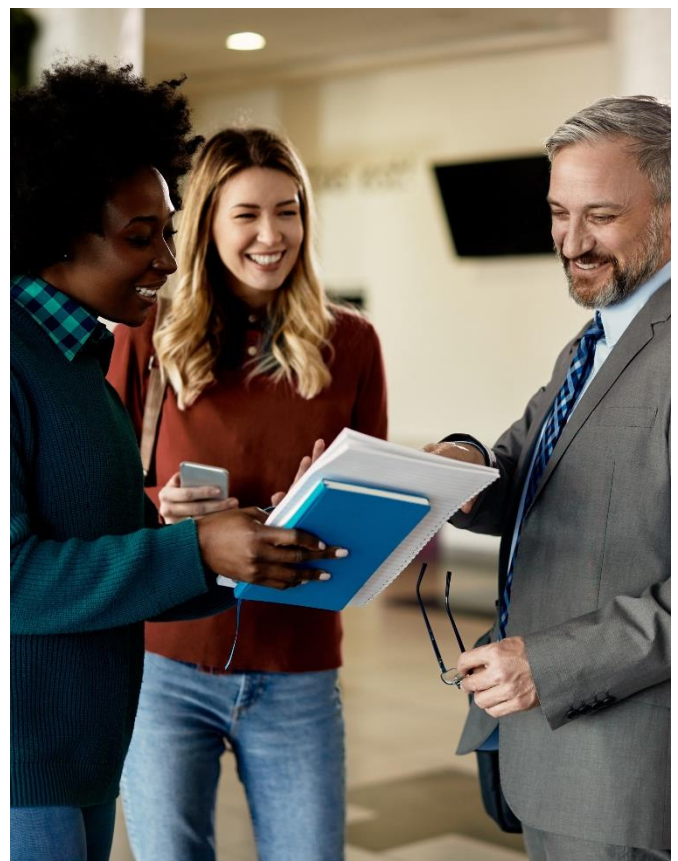
The programme was initially rolled out to the Executive Leadership and Management teams, and on the strength of their positive feedback, rolled out to all middle managers. Recognising the difference this kind of equipping could make, the programme was made mandatory for all senior managers.

There are early signs of culture change as a result. There are reports of more inclusive responses to old problems and better conversations leading to more creative problem solving and the following are examples of personal “response-ability” commitments made:

- *I will take more time to talk to my colleagues and try not to avoid conversations that make me feel uncomfortable*
- *Will put people first, respect differences, ask questions and listen rather than seek to dominate conversations*
- *Commit to more regular 1-1 catch ups informally*
- *Think about the different [personality types] and how to use these to engage and be more inclusive*
- *Be more open and authentic, speak up more and work on challenging my own assumptions*
- *Show my own vulnerabilities more*
- *Not give up on discovering how people operate because I wouldn't want someone to give up on me*
- *Making sure I understand the core issues that made someone react, not just the white noise*

- *Remind myself to hold my opinions lightly*
- *Importance of intentionality in building connection*

This approach is helping embed a culture of diversity and inclusion across the organisation, by breathing new life into the quality of relationships (inter-team and throughout the organisation) and in people's domestic support networks – thus also yielding improved wellbeing and mental health benefits.



WHAT TRUSTS CAN DO TO BECOME MORE INCLUSIVE AND MORE DIVERSE

Facilitating Diversity:

Trusts that build an inclusive culture will reap the positive benefits of a diverse workforce. It is vital that work starts with inclusive leadership. Trusts can then be more proactive at recruiting, developing and promoting a more diverse workforce. Trusts are encouraged to be realistic in their diversity ambitions and reflect their local context.

Data and management information

'What gets measured gets done'⁶ – we believe this should lead any ED&I initiative. A lot of organisations and business outside of education top and tail their ED&I strategies with measuring success and ask themselves 'what difference do we want to see as a consequence of our ED&I activity?'. To propel and maintain momentum to increase diversity and become inclusive, it is important to have a vision to aspire to and an accountability framework to support its delivery and help ensure it's realised.

Many Trusts lack clear and meaningful data on the make-up of their workforce, and this is an important area to address. Understanding your current profile as a baseline and the ability to measure impact over time will help you assess if your work is delivering. Good HR technology is vital here, as are clear and consistent communications so that your staff are confident in providing their personal data to you.

Data should be collected from those applying for jobs to those leaving the Trust and across a range of areas, including the profile of those appointed to jobs, who is accessing training, internal promotions, and the workforce make up at different career stages, etc.

Trusts should communicate explicitly and clearly why they want this data and how it will be used. In our experience, many organisations struggle with data returns – so the more you can demonstrate that this is about positive intent and real action, the better.

Measuring *inclusion* needs to be high on the list of priorities, and we're aware that this has not always been easy or straight forward. In fact, we have experience of many organisations collecting data regarding the diversity of their staff and using that, often unwittingly, as a measure of inclusion.

How diverse your organisation is tells you little or nothing about how inclusive it is. Achieving your diversity goals, if you've set any, in terms of the proportion of female, minority ethnic, disabled, or LGBTQ+ staff on the Board, or in senior or middle leadership roles, tells you nothing about whether anyone feels included.

To measure inclusion and commitments to diversity, we use our inclusion and diversity affirmations, based on 29 years of action research, and utilise the Truthsayers® Implicit Reaction Time (IRT) method, developed by neuroscientists, psychologists and business leaders on the global Neurotech® platform. The Truthsayers tools bypasses conscious bias and, when combined with our inclusion and diversity affirmations, quantitatively measures whether people feel included and their attitudes towards diversity. It combines how people feel with what they think. In the Dixon's case study, you can see an example of how a Trust is using this.

Staff networks

Staff networks can be a powerful way to engage staff in an inclusive culture and ensure there is a voice for the workforce. You can see examples in the Trust case studies. It is important to think through carefully at the outset the purpose of any networks and their terms of reference. This will then shape who should be involved and provide clarity on the role.

In some organisations, staff networks work directly with the CEO, HRD and top teams to input into ED&I strategy. In others they are a grassroots body, providing support to their members. Other organisations bring together leaders from diverse backgrounds to help drive the agenda.

All these approaches and a mix of them can work. The important thing is to be clear at the outset and to regularly review the terms of reference to avoid confusion and disillusionment.

There are also many grass roots bodies in the sector including #WomenEd, #BAMEEd, #LGBTED, #DisabilityEd and @MenTeachPrimary and @mityuk (Men in early years) to name a few that a Trust can connect with, encourage staff to get involved in and seek support from.

⁶ [Society of Claims Professionals, April 2021](#)

WHAT TRUSTS CAN DO TO BECOME MORE INCLUSIVE AND MORE DIVERSE

Recruitment practice

Many Trusts find they struggle to attract a very diverse range of applicants from which to recruit with challenges such as getting minority ethnic candidates into senior roles, women into Secondary leadership or men into early years, Primary and Teaching Assistant vacancies. Few schools employ staff with visible disabilities.

To propose to someone to join a Trust, it's in your interest to outline clearly what a prospective employee should expect of you, with all their differing backgrounds, perceptions, individual needs and motivations. Why should someone consider working for you? When looking for talent out there, we see a need for a change in approach where we move away from *cultural fit to values fit and cultural add*.

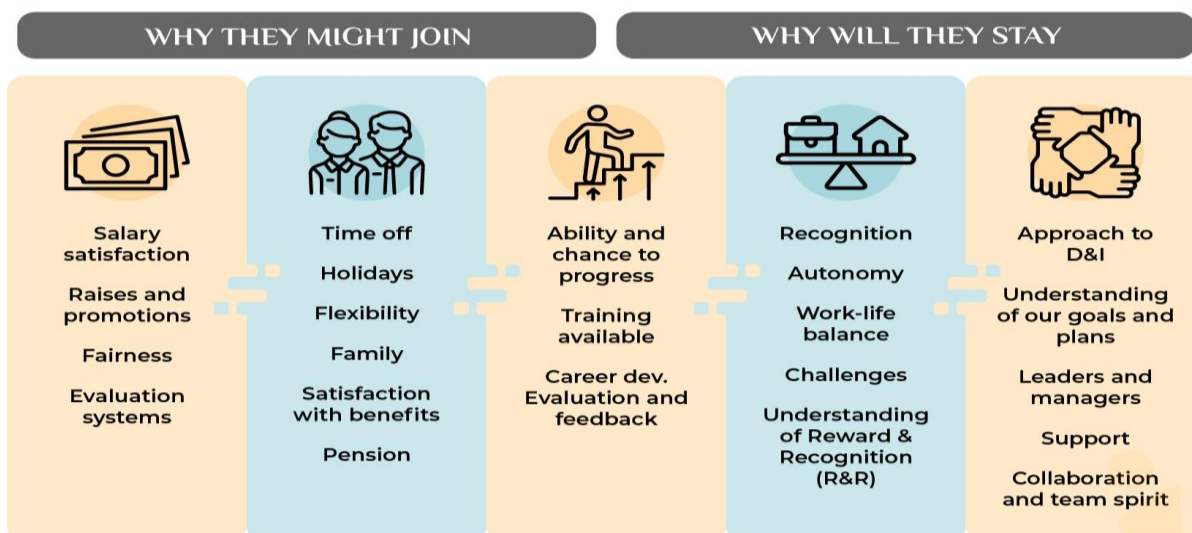
We recommend that you start by seeing the communities your schools serve as the diversity you are seeking to reflect in your staff, and be proactive in building links with them so that they can become a more powerful source of information about the intentions of the school or Trust and have means of advising you about where to go and who to speak to access relevant networks.

Looking at your reach to people from backgrounds that may be very different from you, how you

position roles and the language and images you use in all your everyday materials, as well as in advertising, will be vital. Potential candidates will notice any dissonance between what your adverts say, and what your website doesn't say! It is well researched, for example, that women can be put off from applying for Headteacher roles by the language in the advert. Minority ethnic candidates may not apply if they see no indication that their ethnicity is going to be valued.

Take a good look at how you advertise your roles, as well as where and who can help you amplify your commitments to diversity. Trusts and schools that have been very visible and upfront about their commitment in their recruitment process do find this attracts greater diversity. As you start attracting more diverse groups of candidates, you can look at your selection processes to ensure they are fair and transparent. This includes training panels, ensuring selection panels have diverse membership and monitoring applications and appointments.

A further step to consider is offering feedback and support to candidates from minority backgrounds. For those running ITT programmes, this could be vital to addressing the current drop off rate we see from minority ethnic candidates applying to securing placements. Following up these candidates with feedback support could have an impact on future applications.



WHAT TRUSTS CAN DO TO BECOME MORE INCLUSIVE AND MORE DIVERSE

Talent management

For many Trusts the senior leadership profile does not reflect the whole workforce or pupil populations that they serve. Most Trusts have sizable gender pay gaps, driven by a combination of fewer women in senior leadership than men and more women in lower paid part time roles. People of minority ethnic origin are not reflected in leadership, in Governance and in ITT appointments; this is a major challenge for the sector.

Trusts need to be monitoring and tracking who in their organisation has access to training, development and promotions, from applications to train to teach and through to senior appointments.

Coaching and mentoring can be a powerful tool to encourage and bring on talent. This can be open to all employees alongside a specific targeted focus on under-represented groups, such as women and minority ethnic colleagues. Some Trusts and organisations have introduced 'reverse mentoring', whereby senior leaders are mentored by more junior colleagues from minority ethnic backgrounds.

It is important to look at who has access to the opportunities in schools and the Trust that can lead to promotion. For example, leading on teaching and learning is crucial for those wanting to get to senior leadership and the Trust will want to track if staff from under-represented groups are getting access to that opportunity. Good quality, honest and constructive feedback is vital, and Trusts should ensure they have strong appraisal and supervision processes that support two-way feedback and development. Leaders need to be skilled at this, including how to handle difficult conversations.

Some Trusts offer specific development for leaders such as women in leadership programmes. #BAMEEd have recently launched a programme for minority ethnic leaders to secure placements in traditionally less ethnically diverse parts of the country.

Flexible working

Flexible working is no longer about part time working for women returning from maternity leave. Recent research demonstrates that it is THE key demand from younger workers entering the labour market, even above salary. It also supports those with caring responsibilities, people with disabilities and demonstrates that cultural diversity is valued. Full time staff can want flexibility as much as part timers, which might include some working from home, late starts/early finishes and occasional time off.

For obvious reasons, schools have found this challenging – but many Trusts and schools are pioneering the way and creating flexible working opportunities at all career stages. We highly recommend the work of the Timewise Pioneer Programme in this area, which captures learning from 3 Academy Trusts with specific recommendations and guidance.

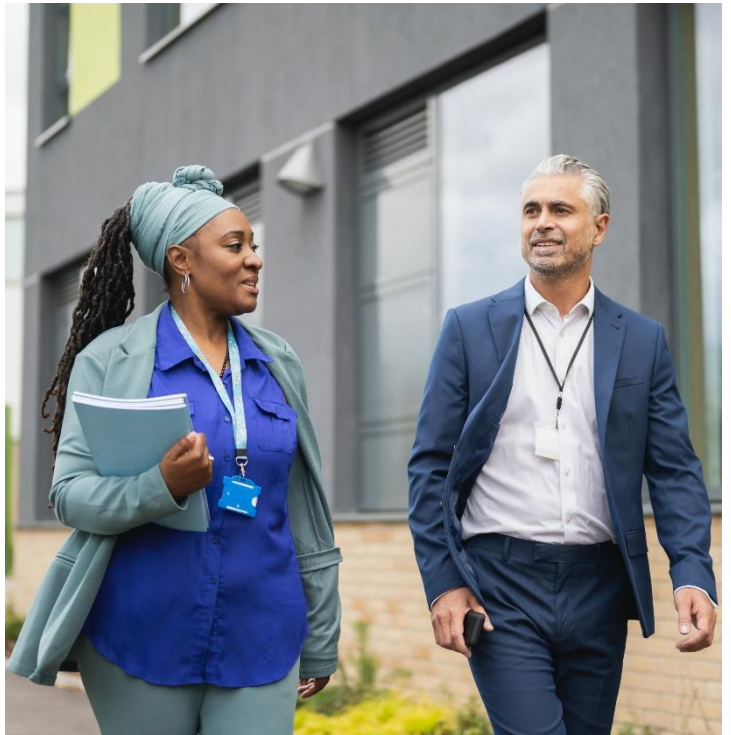
Campaigns

Many Trusts hold specific campaigns, targeted at certain groups in their workforce. A good current example of this is menopause campaigns and support which, for most Trusts, will be a significant issue given the predominately female workforce. Supporting occasions such as Pride and LGBTQ+ staff is another example. Such campaigns can be powerful, but only if they are rooted in an inclusive culture that consistently demonstrates that it values diversity. Inclusive leaders will actively seek to support the different needs of their teams and engage in the campaigns in their organisation.

WHAT TRUSTS CAN DO TO BECOME MORE INCLUSIVE AND MORE DIVERSE

Positive Action

Workforce data, as part of a wider approach to impact assessment will also create an evidence base for any Positive Action that a Trust may take regarding staff development, or in the recruitment process. Positive Action acknowledges underrepresentation of certain groups in the staff body vis a vis the population as a whole and takes targeted action to try and recruit or promote talent from these groups. It's important that we acknowledge that Positive Action initiatives work best in a culture of inclusion. If everyone in the team, school, or Trust feels respected, trusted, valued and safe and experiences the Trust's commitment to inclusion being lived out, then Positive Action has a good chance of being effective. A Positive Action approach should include a statement to emphasise the importance of diversity. A well-crafted Positive Action statement can then be used in marketing materials and on the website to substantiate Trust's commitment to and action on Diversity and Inclusion. ⁷



⁷ [Diversity and positive action](#)

TRUSTS ON THE JOURNEY

CASE STUDIES

The Compass Partnership of schools



The Compass Partnership of schools is a group of 10 primary schools and one all through special school spanning two geographical regions. The values of ambition, optimism and resilience sit at the heart of our Trust. These are not just words, but central to all we do. Without a commitment to ED&I, our values mean nothing. This commitment is not just the 'right thing' to do, it is key to ensuring you gain the best from people. We want our children to become adults who change the world for the better and staff who not just are reflective of our community but have a voice and are committed to the organisation.

In 2018, we had begun our journey in reshaping our curriculum ensuring it was purposeful, sequential, and enabled children to know and remember more. We took this opportunity to consider representation and diversity, ensuring our curriculum design and text choice was rich and representative. By the time the 'Black Lives Matter movement' gathered greater prominence in 2020, we had already begun our curriculum journey. Consideration for us was in developing shared understanding and commitment to ED&I.

We took the decision to begin this work with our leaders to enable them to effectively drive change in their schools. Navigating the wealth of CPD opportunities available was a challenge. To ensure deep understanding that led to considered change, we wanted leaders to have the opportunity not only deepen knowledge, but also explore their own realities, experiences and perceptions. Trust Inclusion were able to offer us a bespoke package that enabled learning, reflection, coaching and support for practical action planning.

The light bulb moment for us was the realisation that the key to inclusion was belonging: not just who was in the room, but rather how they felt within our organisation. Having initially prioritised the work with our leaders, we felt confident we had a shared understanding and commitment to change.

The development of our three-year trust plan followed, recreating a format that ensured the agreed trust commitments sat at the heart and were driven through the priorities our schools identified. As part of this plan, we developed an overarching Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) strategy, this set out our commitments and not only identified future aims, but also collated what was currently in place that sat within the framework. This provided all staff with the opportunity to see EDIB as being central to all we do. We took the theme of 'Belonging' for our annual staff conference, using this Platform to launch the staff well-being strategy demonstrating our commitment.

The pandemic posed many challenges. With staffing a continual issue across our schools, finding the opportunity for leaders to leave the daily dilemmas they faced and give ED&I the focus it required was not easy. Forward planning, and committing the resources required assisted the process, but ultimately it was the shared commitment that made the biggest difference.

Measuring the impact of this work is not a simple science. Indicators of success we are exploring are recruitment and retention, improved use of data, feedback from all stakeholders.

Even at this early stage we see progress. At a time when London schools face intense difficulty with recruitment and retention, we have seen minimal staff movement. Our equalities action plans offer more thought and purpose. Alongside this, recent OFSTED inspections of four of our schools highlighted PHSE as a strength, in particular children's abilities to discuss issues related to inclusion, equality and diversity.

As a growing trust, our next steps are to develop an induction programme ensuring EBID understanding and commitment of new schools. Alongside this we are exploring strategies to diversify staffing, in particular our leadership teams.

For anyone starting this journey, be clear about what you want to achieve, evaluate what you do well already and build on it. Consider carefully how you achieve commitment and choose the right people to support you on your journey.



At Dixons, our mission is to challenge educational and social disadvantage in the North. We do this by establishing high-performing, non-faith academies which maximise attainment, value diversity, develop character, and build cultural capital.

In 2020, our anti-racism action plan was developed. A key driver for this was the growing body of research confirming the importance of effective role models in improving student outcomes (e.g., Gershenson et al., 2021). Considering this context, tackling racism and historic under-representation of staff from diverse backgrounds, especially at senior levels in our schools, has been a top priority. We also created an anti-racism cross cutting team (CCT) as part of our strategy, recognising that it was important to listen to the reality and narrative of those who have experienced racism.

More recently, in addition to the work on anti-racism, there has been significant progress in creating a wider understanding across the organisation of our broader Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) agenda:

- Our anti-racism CCT has led the way, with one of its members, Funmilola Stewart, recently invited to speak at the Confederation for Schools Trusts conference on her joint thought paper with our Executive Director: Development, Jenny Thompson, around de-colonisation of the school curriculum.
- The executive team, principals and central functional leads have participated in an ED&I Development Programme delivered by Trust Inclusion. This included:
 - a senior leaders' ED&I Awareness Workshop
 - mentoring sessions for our executive team
 - group coaching sessions for all principals and functional leads
- A 'Truthsayers Survey' was conducted with middle leaders and designed to gather both explicit and implicit affirmations in relation to ED&I. Unlike a traditional survey, it has a mechanism around implicit reaction time to judge if what a respondent explicitly states is what they believe. The findings have been used to inform our strategy.

All of our work is driven by data, as without a proper baseline we cannot measure our impact. Through a number of data collection exercises, we now have over 90% completion of diversity monitoring information which allows us to accurately track the impact of our strategy. For example, we can see that progress is being made around senior level representation with 33% of all SLT hires in 2022 from minority ethnic groups. This has steadily increased from 16% in 2020.

Whilst we are making progress, we recognise that there is still much for us to do, and we plan to be even more ambitious. We have developed an ED&I strategy which sets out the three pillars of activity that form a key element of our 2-5 year plan:

Make our Centre for Growth the go-to place for our academies and the sector-lead for rigorous implementation; crafting school culture; and equality, diversity and inclusion.

This plan will be delivered by a series of big moves (12-18 month work programmes) centred around our three pillars: culture, representation and curriculum. Each big move has a clear set of aims, actions and outcome measures which will enable us to deliver on our commitments in each of the three pillars we have set out.

Our Culture big move sets out the following aims:

- Staff, students and families know they will be appreciated as their authentic selves
- We understand the explicit and implicit ED&I experiences of our team
- There are nine protected characteristics, in our thinking; each will be treated with equity

Our Representation big move sets out the following aims:

- Staff, students and families recognise themselves in our trust: they belong
- The reality and narrative of lived racism informs our strategy
- ED&I is central to our new approach to professional growth

Our Curriculum big move sets out the following aims:

- Our commitment to ED&I permeates our curricula
- Our curricula will actively promote the protected characteristics
- The cross-cutting teams are central to this work

Our plan has the full backing of our board and executive team. We have recently appointed a trust AP: research and development for ED&I to work with our chief people officer and executive director: development to make our commitment a reality.

Oasis Community Learning



Oasis Community Learning's vision is to create "Exceptional Education at the Heart of the Community." We serve over 32,000 young people, 47% of whom are from disadvantaged backgrounds and 31% speak English as an additional language. We are committed to a model of inclusion, equality, healthy relationships, hope, and perseverance throughout all aspects of the life and culture of every Oasis Hub and academy community. We have a passion to include everyone and a deep desire to treat everyone equally - staff, students and community members alike. We accept others for who they are and respect differences.

Each of our academies, and the services behind them, are committed to creating exceptional entitlement that ensures that our students have real choice in their lives. We want to continually develop our staff and students' learning in a holistic manner. We work hard to improve students' attainment and the standards of teaching and learning continually on an academic level, and at the same time, aim to meet the needs of the whole person and the whole community. We are a people-centred organisation, every person matters, and we want to be truly representative of the communities that we serve. Equality is therefore in the heart of our academies and hubs nationwide.

Following the tragic killing of George Floyd, Oasis launched the Break the Cycle Movement with a one-day conference entitled 'Time for Change: How a Racist Education produces a Racist Culture.' This has been the first in a series of Break the Cycle events aimed at tackling racism in education. We have had an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) Steering Group for a number of years and the group regained momentum following the launch of Break the Cycle. This group meets every 3 weeks, includes the CEO, Directors, and a cross section of staff, and directs the ED&I strategy and workstreams across the organisation. In recent years, we have focussed on staff involvement within these networks, which have created opportunities to nationally influence and lead our ED&I strategy.

A central strategy has been the creation of staff networks, who are led by paid Network Advocate Leads. [The Break the Cycle Anti Racist Staff Network](#) has been a catalyst for excellent pockets of innovation, including staff working groups, curriculum audits, and racism responders. The group meets regularly and is open to everybody in Oasis to attend.

There has also been a notable impact on the curriculum with changes initiated and driven by another role we have created; that of [Anti-Racist Curriculum Advocate](#). Further work has also been undertaken to review the content of training to be culturally sensitive and racially literate. Trust-wide racist incident categories have been created which provide consistent data and allow us to analyse trends across the Trust. This network has led training for all staff in Trust INSET Days and Leadership Conferences.

Whole staff training has also been led by the [LGBTQ+ Allies Staff Network](#). The network, which again meets regularly is creating, growing and connecting academy Pride groups, driving changes in the implementation of the LGBTQ+ curriculum and encouraging engagement with Pride month celebrations. The network has created a range of resources, notably 'Our OCL LGBTQ+ community' booklet to support each academy. The creation of Trust-wide homophobic classification categories has also provided a way to accurately record and challenge the occurrence of such behaviour. We are also pleased to report that we are currently advertising internally for a Gender Staff Network Advocate who will lead on policy and strategy. It is our intention as an organisation that all protected characteristics will be well-represented through our staff network groups.

In order to hear from all staff, we commissioned a Trust-wide ED&I survey that allows for benchmarking across the education sector. This survey is part of creating a listening organisation together, one that has integrity and a truly inclusive culture. The collective results which we have shared with staff and the unions provide us with a credible base line of where we are currently and suggest specific areas in our commitment to the principles of ED&I. The data from the survey provides us with the opportunity now to have an evidence-based approach to strategy and we are focussed on a number of key areas: Policy, Training, Resources, Representation, and Diversity amongst our teams and leaders.

Training for senior leaders, and then the whole staff team, has been vital in moving this work forward. We know that inclusion is about creating a robust policy and process to support colleagues in the workplace, but at the same time, it is also about feeling and belief and staff identified their part of our organisation. Creating capacity through dedicated time and resource has been important and the culture is shifting as a result of the focus on this work at a Trust-wide level. At the same time, individuals make a huge difference in every interaction every day and enabling passionate people to bring energy for change is vital. There is much to change and we are keen to work with others across the sector so that we can help each other be that change.

WHAT TRUSTS CAN DO TO BECOME MORE INCLUSIVE AND MORE DIVERSE

School leaders

Headteachers and Principals play a vital role in promoting ED&I. They can demonstrate visible leadership by personally working to be inclusive leaders and ensuring all leaders in the school are supported with development in this area. School leaders can contextualise the Trust vision into their local communities, ensuring action focuses on the needs of their pupils, parents and communities. They can actively champion change showing consistent and visible commitment and holding themselves and their team to account for delivery.

Chief Executives and Executive Teams

CEOs and top teams can make a difference by viewing this work as about the whole Trust culture and ensuring it is visibly led from the top. This includes developing all leaders to be Inclusive Leaders and ensuring that all senior leaders are clear as to expectations of them. By focusing on creating inclusive work environments, CEOs can build the culture that enables diversity to be attracted and flourish. This is everyone's responsibility, not just that of the HR team, and CEOs can ensure that inclusivity goes across people management, curriculum, community, parental engagement and work with suppliers. CEOs can actively champion change showing consistent and visible commitment, holding themselves and their team to account for delivery.

HR Directors

ED&I is not the exclusive preserve of the HR team, but they do have an important role to play. HR Directors can make an impact by resisting the temptation to jump to diversity initiatives and first ensuring that top teams are engaged and are actively working on building an inclusive culture and becoming Inclusive Leaders. HR Directors can lead changes to employment practice that drive greater inclusivity and diversity at all levels including in areas such as recruitment, talent management, staff networks and flexible working. HR Directors can act as a proactive champion of ED&I and ensure the Board and CEO have the data they need to assess impact.

Trust Boards

Chairs and Boards can champion ED&I and ensure these are integrated into the values of the Trust. Boards can ensure they are well educated and informed in this area and are proactive in their development as inclusive leaders. Boards are the protectors of the values and can challenge assumptions as to what makes great leaders and teachers and where the Trust finds talent. Boards can actively challenge and support the CEO and Executive, encouraging their development as Inclusive Leaders and active promoters of diversity. Boards can ensure that ED&I are integrated in to all the work of the Board across teaching and learning, people management and resource allocation. Boards can seek data and feedback from all stakeholders to hold the Executive to account and ensure they understand how the Trust is delivering on its ED&I commitments. Chairs and Boards can ensure they model inclusive working practices in how they operate and promote diversity in representation. A priority function for the Board Chair must be to ensure all Board Members feel respected, trusted, valued and safe. If this is achieved and maintained, the Board, and by extension the Trust, will benefit greatly from each and every member as they allow their differences to make a difference.