

INCLUSION EQUALITY DIVERSITY:

INCLUSIVE RECRUITMENT BRIEF

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This document is the second in a series of IED briefs developed by Third Sector Leeds. It is intended as a guide for third sector organisations and strategic partners seeking to implement more inclusive employment practices. The focus of this brief is inclusive recruitment. You can read out previous brief on '*Microaggressions in the Workplace*'.

“Any recruiter who claims there is a shortage of suitable Culturally Diverse candidates is not looking hard enough” (Tevin Toban)

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Why do we need this guide?

The last 2 years has been an extraordinary in many ways. The Covid-19 pandemic has raised awareness of the widening inequalities faced by communities and the need for the third sector to continue to increase the diversity of its workforce.

At Third Sector Leeds, one of the ways we're seeking to enable third sector organisations to improve their workforce diversity is by capturing and collating some of the key learning from the private, public and third sectors that can help organisations to become more inclusive.

Any aspect of the hiring process is susceptible to bias. We know from conversations with our members and partners, that organisations want to be better at diverse recruitment but aren't always sure where to start. This guide aims to offer some starting points on how to approach recruitment and create a culturally competent culture and safe space for unrepresented communities.

Why investing in more inclusive recruitment makes sense

Sundar Pichia (CEO Google) states "a diverse mix of voices leads to better discussions and outcomes for all".

A representative workforce, senior management, and board team, shows to the local community that you are an inclusive organisation, and contributes to reducing barriers to accessing communities. Having a diverse workforce may assist with community engagement and promote a more cohesive way of working. A diverse workforce brings different cultures, backgrounds, and lived experiences, which will assist in enhancing an organisations' performance, staff retention, practice, and policies, to benefit all employees and users. It also informs and supports an organisation to meet the needs of users, be high performing and deliver good quality, culturally sensitive and appropriate services.

Recruitment is just the start

This brief is intended to offer starting points that could enable your organisation to take a more inclusive and diversity positive recruitment approach. However, it's important to recognise that applying these actions must be part of a wider approach to being an inclusive organisation. It's important that potential, new (and existing) staff feel that they are in an organisation that truly values a range of views, experiences, and perspectives, and that puts systems in place to ensure inclusion and equity. Get your approach right, and you'll create a virtuous circle where your reputation for being an inclusive employer grows and a wider group of people will want to work for you which will contribute to continuous improvement in service delivery.

Inclusive Job Descriptions

1) Tailor both your vocabulary and format to attract people from underrepresented groups to apply, and reflect this in your messages, marketing, and communications. This is especially true when advertising to fill vacancies. If you are not sure of the best language to use, then ask several people from underrepresented groups to read your message and give their feedback:

- put positive statements in your job information about the value you place on diversity
- avoid jargon
- use plain language
- avoid abbreviations
- remove potential barriers (e.g., asking for people to have cars or qualifications that aren't necessary for the role)

2) Avoid lengthy job descriptions that stray from the core fundamentals of the role you are recruiting to.

3) Focus in on what the job requires, avoid asking for things that are not necessary to be successful. Be conscious of the fact that every requirement line in your job description might be another line of exclusion. If you ask for skills, experiences, degrees, and levels of seniority that aren't necessary for success, you'll be reducing your candidate pool and missing out on talented people that would excel in the position you need to fill, especially from underrepresented groups. A suggestion would be to focus on performance objectives and what a person needs to be able to do and achieve.

4) Recognise, celebrate, and welcome the value of culture, diversity, and Lived Experience. In recruiting people from underrepresented groups and/or with lived experience, they can inform on how to continuously improve on inclusion, equality, and diversity, including how to attract potential staff as well as act as role models for others and the organisation. Make inclusion, equality & diversity one of your organisation's central values, clearly articulating how you live your values and how lived experience adds value to otherwise equal candidates.

5) Tell potential applicants how you are going to help them succeed as they develop through their first 6 – 12 months and communicate how your organisation plans to achieve this.

6) Think about developing staff case studies that demonstrate your organisation's values and commitments.

7) Ensure your application process is inclusive of disabled people. The law says that an organisation cannot ask a person to disclose a disability during the application process (except in limited circumstances). An organisation may ask whether a candidate is able to take full part in the recruitment process but you should do this in the least intrusive way possible, and ensure that you follow through with any reasonable

adjustments to the process. You should ensure that you make positive statements about, and have an organisational commitment to, delivering reasonable adjustments. (Page 6 of this document offers helpful guidance on Disability disclosure). You should be openly committed to enabling Access to Work arrangements.

8) Promoting flexible working opportunities, work from home or flexible hours could also reduce barriers to attracting underrepresented groups (according to LinkedIn's gender insights report, flexible working is 10% more important to women). For example, neurodiverse employees might be able to avoid busy commutes and noisy office environments that can be overwhelming at times and flexible working could help parents with childcare arrangements.

9) Promote awareness of religious festivals and show consideration to requests for leave by employees that wish to observe religious holidays. Also share your organisations commitment to adjusting tailored to individual needs; for example, adjusting for employees that are fasting, providing a private and quiet space for prayers.

10) A transparent salary and benefits structure, and a commitment to understanding and sharing data about pay gaps sends an important signal to potential employees that you are committed to fair pay.

11) State values of inclusivity on the organisation website or mission statement and gain accreditations such as Mindful employer or Disability Confident employer scheme. Additionally, partner with employee networks and organisations.

Knowing communities

Engage local community groups and link with community leaders in the areas where your work force is underrepresented. Make links with organisations who support diverse communities.

If your organisation works in an area that is relatively mono-cultural, take positive action to widen your job search into areas that are more diverse.

Advertise roles in community languages and through alternative media and community venues that are most likely to attract culturally diverse applicants - talk to culturally diverse staff or local community groups to identify relevant sources. You may consider;

- local news media aimed at specific communities
- community radio
- temples/mosques/churches

Invest time in collecting data to understand gaps in your workforce and the areas where communities are underrepresented in your workforce. Ask staff from these communities how you can engage potential employees. You might discuss options for:

- mentoring
- volunteering
- trainee/ development roles

Effective design and placement of adverts

1) Consider having your advert available in different languages and be clear about the level of fluency required to perform the role effectively.

2) Positioning adverts on the right job boards, forums and platforms increases chances of reaching suitable candidates of all backgrounds.

However, many businesses find a vacancy board and stick to it, despite receiving the same candidates from the same backgrounds, time and time again.

- Approach Culturally diverse organisations and other equality, and diversity networks, e.g., 'Inclusive Employer', 'Stonewall', and recruitment organisations specialising in the recruitment of Culturally diverse candidates (e.g., *Black young professionals' network*, *LGBT jobs*, *PATH*)
- Consider pursuing diversity aware standards such as *Disability Confident* , *Stonewall* , or *Mindful Employer* , and reference these in your recruitment.

3) Don't underestimate the power of visuals, it is evocative for communities to see themselves and reinforces statements of commitment to creating a more inclusive workforce.

4) Develop a list of passive candidates: a passive candidate is someone an employer is considering for a certain position, but who is not actively seeking a new position. An active search for passive candidates will increase your candidate pool and the number of diverse and qualified candidates interested in your positions. LinkedIn and social media professional groups can be great tools to accessing this pool.

5) Develop longstanding relationships with culturally diverse communities' groups, articulating your organisations commitment to increasing diversity in staff. Ask them what positive action you can take to attract underrepresented groups. They can be approached to suggest passive and active candidates that might be interested in the job role.

Lowering barriers to interview and at interview

- 1) Endeavour to tailor interview processes to candidate's specific needs wherever possible. For example, traditional interviews rely heavily on social cues such as body language, eye contact and communication skills which can be a disadvantage to neurodiverse candidates.
- 2) Take a considered approach to gaps in employment history. There are many reasons why a person might have a gap in employment (for instance women are more likely to have taken time out of the workforce while bringing up children). These gaps are rarely good indicators of a person's potential as an employee.
- 3) Providing interview questions ahead of time gives all candidates a chance to think through their key skills and experience.
- 4) Consider co-creating short term (paid) traineeship/ internship programmes with guaranteed interviews.
- 5) Create and promote mentoring opportunities.
- 6) Implement a development programme to support people from underrepresented groups to gain the skills and knowledge to be able to progress within the organisation.
- 7) Consider ways in which you may be able to offer interviews even if the candidates application form wouldn't normally enable them to proceed (e.g., if your organisation has volunteers you could offer them a guaranteed interview). Application forms test a set of writing skills that are not always necessary to perform a job well. Taking a flexible approach to application forms may be most appropriate when there are few candidates for a role as it is important to ensure that your selection is fair and transparent.

8) Create volunteering opportunities. If you have people volunteering in your organisation, discuss with them whether they aspire to take on paid roles with you, and work with them through the support you offer to them to develop the skills and experience that will mean they are well placed to be successful in their applications.

9) If you set practical skills-based screening exercises, make sure you take into consideration issues such as candidate's language skills or neurodiversity and ensure that the task is relevant to the role that the candidate will undertake.

10) Have a diverse interview panel; if at all possible, your interview panel should involve a range of personalities, backgrounds, ages, and Lived experience. Avoid a mono-cultural group, as this often leads to "group think".

11) You should ensure that all dress codes are non-discriminatory. Most organisations have a dress code, but 31 percent of non-binary people and 18 percent of transgendered individuals don't feel comfortable wearing work attire which represents their gender expression (*Stonewall's LGBT in Britain- work report 2018*). Additionally, candidates might not fit into dress codes due to religious reasons.

12) Consider interview days and times, for example making sure an interview isn't scheduled on a Friday, which could disrupt prayer for practicing Muslims.

13) If an interviewee asks you how you make your workplace inclusive you should offer an honest assessment of where you are as an organisation, highlighting your inclusion positives but also recognising areas where there is potential for growth.

Continuous improvement

Track and measure the success of every recruitment process. If your organisation truly intends to gain an understanding of candidate experience with the intention of improving it, send out post-interview surveys for feedback. Results will indicate how candidates felt about their experience of your interview process and if they felt it was inclusive.

You should consider inviting independent scrutiny of your recruitment approach by culturally diverse communities to get a clear view of the barriers in your organisation.

Open conversations and better training for recruitment teams and the wider workforce should enable people to become more diversity positive in their recruitment process.

The most effective way to attract a wider group of potential employees and to show a candidate that you're the employer for them is to create a diverse environment where everyone feels welcome. Once you nurture and celebrate this culture candidates will choose your organisation because of its reputation. While your recruitment practice contributes to this positive environment it is, of course, part of the whole.

Get involved

We hope that this brief has given your organisation some starting points for inclusivity-proofing your recruitment practice. However, we recognise that we all have a long way to go and that this is a partial picture of ways to lower barriers for careers in the third sector.

We are committed to this work, and we'd really like to hear your thoughts about this guide, and examples of practices that have worked for your organisation.

We'd also like to hear from you about other areas of practice where future briefs would be helpful, and if you are a third sector organisation providing training and advice services in this area, then we'd be pleased to highlight your service.

As we hear from you, we'll continue to revise this document and publish amendments and your good ideas.

To let us know your thoughts, or to have a chat about how our sector can move forward, please contact either Abigail.olaleye@val.org.uk or Richard.warrington@val.org.uk

Appendix

Examples of the impact of poor diversity practice in the workforce

Physical and Hidden disabilities

According to the *Disability perception gap report*, 1 in 5 working adults in the UK have an impairment or disability and people with disabilities are twice as likely to be unemployed. For many disabled people a fear of discrimination in the workplace is the main barrier to disclosing their conditions or asking for support. Typically, when people think of disability, they often envisage physical disabilities; consequently, people may overlook hidden disabilities such as epilepsy or hearing loss when creating job advertisements. The onus is on organisations to create a welcoming culture, where differences are accepted and valued.

Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity is the natural variation of the human brain function and is often likened to an invisible disability that encompasses conditions such as: autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD, and many others. *The Neurodiversity in workplace report* estimates that over 15% of people in the UK are neurodivergent, meaning they have brains that function, learn, and process information differently. Despite the increased awareness of neurodiversity, only about 16% of autistic adults are employed. Standard recruitment practices still have a long way to go in designing processes with neurodiversity in mind and often disadvantage a neurodivergent candidate.

Women

The *Gender Insights Report* by LinkedIn shows women are 16% less likely to apply for a job after viewing it. Research has shown that men generally overestimate their abilities and performance, while women

underestimate both. Women are screening themselves out of the candidate pool before they apply, this is often referred to as the confidence pay gap.

LGBTQ+

The *LGBT in Britain Work Report*, by Stonewall in partnership with YouGov (2018), found that one in five participants reported that they had been the target of discriminatory comments or conduct from work colleagues. Also, one in eight transsexual individuals had been physically attacked by customers or colleagues due to their gender identity. Meanwhile, 12% of black, Asian and minority ethnic employees said they had lost their jobs because of being LGBT, compared to 4% of white LGBT staff. Organisations should develop clear zero-tolerance policies on homophobic, biphobic and transphobic discrimination and harassment, with clear sanctions for staff and customers who are in violation of such policies.

Age

Ageism is something that affects both those who are older and younger in the recruitment process. However, many older workers feel more disadvantaged or discriminated against within the recruitment process because of their age. These experiences have wide-ranging effects on older workers' confidence, health, and financial security. With more people wanting or needing to work for longer, it is increasingly important for people to be able to move or change jobs as they age. According to the *Good recruitment for older workers study*, about 36% of people (aged 50 – 69) felt they would be at a disadvantage in applying for jobs because of their age, 48% thought that recruitment processes worked to disadvantage older applicants, 15% thought they had been turned down for a role due to their age; and 17% said they had experienced age discrimination in the past few years when applying for a job or a promotion.



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