

**CHANGE  
COLLECTIVE**

**GUIDE TO RECRUITMENT FOR  
RECRUITMENT AGENCIES**

# INTRODUCTION

Recruitment agencies play an important role in the journey to achieving equality, diversity and inclusion for fundraising roles. Whether you are placing an admin temp into a fundraising team or recruiting a fundraising executive for one of the largest household name charities you have an opportunity to get that organisation to consider EDI in the recruitment.

The Chartered Institute of Fundraising is the profession's membership body. We know how important it is for you to find experienced and trusted fundraisers. Our members include sole fundraisers working freelance with small and medium charities. We are working with our members and charities across the UK to ensure fundraising is, and is acknowledged to be, an equal, diverse and inclusive profession.

We have produced this guide to help you think about your role in changing the diversity of the fundraising profession. We thank the agencies that participated in the roundtable discussion that helped form this guide and to those who have contributed to its development. This is a short guide to complement the guides written for hiring managers, small charities and candidates.

The majority of the guide was written before the Coronavirus (Covid-19) crisis and those principles, experience and guidance remain important. Additional elements have been added to reflect recruitment in a crisis.



# WHAT IS EDI? SOME DEFINITIONS TO GET YOU STARTED

## EQUALITY

Equality is used as shorthand for 'Equal Opportunities'. In the workplace and for recruitment we use this to describe our legal compliance with anti-discrimination legislation. This protects people from being discriminated against on the grounds of sex, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion and belief, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity. These are known as protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010.

## DIVERSITY

Diversity is about a wide range of characteristics. It covers visible and invisible individual differences and refers to the makeup of groups and your staff teams. The makeup usually refers to the protected characteristics but also about the intersectionality in those characteristics along with education, socio-economic differences, family structures, culture, values, political beliefs, and the experiences people have that leads to different thoughts and ideas. In the workplace we might think about diversity in terms of the numbers of people with different characteristics we have at different levels of the organisation: diversity is something we can measure.

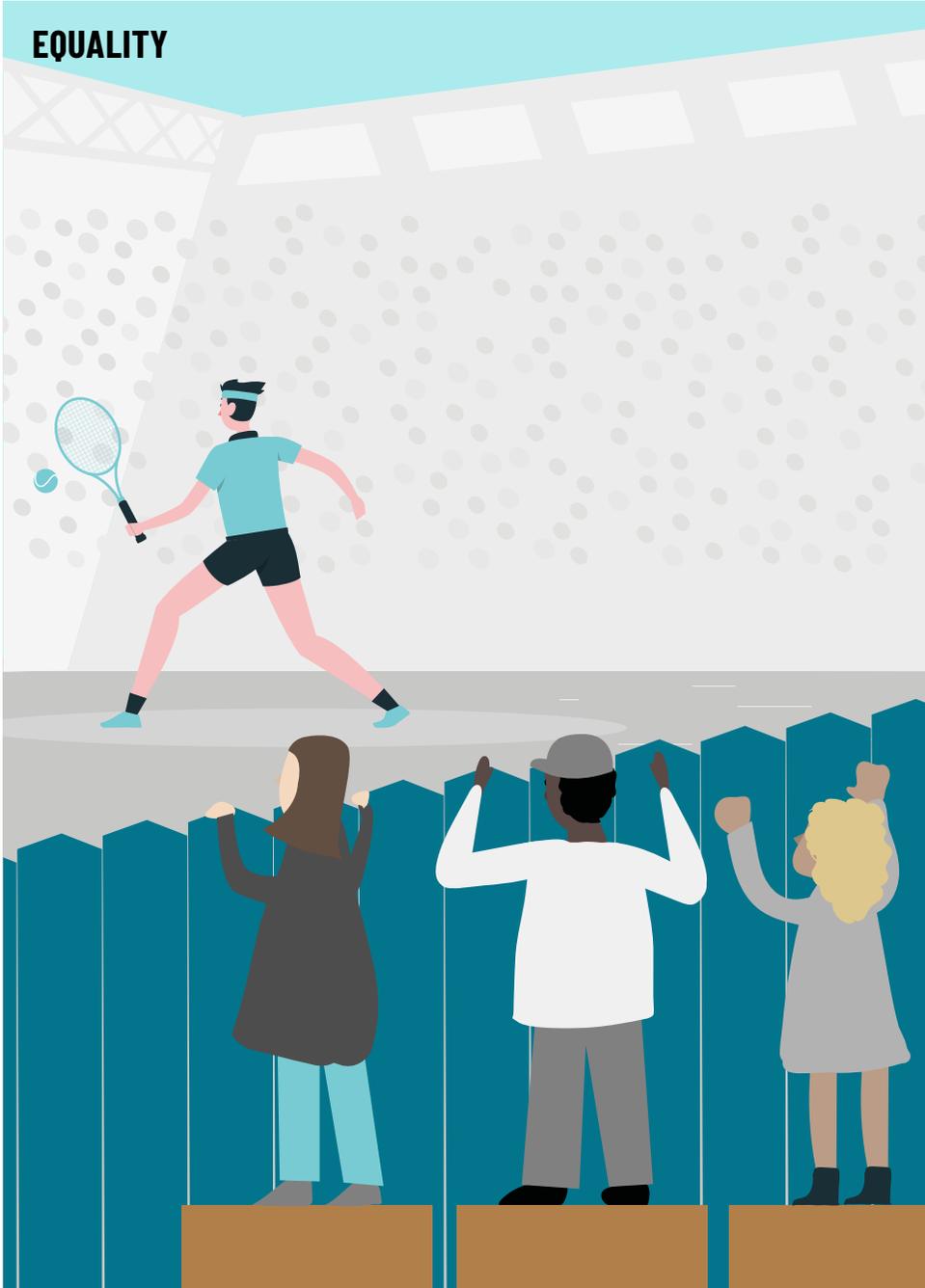
## INCLUSION

Inclusion is about respecting and embracing the difference individuals bring and changing your systems, processes and behaviours to do more than meet legal obligations. It is more than representation. Inclusion enables people to have a sense of connection and belonging, to feel welcomed and valued. Inclusion challenges us to overcome our unconscious bias to achieve equity.

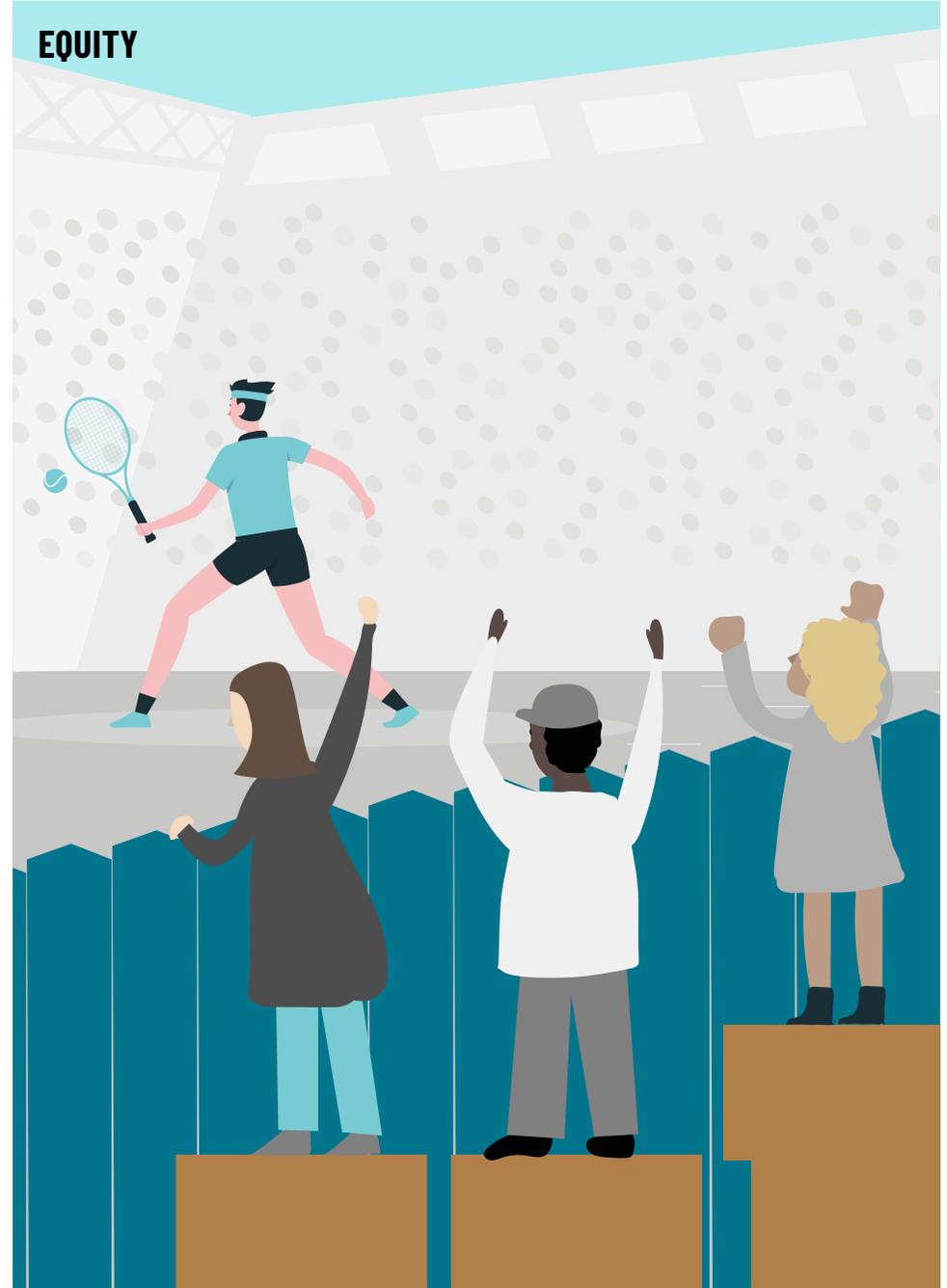
## EQUITY

Equity is about the fair treatment needed to ensure everyone can access opportunities, advance and achieve the same or similar outcomes. Equity recognises the different starting positions, privileges or disadvantages of individuals and groups and creates the processes, actions and behaviours to address these. This might include using positive action to recruit a more diverse workforce.

**EQUALITY**



**EQUITY**



## UNCONSCIOUS OR IMPLICIT BIAS

Bias is a prejudice against or in favour of something, some groups and people. We have conscious, explicit biases and we have unconscious, implicit biases. We all have unconscious beliefs and stereotypes arising from our environment, upbringing, values and experiences. Being aware of our biases helps us look at the systems and processes we create that may lead to recruiting less diverse teams.

## INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality refers to the complex and cumulative ways that multiple forms of discrimination overlap and combine to affect people and groups. Thinking about intersectionality arises from Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory that each category (e.g. race, gender, socio-economic background, education) does not exist in isolation and should be addressed together and at the intersection of those experiences.

### **EDI STATEMENT, POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

Our research shows that 70% of respondents say that their organisation has an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy, 60% have EDI as a stated value, priority or strategic objective and 35% require staff to attend EDI training. Do you know whether you have a statement, a policy or both? Do you know your organisation's procedures for EDI in recruitment? If not, find out what you have, read the policies and procedures and review whether these are adequate.

Your statement, policy and procedures should set out that you will treat everyone fairly and that you are open and receptive to the needs of those with protected and unique characteristics and will be supportive and inclusive of them as candidates and employees.

Before you start, map out the organisation's power structure. Do you have a diverse

group of decision makers with the vision to identify the changes needed to be diverse and inclusive, to seek out a diversity of talent and experience to fill vacancies, and to promote for difference? Diversity is about diversity of thought and experience as well as visible characteristics.

## STATEMENT

Your statement might set out your intention and your values. You can find EDI statements on job advertisements but there are mixed views about this. Some people with protected characteristics welcome seeing a statement and others say it would put them off applying as it emphasises their difference.

### **GUIDE POINTS:**

- **Review your EDI statement.**
- **You could carry out a short staff survey to see if the statement encouraged or discouraged them from applying.**
- **Consider what the statement says about your overall brand.**

# EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY - WHERE TO START

Your EDI policy will explain your values towards equality and diversity in the workplace and the attitudes that form your culture. Your policy might set out:

- **Your aim to have a positive and supportive environment for all service users, stakeholders and employees**
- **Providing an equal and fair opportunity to everyone applying to work at your organisation, regardless of background or protected characteristics.**
- **Your commitment to protecting employees from being discriminated against because of one or more of the protected characteristics that apply to them.**
- **Promoting the diversity of the workforce and demonstrating an alignment with your cause.**
- **Commitment to keeping valued employees and attracting a diversity of applicants through flexible working, job-share or part-time working.**

## GUIDE POINTS

1. Write a statement that outlines your organisation's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion using positive and inclusive language.
2. Put your values at the top and centre of the policy.
3. Clearly set out that recruitment and employment will not discriminate on the grounds of any protected characteristics.
4. Set out if any roles have a Genuine Occupational Requirement that may deviate from applying non-discrimination of protected characteristics.
5. Explicitly state that you oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination.
6. Describe the work environment you want (or have) to be free from prejudice, discrimination where people are treated with dignity and respect.
7. State that, when selecting for employment, promotion, training, or any special opportunity like attending a conference or high-level meetings, it will be based on the individual's own aptitude and ability.
8. State that disciplinary action will be taken against those that breach your policy.
9. Make it clear that the policy is active, regularly reviewed by senior managers and the board and accessible to anyone who wants it.
10. Put the statement and policy on your website.

## GENERAL GUIDE POINTS



***Our Director of Individual Membership, Compliance and Professional Development, Alex Xavier, sets out the routes into the profession and provides guidance based on his many years as a recruitment consultant.***

### OWN ORGANISATION'S EDI STANCE AND PRACTICE

- Develop and implement an EDI policy
- Ensure there is diversity within your workforce of recruiters
- Provide training and development for recruiters to understand EDI principles and practice
- Publish your EDI recruitment statistics, at least annually, and by role type and salary band
- Engage with the Chartered Institute of Fundraising's Change Collective strategy
- Sign up to the Good Recruitment Collective

### ADVERTISING AND LOOKING BEYOND THE EXISTING POOL

- Widen your candidate recruitment to unconventional sources which may attract more diverse candidates for fundraising roles
- Communicate the benefits of EDI to existing placed candidates to see if they can offer referrals
- Design ads to be inclusive and accessible for disabled people, e.g. are they optimised for screenreaders?
- Responding to client brief and relationship management
- Challenge organisations and educate them on the benefits of a more diverse workforce
- Question whether a degree requirement is absolutely necessary for roles when they are submitted to you
- Challenge them to look beyond candidates from similar organisations already doing similar work; think about transferrable skills

## **GENERAL GUIDE POINTS**

*by Alex Xavier*

### **DISCUSSING EDI REQUIREMENTS WITH CLIENTS**

- Ask to see their EDI statement, policy and procedures so that you are able to deliver to that, as well as the brief
- Offer clients your EDI statement and policy
- Set out the EDI training and development your recruiters have had
- Decide whether you are collecting EDI monitoring information for your use or on behalf of the client for their use

### **ADVISING ON PACKS, QUESTIONS AND TESTS**

- Ensure consistency in questions and tests
- Make sure a diverse panel is involved in constructing packs, questions and tests to mitigate risks of unconscious bias
- Packs should be available in plain text, large print and in colours that work for dyslexia
- Prepare clients to carry out remote interviews
- Considerations for working with diverse candidates
- Show empathy towards their challenges in progressing or getting into the fundraising profession
- Work with candidates to identify practical examples from work experience, studies or lived experience which can be applied positively in an application and/or interview scenario
- Go out of your way to prepare candidates for what to expect at interviews in terms of the people they will meet and the questions that may be asked

### **SUPPORTING CANDIDATES THROUGH THE PROCESS**

- Ensure they are fully briefed in person, email and phone
- Be sure to give them confidence
- Try and identify questions which may blindside them (prepare for the worst)
- Prepare them for remote interviews

### **KEEPING CANDIDATES INFORMED**

- Always keep candidates informed on a regular basis
- If a candidate is unsuccessful, be sure to gather feedback and communicate it honestly to them so they can develop
- Avoid telling them they are not the “right fit” – this is unhelpful, and many receive it as code for discriminatory practice

# INDISCRIMINATE ROBOTS: AVOIDING HUMAN AND MACHINE BIAS IN RECRUITMENT



**Ornella Nsio, Stakeholder Engagement Manager at the Recruitment and Employment Confederation sets out the need to be cautious in relying on technology to reduce bias**

Human bias, unconscious and conscious, in the recruitment process is a major blockage for any business trying to achieve a diverse workforce.

From the job ad to the face to face interview, the recruitment process is littered with opportunities for bias which limit career progression. According to **Gaining Momentum**, a global report by the **International Labour Organisation**, five of fourteen barriers to women's leadership were related to discrimination and unconscious gender bias.

This presents a problem not just for the candidate but also the employer, who may have missed out on an opportunity to diversify their team. There's plenty of research that shows diversity is good for the workplace. It increases productivity; it enhances problem solving; and can increase profits.

The business case for workplace diversity has been made, but the question of how to achieve diversity is more complex.

As experts in recruitment, recruitment professionals can help employers evaluate their current recruitment practices and advise them on the necessary changes they can make to help eradicate bias and bring in more diversity.

## WOMEN'S CHESS CLUB CAPTAINS NEED NOT APPLY

The Recruitment & Employment Confederation's Future of Jobs report has identified technology as the biggest disruptor in recruitment. In a bid to inject more diversity into an organisation, employers are increasingly turning to A.I and algorithms to eliminate bias in the hiring process.

***"Algorithms have long been used by online recruitment boards to promote job adverts toward certain candidates and shortlist CVs by scanning the text for the right words."***

The use of algorithms in recruitment is not a new phenomenon. Algorithms have long been used by online recruitment boards to promote job adverts toward certain candidates and shortlist CVs by scanning the text for the right words. However, the use of algorithms in recruitment to help reduce human bias is a fairly new concept.

Artificial Intelligence tools such as **Applied** are being used

## EXPERT ADVICE

By Ornella Nsio

by employers to reduce bias in the early stages of the recruitment process. **Applied** helps employers write compelling and inclusive job descriptions with gender neutral language. Other tools such as **TribePads' Applicant Tracking Software**, removes all personal and demographic information from the hiring process so hiring managers can assess candidates based on ability alone.

While it is clear that algorithm tools can support more diverse hiring, employers should exercise caution when using them. Algorithms rely on humans to provide the information they base their decisions on.

***"While it is clear that algorithm tools can support more diverse hiring, employers should exercise caution when using them."***

This means AI can only be as unbiased as the information they are based on. Last year Amazon's own AI recruitment programme was found to be systemising gender biases on a huge scale.

The tool designed by AI experts at Amazon was trained with successful CVs submitted to the company. Unsurprisingly the majority of the successful CVs submitted came from men, therefore the tool began to actively discriminate against female candidates by penalising CVs that referenced women.

One person fell victim to algorithm bias because their CV listed women's chess club captain under the experience section.

## DEALING WITH HUMAN AND ROBOT BIASES

Late last year the REC hosted a series of roundtables with members and Centre for Data Ethic and Innovation (CDEI) to discuss how the recruitment industry can tackle algorithm bias in recruitment. One of the key recommendations was for employers to be diligent on the data sets they were using for their algorithm.

Checks should be completed to ensure that employers are supplying the tools with as much unbiased information as possible. The tools should also be tested regularly to make sure there are no glitches in the programming. While there are pros and cons with using algorithms to help reduce unconscious bias in the recruitment process, employers must not rely solely on machines to change workplace behaviours.

There are a number of tactics that can be employed to reduced unconscious bias in the recruitment process, which don't even require WiFi. For example, using name blind CVs and having a diverse interview panel will help reduce opportunities for unconscious bias.

***"There are a number of tactics that can be employed to reduced unconscious bias in the recruitment process, which don't even require WiFi."***

The REC has created a helpful toolkit with tips for employers on reducing unconscious bias in their recruitment process. The toolkit can be found on the **Good Recruitment Collective** section of the website and accessed by signatories of the GRC. Signing up to the GRC is free and includes access to research reports and training events. You can sign up here: [rec.uk.com/good-recruitment-campaign](https://rec.uk.com/good-recruitment-campaign)

## LIVED EXPERIENCE

# FIT



**Jaz Nannar, founder of Jaz Nannar Consulting, and member of the EDI Committee reflects on what is meant by 'fit'**

I headed up a strategic and creative agency for the charity sector for many years. Over that time, I've worked across a huge range of causes and charities, from health care to saving nature, from medical research to faith. I've interviewed hundreds of key stakeholders at charities and many more of their supporters.

Our clients (and some of the prospective ones) sometimes asked to see our policies on the environment, on health and safety and, in one notable patch, our way of complying with modern slavery rules.

Suffice to say we were all clear on the modern slavery front... but no-one asked me about the make-up of our strategy, creative and account management teams. As it happens, we were around one third BAME, which shouldn't be surprising given we were a London-based agency. But, if you use agencies, how many of them

**"People are drawn to versions of themselves. There's a safety in it. A comfort."**

- be they creative or media - can say the same? How many of you can say the same? Particularly if you're based in big towns and cities with ready-made access to a wide pool of people.

People are drawn to versions of themselves. There's a safety in it. A comfort. And if you're told that you're not quite the right fit for the role/charity/agency, if you are from a BAME background looking out at who already works there and who got the job ahead of you, you wonder if that's code for something that you can't change about yourself.

**"I'm here to tell you that 'Not being the right fit' is the strength that's staring you in the face."**

In the past, when I've written on this subject, colleagues would cast an eye over my words and tell me I didn't need to put my story front and centre, because my argument shouldn't need it. They are absolutely right.

But if I don't, will you remember what I say?

So, I'm here to tell you that 'not being the right fit' is the strength that's staring you in the face. More of the same and more of who and what you know is surely not what fundraising needs right now.

In some recent insight gathering staff interviews, I heard a brown-skinned Muslim woman say she's been

## LIVED EXPERIENCE

By Jaz Nannar

***“A brown-skinned Muslim woman say she’s been in the same role for 10 years and watched all her white colleagues get promoted before her.”***

in the same role for 10 years and watched all her white colleagues get promoted before her.

You will feel something as you read that sentence.

I will feel something as a brown-skinned woman.

This is 2020. She works for a huge charity. She’d been told versions of ‘you’re not the right fit’ for 10 years. And she stayed, believing that things wouldn’t be much better at any other charity.

A friend of mine told me about sitting on an interview panel recently. He wasn’t the key decision maker. But those who were, were adept at finding ways to say they thought one of the candidates wasn’t right for the job because she might be ‘difficult to manage’. Perhaps a ‘tad confrontational’. Perhaps ‘not quite the right fit’.

Perhaps.

Or perhaps it’s just a lazy, disgraceful racist trope about black women.

This sort of thing doesn’t get fixed by putting a token ‘diverse’ candidate on the list of people who get interviewed. It begins with charity leaders, fundraising leaders being braver. Having the courage to admit something isn’t right and not rushing to hire a sole EDI person to have the impossible task of solving this.

I’m not saying it’s easy. It’s not meant to be. But it’s the right thing to do to question ourselves and each other and the recruitment processes that are in place that mean things haven’t changed much. And even if it wasn’t the right thing to do, the business case for more diverse teams – be they fundraising or not – has been proven many times over.

***“I don’t think the same as everyone else because I don’t usually come from the same background as you. That’s the strength.”***

It is possible to do things differently.

I’ve been working with a big nature charity recently. On paper, perhaps I’m not the right fit. I grew up a mile away from Heathrow Airport and nature didn’t feature in a big way in my childhood.

But I have a different perspective and a different approach. I have interviewed key stakeholders and engineered conversations about good fairies and bad fairies that, believe it or not, have unlocked interesting answers that haven’t been heard before. Invariably, senior directors be they in charge of clinical teams, conservation teams or chaplains will say that they found our conversations interesting and thought-provoking. And to be honest, I do too. Their lives and experience are so far removed from mine.

## LIVED EXPERIENCE

*By Jaz Nannar*

I don't think the same as everyone else because I don't usually come from the same background as you. That's the strength.

That's what the disabled person you're interviewing brings.

That's what the darker-skinned person who knows what it feels like to be judged on the colour of their skin brings.

That's what the gay person who has been on a journey with their family and friends brings. We are all the right fit. If only you could see it.



## LIVED EXPERIENCE



***Femke Vorstman, Senior Recruitment Consultant at Prospectus, sets out why the team have put EDI at the centre of their work and what they have been doing to improve the organisation.***

For over 60 years Prospectus has been working across the UK and internationally to connect talented people with not for profit organisations. A certified B-Corp, Prospectus is part of a global movement using business for good and we believe our clients change the world for individuals, communities and society. Each year we conduct thousands of interviews and place hundreds of candidates in a variety of roles including operations, marketing, finance and fundraising – and many more.

***“Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) isn’t something that should stand alone but should be the norm; it is both a social justice and an organisational issue.”***

We recognise that equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) isn’t something that should stand alone but should be the norm; it is both a social justice and an organisational issue. Opportunity in life and work should be about your contribution only. Inclusive organisations are more successful, productive and impactful.

It is clear that as I write this, all organisations are focused on their response to Covid-19, however in our view that does not make EDI less important, nor an

issue that becomes medium term whilst we deal with the immediate priorities of the Coronavirus. In the same way the virus does not discriminate who it affects, the sector should take a responsibility to ensure that all are represented in formulating the response. The sector should take a responsibility to ensure that all are represented in formulating the response.

As recruiters, we recognise the important role we play in building more inclusive organisations, at every level from Board to operational delivery. Our clients and candidates vest significant trust in us, and as conduits between them, we have a responsibility to ensure fair and transparent processes, challenging bias, and their perception of what is possible.

So, we play a very important role when it comes to EDI, not just for individual organisations but for our sector as a whole. Prospectus have been on a journey to invest and improve upon our understanding, approach and impact in relation to EDI. This has been championed by one of our Managing Directors, features as part of our reporting to the company Board and engaged the entire Prospectus team.

### **WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?**

The answer is simple, because when equality and diversity is truly embraced and celebrated, it unleashes

## LIVED EXPERIENCE

By Femke Vorstman

tremendous creativity and value for individuals, organisations and communities. We are aware that we are by no means perfect, nor that we have a 'one size fits all' solution - like you, we are on a journey, but what I can promise you is that we're doing our best, we will keep learning and EDI has been, and will continue to be, a fundamental part of our organisation.

To put this another way, we are what we say on the tin - 'a beyond profit' recruiter. That is to say, we as an organisation, but also as individual non-commission led consultants, are able to prioritise EDI over profit generation for the business. This gives us all a sense of purpose and real impact.

### WHAT HAVE WE HAD TO CONSIDER?

I won't be able to take you through everything, there's just too much! I'll also add that our experience so far has been that there is always even more that can be done. For us, this is a living, breathing, ever developing project. To give you a helicopter view, we can break our EDI Project into internal work and external work.

Internally, we have taken an honest look at ourselves. How well does our workforce represent the communities we support? Does everyone at Prospectus truly feel they can be themselves at work? What about our culture and also our image, does it welcome people of all kinds? How accessible is our website, our building, our equipment and what about our policies; are they inclusive?

As consultants, our work externally with a focus on EDI has a number of immediate and long-term benefits. We see this in terms of impact on the sector; for example, our introduction of each candidate has the potential to open up donor networks that may not be giving right now perhaps because of who is approaching them.

We also believe that organisations are missing out on excellent talent and diversity of thought when they look to recruit someone who 'fits' their culture, rather than 'adds' to it. Our EDI focus as part of an organisations recruitment process will empower more diversity of thought and innovation in the sector.

We know that when it comes to EDI, it's our actions that count. Here's what we have been doing:

- **We are continuously working to improve our EDI statistics;**
- **We are trialling platforms such as BeApplied;**
- **We are providing an unconscious bias one-pager for interviewers to read through and have at the forefront of their mind before interviewing;**
- **We have increased the accessibility of our website;**
- **We have a dedicated designer to make all our in-house designed candidate packs accessible to all;**
- **Training for all staff;**
- **Making EDI a thread running through other projects and conversations.**

When working with clients we support and challenge them in different ways to improve EDI - steps such as removing unnecessary requirements and gender biased language in job descriptions/advert copy, talk through flexible working options and the benefits thereof, ask and advise around accessibility, providing anonymised applications, suggest the use of a shortlisting matrix at CV and interview stage, support with an overview of unconscious biases, and more.

## LIVED EXPERIENCE

By Femke Vorstman

### TRAINING

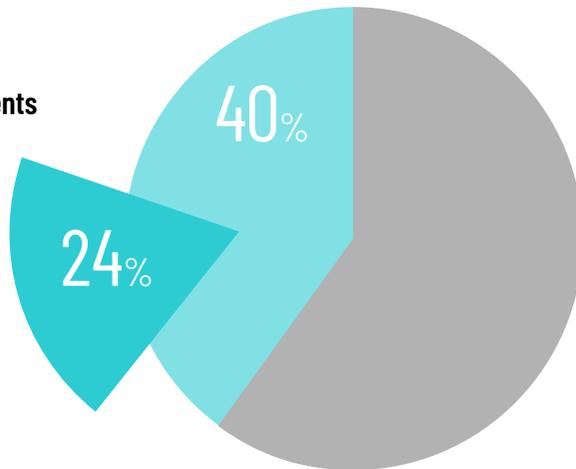
All staff have undergone specific EDI recruitment practice training, this includes parts of the recruitment process that our client organisation would typically be responsible for, enabling us to advise them so we ensure an inclusive recruitment process from start to finish. We have committed to training all new staff.

### WHAT'S THE IMPACT?

We are still refining and improving how we collect our data but we are able to report on just under 36,000 candidates who completed our equal ops form in the past 12 months. Against some of our key diversity priorities this is how we performed.

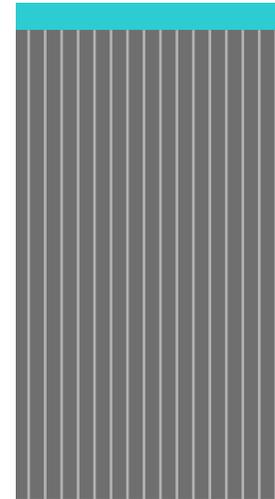
#### BAME

40% of applications  
and 24% of placements



#### DISABILITY

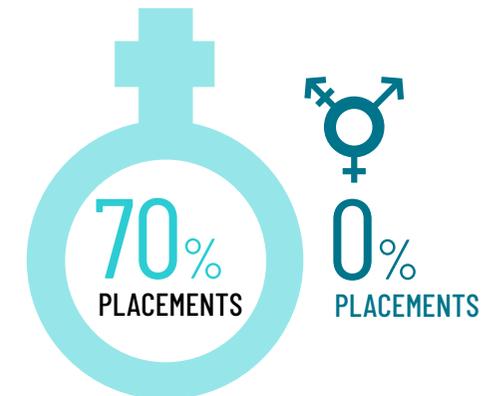
5% of applications  
5% of placements



#### GENDER

FEMALE - 59% of applications  
and 70% of placements

TRANSGENDER - 0.1% of applications  
and 0% of placements



#### SEXUALITY

GAY/LESBIAN/BISEXUAL  
9% of applications  
and 19% of placements



## LIVED EXPERIENCE



**Peter Babudu, Head of Evidence at the Youth Endowment Fund reflects on barriers for BAME and working class candidates**

I'm Head of Evidence at the Youth Endowment Fund, having spent much of the last decade working with funders as an external consultant and evaluator to improve how they use evidence, I decided to move towards doing this in-house. I began my career in the corporate sector but found that purpose was a necessary motivator for me but often absent from my day-to-day work.

I do not award funds but I look at what evidence we have to inform funding decisions. It's a role that I think should exist in more funders, not just in what works centres like the YEF.

Recruiting managers should consider looking for a fork in a room of spoons. I think the assumptions about what works can be very narrowing. For example, people who show good attention to detail but bring less existing relationships could still make for great fundraisers as more and more funders look to make evidence-informed decisions.

Requirements for experience are often a barrier as the early experience is often unpaid and available via relationships. This can be particularly difficult for young people from BAME and working class backgrounds. Their potential to add value to your organisation is dismissed before it is given a chance

as they can't afford to work unpaid and don't have the relationships to get the word-of-mouth opportunities.

I see young people of colour not getting the opportunities or making the progress they should. I think people should have diversity in their career options and not disregard getting groundings in areas with better track records of diversity.

***"Recruiting managers should consider looking for a fork in a room of spoon."***

I've found the charity sector more discriminatory, often in subtle ways, than I experienced during my corporate career. That said, things continue to change and we need pioneers to support each other in making this sector more accessible.

## WORKING WITH AGENCIES



***Jimmy James MInstF(Dip), Principal Minerva Fundraising Consultancy, and author of The Volunteer Fundraiser's Handbook reflects on approaches from recruitment agencies.***

My experience of recruitment agencies, both as a consultant looking for contracts for myself and as a Trustee or executive seeking candidates for a job, has not been particularly good.

### **SPECIFIC PROBLEMS I HAVE ENCOUNTERED ARE:**

- **Being told by a recruitment agency that the Trustees of a charity located in a different part of the country from where I am based considered me as a front-runner for their contract. When I had travelled considerable distance for the interview, the Trustees made it very clear that actually they were looking for a locally based consultant**
- **Being sent contract details by a recruitment agency, stating that the charity's candidate profile "exactly" or "precisely" matched my own. On reading the job description and person specification, it was soon clear that this was not the case**
- **Being invited for initial interview by the recruitment agency, only to discover that I had been invited because I happened to be on their books and they wanted to present their client with a large list of candidates**
- **Asking a recruitment agency if they had any suitable candidates for a senior fundraising post, and being told that indeed they did. However, the CVs forwarded by the agency did not in most cases meet the person specification laid down. In one case we specified that candidates must have a qualification in fundraising from the Chartered Institute of Fundraising or other appropriate national or international body - only to discover that none of the candidates put forward had any relevant qualification as requested**
- **Poor advertising for candidates through recruitment agencies' websites and newsletters which failed to give the charity's vacancy sufficient prominence; or did not reflect the information the charity had given to the recruitment agency.**

Overall, it appears that most recruitment agencies, even those which specialise in the charity sector, are not conversant with the Chartered Institute of Fundraising Academy's qualifications.

## THE ISSUE OF CLIENTS BECOMING MORE CONSERVATIVE ONCE THEY GET TO SHORTLIST



**Kai Adams, Partner at Green Park, reflects on the challenge of getting clients to take a risk to achieve diversity**

Attempting to land at Gatwick recently in the throes of one of the Storms of 2020, the plane endlessly circling in a turbulence-buffed holding pattern, I got to thinking about one of the most invidious features my work: approach avoidance.

Kurt Lewin, a founder of modern social psychology, coined the term as something that occurs when a decision-maker moves towards a stated and appealing goal but as awareness of potential negative factors increases, the desire to avoid the goal arises.

Maybe Lewin was a headhunter on the side. His description of what I often see during appointment processes is way too close for comfort. Particularly when the stated and appealing goal is “diversity”.

Almost by definition, approach avoidance manifests itself in the final stages. But what if the stated and appealing goal of greater diversity is just that, stated? Words. Not actions. Not real.

In other words, do organisations really want to hire diverse talent or just have some different looking or sounding candidates to take second place?

How else to explain the statistically poor representation of diverse talent at senior levels in multiple sectors?

My concern is that while approach avoidance is most

visible from the point of shortlist onwards, it was there all along, right from the start.

**“...‘diversity’ is almost always accompanied by a strange flapping of hands as if moulding something from the air...”**

Without exaggerating too much, a typical briefing meeting starts with an exhortation to the headhunter for bigger, broader, more creative thinking. What is meant by ‘diversity’ is almost always accompanied by a strange flapping of hands as if moulding something from the air, and the coda, “you know what I mean”. Actually, I don’t. And more often than not, they don’t know how to articulate it.

Is it embarrassment? Fear? Ignorance? Best intentions poorly articulated? Do people find the discussion difficult? Awkward?

Establishing a common definition is critical.

Once we’ve (not) got one, the classic next step is to generate a series of descriptors referencing “scale”, “stature”, “gravitas”, “complexity”, “previous experience

## LIVED EXPERIENCE

By Kai Adams

at a senior level". Never mind that issues of power or social and structural barriers – let alone (un)conscious bias mean that they've now excluded most women, young people, those with a disability, people of colour etc.

### WHAT ARE THE ANALOGUES OF THIS 'TRADITIONAL' EXPERIENCE THAT COULD WIDEN THE GATES WITHOUT LOWERING THE BAR?

At longlist, where there is still little sense of jeopardy and where all bets are still on because the client has its choice of a dozen or more people, confidence and benevolence are high. Even then, the conversation rapidly focuses on those who obviously 'fit': recognised (literally or figuratively) as having the right qualities. Usually, the list is then garnished very generously by some 'wild cards'.

***"The person who brings a different way of creating a movement through influence lacks direct management experience."***

Describing someone as a 'wild card', 'left field' or 'diverse' is already loading the dice. Let's face it, it's easier for an older, white, middle class male to be viewed and judged as a 'capable' individual because they're the norm amongst the senior leadership population. Anyone 'diverse' is filtered through the lens of their membership of traditionally excluded groups.

It's important to move from this kind of deficit language to something more asset-based.

By the shortlist, the initially enticing differences have become shortfalls, risks,

obstacles. The person who brings a different way of creating a movement through influence lacks direct management experience. The individual who approaches from a different perspective risks destabilising the team. The leader who displays greater transparency or – God forbid! – vulnerability – lacks influence.

***"Don't immediately focus on what they're missing. Think instead about what they bring that you lack."***

Don't immediately focus on what they're missing. Think instead about what they bring that you lack. Appointment panels skew their decisions towards years of experience, linear career progression or recognised networks. They aim for what they already know, rather than looking for what might add bench strength. They look for overlap with their own skills or those of the organisation, not where difference could increase their influence, reach or impact. If they go for what they know and get it wrong, it seems, they have a legitimate excuse: "it worked last time!" If they go for difference and it backfires, those who say, "I told you so!" are legion.

Being able to say they got "a diverse shortlist and went for the best candidate" isn't enough if the process hasn't been equitable and authentic.

If we're to eliminate approach avoidance, we need to be better at asking the blunt questions whether these 'diverse' candidates were ever going to be appointed and if not, why not. We need to ask them right from the outset and at every subsequent opportunity. If we don't, we risk becoming complicit in counterproductive – or worse, cynical – processes where the stated goal was a fig-leaf, not a fact.

We can't keep circling and circling. At some point we have to land the plane.

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