

Action for Trustee Racial Diversity – Key findings from mapping survey questionnaire

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“Suit the actions to the words, the words to the action” were the immortal words of Shakespeare’s most celebrated tragic hero, Hamlet.

When I took inspiration from my own eighteen years of trusteeship to start a campaign to increase the woefully small number of black and Asian trustees on charity trustee boards, I was determined not to add too many more words to the considerable bibliography of evidence and good practice.

Nevertheless here are a few facts which speak for themselves.

- 62% of the top charities by income have all white boards. By contrast, there are only four all-BAME boards - 50% fewer than in 2016 (*Inclusive Boards 2018*)
- 34 out of 100 UK major charities have all white Senior Leadership (both voluntary and professional) (*Green Park 2017*)
- 2.9% of trustees in the sector are women of colour (*Inclusive Boards 2018*)
- 92% of trustees are white, older, and above average income and education (*Charity Commission 2017*)
- 71% of trustees are recruited through an informal process
- A survey of the top 500 charities by income found that between 2016 and 2018 the number of charity boards that are all white actually increased by 5 to 62%. By contrast there are only four all-BAME boards, a 50% reduction since 2016.
- The level of ethnic minority individuals on large charity boards is just 6.6%, representing 418 trustees out of a total of 6338 trustees.

To put in context, 14% of the England and Wales population is from a non- white background. In London, the figure is 36.8 %. Comparatively, the North East figure is 4.3% and Wales 3.9%. It’s about time trustee recruitment reflected these stats because charities cannot truly claim to serve their communities if their leadership does not represent the people they serve! The challenge for the sector and for this project is to change these damning statistics, which have not significantly changed over the years and even worsened in some respects.

Project Summary

- There is a strong willingness to engage, to pool resources and to champion this project

- Often other organisational priorities take precedence over diversity. This project presents an opportunity to refocus attention on addressing the issue of under-representation
- There is an overwhelming need for more access to and knowledge of BAME networks
- There is a lot of good practice out there but not always widely known.
- The barriers are wide and attributable to lack of knowledge, lack of resources, lack of commitment and resistance to cultural change.
- The solutions are largely understood but generally not being driven in a partnership, action-focused way to achieve significant impact.

Aims of the project

The project aims to promote practical actions to address the significant and longstanding under-representation of people from Black and Asian backgrounds on charity Trustee Boards across the UK

We aim to provide charities with knowledge, resources, toolkits, networks and specialist advice to enable them to take practical steps to increase the racial diversity of their Boards. This is the first phase.

Key project activities

- To map the current position on racial diversity on charity Boards defined by numbers of Black and Asian trustees; percentage of Black and Asian trustees; current activity and type of activity to increase racial diversity; key organisations working to increase racial diversity; demographics of Black and Asian people by region.
- To research, highlight and raise awareness of the key challenges and barriers to increasing racial diversity
- To research and propose tailored strategies for addressing challenges and barriers to increasing racial diversity
- To agree project branding and communications strategies
- To sign up key organisations to the aims and outcomes of the project
- To sign up 50-100 project champions
- To draw up lists of potential Black and Asian trustees and sources of recruitment for Black and Asian trustees.

The inspiration for the project

I stood down last year as Vice –Chair of Anti-Slavery International - a well- respected and long-standing international development charity with a challenging mission to create a world free from the evil of slavery. When I stood down, the Board had no trustee of a Board of 10 from a non-white background though it had long been aware of the need for a more ethnically diverse Board which would also be more representative of the people it serves. However other pressing priorities – internal and external – meant that action to address this had not yet taken place.

As my “legacy” to the organisation, I agreed to support the organisation’s laudable commitment to recruit up to three Black and Asian trustees. By explicitly declaring in our trustee recruitment advert that we were specifically seeking to recruit Black and Asian trustees, ensuring that the wording of the advert would encourage a wider range of applicants than normal and using social media networks, the organisation was successful in recruiting three excellent Black and Asian trustees.

Crucially for me this proved that effecting a significant increase in the numbers of Black and Asian was eminently achievable with the right organisational focus and commitment. Although the process was not without its challenges, and without strong championing by the organisation’s leadership would not have happened. However it also brought home to me very starkly the enormous gap between the prevailing rhetoric and the shameful numbers on the ground. At that stage, I decided to draw on my own experience, networks and personal commitment to try to redress that imbalance.

Reaching Out

An immediate impression from my trustee recruitment work with Anti-Slavery was that a lot of organisations were working hard to improve diversity in the sector but that much of it was in silos. Much more could be done more productively and impactful in partnership. **Significantly for me, no organisation was focussing specifically on increasing the numbers of Black and Asian trustees** – in my opinion the most overt sign of the charity sector’s lack of diversity and representation.

Big thanks initially to Kai Adams and Cordelia Osewa -Ediae- from Green Park Diversity Consulting to whom I reached out to map what work was already going on to challenge the lack of diversity in the sector. In doing this, I was very keen to ensure that my project did not reinvent the wheel or duplicate good work already going on!

Together we drew up a list of key organisations which were already doing something or were keen to do so. Thanks also to Penny Wilson, CEO of Getting On Board, for generously sharing her own considerable book of networks and individual contacts.

I eventually pulled together an impressive list of some 35 stakeholder organisations from the charity and private sector over several phone calls and cups of coffee in cafes all over London – all keen to offer what support they could to the project. The list included ACEVO, the Association of Chairs, Charity Finance Group, Getting On Board, NCVO, Reach Volunteering, the Small Charities Coalition, Voice for Change England and from the private sector, Green Park Consulting and Inclusive Boards and continues to grow.

Getting a team together

One of those coffee meetings with Janet Thorne, CEO of Reach Volunteering, resulted in Janet's very helpful offer to me to recruit a project volunteer through Reach's volunteering portal. My advert produced an excellent response and I was able to recruit a diverse and committed team of four volunteers augmented by a researcher from the consultancy, Rocket Science. Initial key outputs from the project team were agreeing the name of the project – Action for Trustee Racial Diversity – and producing a well-designed survey questionnaire for mapping current activity by key organisation stakeholders.

Findings of Mapping Survey Questionnaire

Methodology

We piloted the questions with 3 key organisations, revised in light of their feedback and sent the questionnaire out to some 35 key organisations of which 20 (57%) completed it. A pretty good response given organisation's other pressing priorities. It was not aimed at individual frontline organisations at this stage. The key aims of the survey questionnaire were to

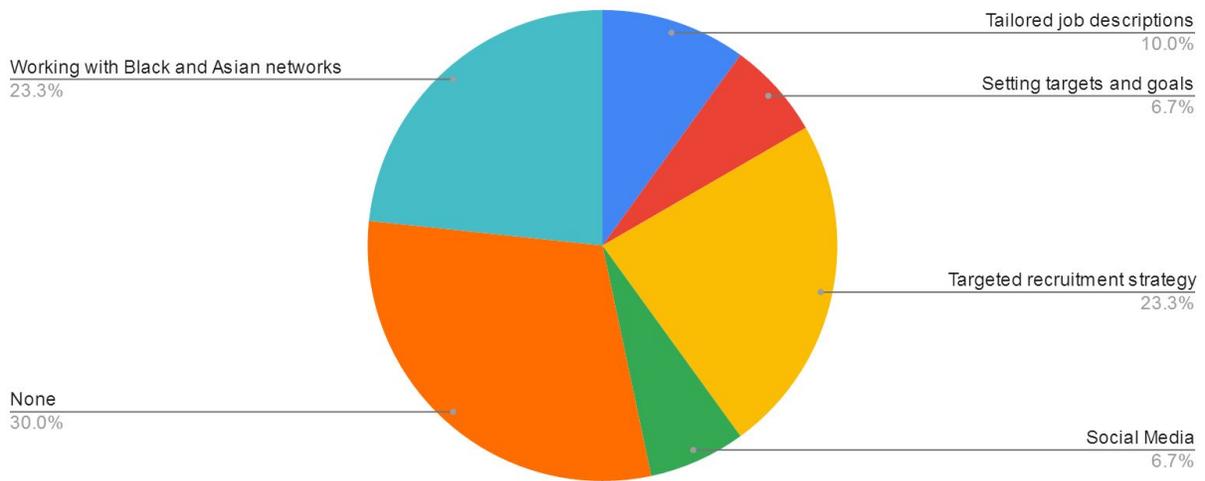
- elicit and highlight wide high level support for the project
- map what work to increase racial diversity on trustee boards was being done or was planned by key and umbrella organisations.
- identify good practice and case studies
- identify barriers
- identify Black and Asian networks
- identify potential project champions from within key and umbrella organisations
- find out what access organisations might have to databases of potential Black and Asian trustees

Key Findings

The figures are of course from a small number of organisations – albeit key ones – but hopefully will give an indication of what’s being done, what more might be done, what support is needed and what specific actions are required to progress the planned outcomes of this project.

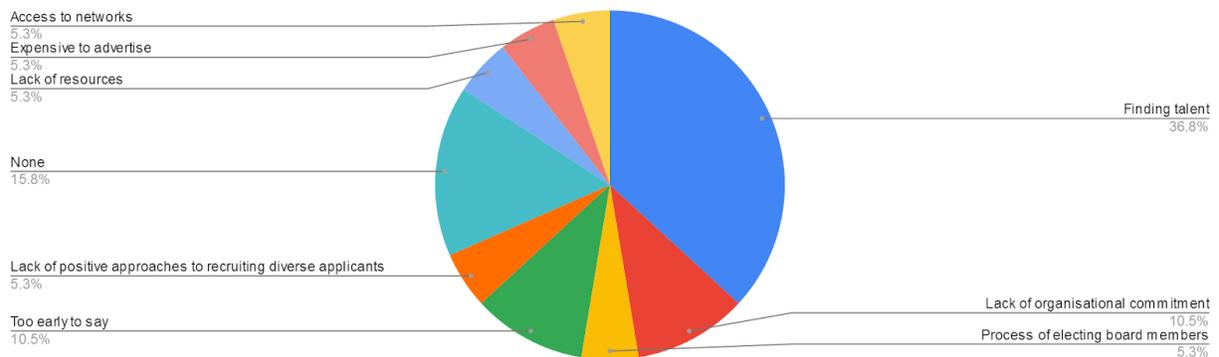
Current activity

What activity are you carrying out to attract Black and Asian applicants?



Barriers

What barriers have you encountered to diversifying your board?



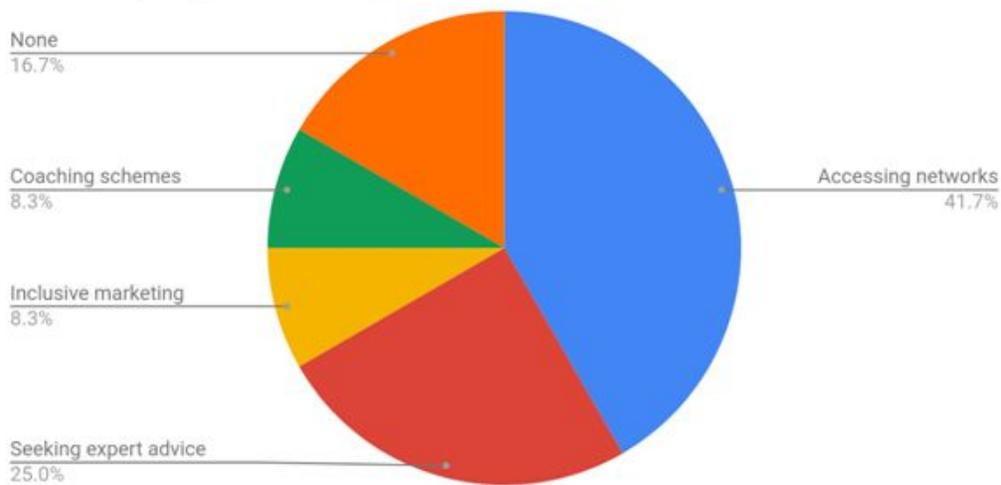
Other barriers included

- Too much reliance on extant networks

- Not enough Black and Asian applicants
- Under-developed thinking about how to diversify and needing to focus on targeting people because of their skills not their diversity

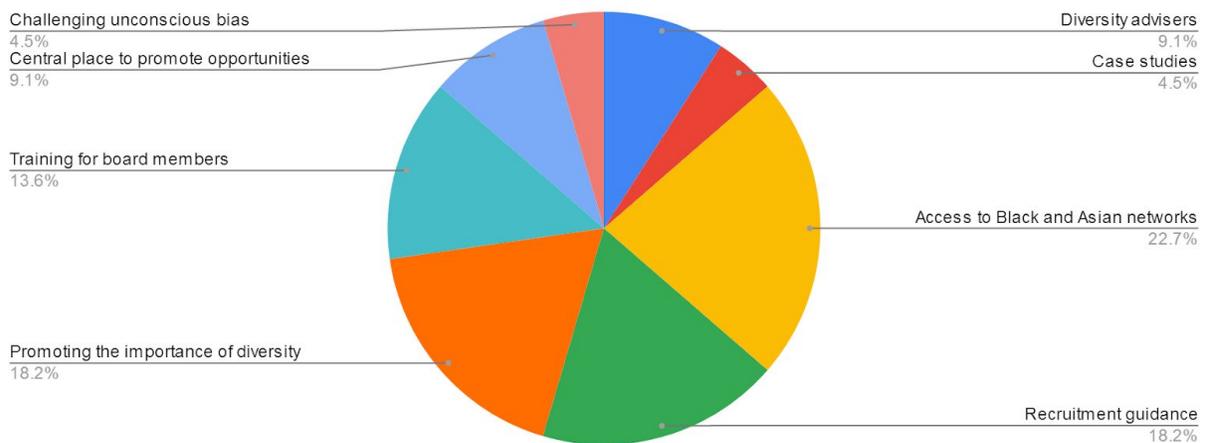
Good practice, case studies etc.

Please share what approaches, case studies, or insights, if any, have helped you diversify your trustee Board?



Support

What support is needed to recruit more Black and Asian trustees?



Black and Asian networks

- Several Black and Asian networks were identified by a few respondents, particularly linked to Voice4Change England.
- 50% of respondents did not have access to Black and Asian networks.

Project champions

The great majority of respondents were keen to champion the project.

Access to Black and Asian databases

65% - Access to Black and Asian databases

35% - No access to Black and Asian databases

Next Steps

- Develop project communication plan
- Sign up project partners to agree to work more closely together; highlight current good examples of partnership working.
- Establish project champions and define their roles (Appendix 1)
- Discuss and agree how project champions engage peers and front line organisations through existing channels, databases and websites
- Research, compile and disseminate widely the list of Black and Asian networks directly and through key partners' channels.
- Set annual project targets in terms of number of organisations recruiting Black and Asian trustees and overall number of Black and Asian trustees.
- Develop and produce process and recruitment guidance for organisations including outlining barriers identified and signposting solutions

September 2019

Appendix 1 – Role of Project Champions

1. Sign up publicly in support of project aims and outcomes
2. Commit own organisation to set targets for Black and Asian trustees
3. Each committing to engaging up to 5 of their peers to set organisational targets for Black and Asian trustee
4. Commit to promoting the project at events, on social media, publications etc.
5. Commit to using their networks and databases to reach and encourage other charitable organisations to increase racial diversity on their Trustee Boards.