

# Diversity in practice: Governance



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The articles in this Guide explore how the fundamental legal duties in the Equality Act 2010 (EA) apply to charities. The **Charity Governance Code** sets out guidance on key elements of charity governance – including on diversity.

The code is not legally binding but expresses ‘best practice’ core principles and governance goals for charity trustee boards. It has been widely adopted across the sector.

The code has seven core principles, including ‘equality, diversity and inclusion’ (EDI). EDI was introduced in early December 2020 – replacing the original ‘diversity’ principle – after a review and consultation process that revealed that diversity remains a key issue for charities.

The new EDI principle is framed around the potential journey that a charity board could make to meet its diversity challenges:

1. assessing understanding of systems and culture
2. setting context-specific and realistic plans and targets
3. taking action and monitoring EDI performance
4. publishing performance information and learning

There are many practical steps that you can take to embed the spirit of the code’s EDI principle within your charity’s governance structures. Some examples include:

### **Recruiting diverse trustees**

The code states that charity boards are more effective if they reflect ‘different perspectives, experiences and skills’.

As well as the protected characteristics under the EA – explored elsewhere in this Guide – diversity in this context includes different backgrounds, life experiences – especially those that are similar to the charity’s beneficiaries – career paths and diversity of thought.

You can use creative approaches in your trustee recruitment processes to reach a more diverse pool of candidates. For example, look at using relevant social media and/or key meeting places for different demographics and adjusting the tone of your recruitment materials to make the role attractive for different types of candidates.

### **Encouraging inclusive and accessible participation**

You will want to make sure that trustees from diverse backgrounds feel fully supported in their role. This includes full induction processes, logistical support

where needed (such as translators / braille or audio support / sufficient disabled access) and, potentially, ongoing mentoring.

Culturally, the nurturing of a 'safe space' where diverse trustees feel that they can share different views and challenge unacceptable behaviour – without being labelled as the 'aggressor' themselves – is crucial. You can encourage this by holding training for all trustees on having challenging and delicate conversations, as well as incorporating EDI awareness as part of your general trustee recruitment, induction, evaluation and exit interview processes.

### **Reporting and monitoring**

To ensure that your EDI measures are accountable, set out what your charity's specific diversity objectives are, and aim to monitor, assess, and publish your performance – and key learnings – on an ongoing basis. Do make sure that you keep within the law: see Jess and Mindy's article on page 6.

### **Sufficient allocation of resources**

As the 'lynchpin' to all other measures, meaningful progress on diversity and governance can only be made if charities actively allocate sufficient financial and time resources – and ideally create a specific budget – to meet your EDI goals.



The Charity Governance Code is recognised by the Charity Commission as the standard for effective charity governance and boards of larger charities are expected to review their own performance annually with an external evaluation every three years. If your board is looking to carry out such a review, we can help by carrying out a governance health check. For more information please see [here](#) or contact your usual advisor.