Improving equality and diversity in the Further Education and Training system:

Support from the Foundation
Personal Foreword from David Russell

The full range and significance of the diversity of our people is understood, appreciated and codified as never before. In appreciating ethnicity, gender, age, languages, beliefs, abilities and many other dimensions, civil society moves inexorably - if unevenly - towards a world where equality for all is protected, diversity is not only celebrated and inclusion is promoted.

This is as true of the beneficiaries of further education and training as of anyone. And it’s true of the professional and para-professional staff in our sector too.

But not everything in the garden is rosy; not by some way.

The Foundation’s recent 2013/14 workforce data¹ for England suggests that the teaching population within the sector does not reflect the profile of learners nor does it reflect the profile of local populations. This is particularly true at leadership and governance level:

- Women comprise on average 63.3% of the workforce across different types of settings, but hold only 48% of senior management roles.

- 84.9% of staff are of “white British” ethnic background – which rises to 91% for senior managers. 4.5% of staff are of Asian and 3.5% of African/Caribbean descent, but only 2.4% or 1.7% respectively out of senior managers. This contrasts with 8.2% and 6.4% of learners nationally.

- People with disabilities are also under-represented amongst staff and governors, though comparisons with percentages of learners are more complex due to classification issues around learners with learning difficulties or other special educational needs.

- We lack data on other protected minority characteristics; this is a problem in itself.

These are national statistics, and we know that there are even more pronounced differences at local levels.

It is surprising to me that anyone still asks why this matters. But they do.

Perhaps we should not be surprised; after all, despite the diversity of modern Britain there are a great many people who have been brought up in ‘monocultural’ and ‘heteronormative’ environments, perhaps with naïve beliefs about what equality of opportunity really means: for example, the well-meaning but frustratingly simplistic position of “just treat everyone the same”.

But even in recent months a senior businessman asked me, in all sincerity, why it mattered if a college’s staff did not remotely reflect the diversity of their students. We must

¹ Published April 2015
never assume that everyone understands the issues, or that we’re into ‘delivery phase’ now. The case – depressingly perhaps in 2015 – must still be made.

Why this is a real priority

The case for increasing the diversity of the workforce, and of senior leadership especially – is two-fold. Front and centre is the business case. If an employer looks at a provider and does not see a diversity which reflects her own business or that of her customers, she is going to question whether that provider has the only thing that really matters: the ability to help her do her business more effectively. And if as a learner – or indeed a teacher - I look at the senior leadership of a college and can’t see any sign of individuals like me, I may start to wonder whether this is a place where people like me can succeed. And in all these cases the likely result is the same: the business, learner or teacher goes elsewhere, taking their talent or their business with them. And that, as they say, is a Fail.

Behind the business case sits the moral case. The obligation on institutions is, we have come to understand as a society in recent decades, every bit as strong as the obligation on individuals to treat people respectfully and equitably (which is not the same as equally, in all cases). And indeed since 2010 this obligation on institutions is recognised and codified in law, in the form of the Equalities Act 2010.

So what can the Foundation do to help?

We have had high ambitions from our inception: our first operational plan set out that we wish to see the senior leadership of the sector reflect the student population in its diversity by 2020; a huge challenge. We have woven equality work into our processes from the beginning, and supported bespoke projects and specialist work in this field. But now we want to raise our game to a higher level. We are not so unrealistic as to suppose the Foundation can tackle these issues alone; the whole sector must act together.

This document sets out the Foundation’s contribution to achieving significant progress on this vital agenda and our support for the sector. It is accompanied by a high level action plan, giving an overview of how we will deliver its aims. Feedback is most welcome. I can always be contacted at david.russell@etfoundation.co.uk

David Russell, CEO
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1. Overall strategic goals

Our vision is of our country as a recognised world leader in further education and training, where learners exceed their high expectations and employers experience growth through excellence in skills development and deployment.

Our mission is to work with teachers, leaders and businesses to help them achieve consistent excellence in Further and Vocational education and training.

We will achieve our mission by:

- Being expert in our field
- Looking outwards
- ‘Doing With’ not ‘Doing To’
- Continuously improving how we work
- Using, creating and promoting evidence and data
- Valuing diversity in excellence wherever it appears
- Having high ambition for learners and employers at all times

The themes of promoting equality and valuing diversity are woven through all these objectives and behaviours; but in particular they come to the fore in the aim of having high ambitions for all, and in valuing all the diverse forms of excellence that can be found and supported in the sector.

In practical terms for equality and diversity, these goals mean we want to promote equality and diversity through our various roles:

As an employer committed to an open and fair People Strategy that ensures we attract and retain the best staff and that all staff have equal opportunities to develop and excel as part of the Foundation.

As a commissioning body committed to having a commissioning and procurement process that ensures contracts we award are to suppliers that can prove their work is accessible to all and proactively encourages a more inclusive and diverse workforce.

As a collaborative player working with the sector to create a more diverse teaching workforce.

Our overarching objectives are therefore to:

- Continue to create and support an inclusive and diverse internal workforce where we attract and retain the best people.
- Help create a more diverse teaching workforce, because this can support quality and equality.
- Help create a more diverse leadership cadre, because this brings greater system resilience, aids innovation, and makes best use of all our collective talents.
- Improve the ability of all leaders and practitioners to support the needs of an increasingly diverse range of staff and learners, because this improves equality of educational and career opportunities for all.
Signs matter

The actions that any body, public or private, can take to improve equality and diversity start with how they communicate. **Signals** – or lack of them – matter. The Foundation will set a good example in how we communicate at all times, whatever the topic. Equality and diversity can easily become an add-on concern that never breaks through into the mainstream discourse of an organisation. From our visual branding – our silhouette figures which are integral to our visual identity and clearly represent diversity – through the accessibility of our services and products, we will not only “think diversity” but “communicate diversity”.

Our equality data collection is uncompromising in its comprehensive approach to inclusion. The questionnaires which we use internally and with all contractors have been compiled with equality experts to represent most up to date practice in equality-proofed data collection. This not only gives us actual data to monitor progress, it also in itself sends a powerful signal about the importance we place on equality. Confident mainstreaming of equality championing matters.

Foundation processes and practice

**Priority for 15-16: Design leading edge internal processes and systems**

The Education and Training Foundation is a commissioning body, delivering through contracts. Our tendering and awarding processes are vital to our character and our success. We highlight, require and demand thoughtful and impactful approaches to equality and diversity at all stages of our tendering processes. Bidders cannot win a contract from us without having a serious, credible plan for how they will make their work accessible and ensure that it is not only open to diversity but actively promotes it. Every contract we let is another chance to make inroads into inequality of opportunity by focussing hard on under-supported or under-represented groups.

For us to be able to achieve our goals, it is fundamental that staff within the Foundation at all levels understand our goals for improving equality and diversity, and are confident in how to deliver this through our various strategies. This means it is crucial that we design leading-edge internal processes and systems that can deliver these aims – through our procurement methods, use of associates and resources and so on. In addition, for us to be seen as an authority on equality and diversity, the Foundation will take a robust approach to increasing the diversity of its own workforce and ensuring equality of opportunities for all who are employed here. This will not only give us more credibility from leading by example, but will also give us much more in-depth knowledge of the practical considerations for employers in implementing these changes within their workforce. It will improve the quality of our commissioning processes and how we support delivery partners – and ultimately providers – in making truly effective changes to their approach.
The Foundation is comfortable publishing details of its own internal position on equality and diversity, showing both strengths and development needs, and how we aim to excel. By being open with how we train our staff and improve our processes we aim to set a good example. We have started a series of internal staff workshops to agree what we need to improve in our own processes and how we go about this. The first of these ran in December 2014, and has resulted in task and finish groups addressing various aspects of our business processes.

We will involve staff as widely and as actively as possible in this process, through our HR/People strategy, so this approach gains maximum engagement and endorsement from colleagues. We will run further staff workshops and training to ensure wider and deeper understanding of the issues and challenges in addressing equality and diversity. We will complete the task and finish group work to recommend and deliver improved processes in these three key areas. We will then review the impact of these processes later in 2015 to identify further ways to improve this part of our work.

In addition, we will undertake a review of our communications activity to ensure this is also designed and delivered in the best way to ensure the achievement of our strategic equality and diversity goals through our main four strategies. We are using our dedicated HR function to undertake a review of our people management practices (for example our staff recruitment, induction and development processes) and ensure these will deliver our strategic equality and diversity goals and embody the principles we are recommending in our programmes. This may involve establishing different entry points to the Foundation such as Apprenticeships and Traineeships.

4. Use of our core programmes to make progress with the sector

Priority for 15-16: Integrate Equality and diversity within our core programmes

Equality and diversity is not a supplementary issue but one that we position at the heart of all our work. We have already integrated equality and diversity into many of our programmes so that our delivery partners included focused elements within wider projects to address relevant issues across the nine protected characteristics. In doing so we aim for a wider, more consistent reach and to improve the impact of equality and diversity activity across the breadth of the sector.

For example:

- Our contract for Learning and development for leaders, managers and those involved in governance in the education and training sector (led by AELP), has
equality and diversity embedded through an accessible and inclusive approach to resource development, support and development for delivery partners in integrating equality and diversity, the use of our equality and diversity monitoring form and analysis of the resulting data.

- Our Professional Standards incorporate equality and diversity explicitly as part of teachers’ and trainers’ professional development.
- Our support to teachers and trainers in improving provision for learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including high-quality resources on the Excellence Gateway.
- Our contract on governance development with AoC, which supports and encourages governing bodies specifically to recruit more women and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people onto governing boards and to make them more representative of their local communities.
- Our Traineeship Staff Support Programme and Apprenticeship Staff Support Programme, which both focused directly on supporting the engagement of vulnerable learners.
- Our Learning Technology Programme, which addresses the accessibility of the digital curriculum through new technologies.

The Foundation’s active funding of bespoke equality and diversity interventions (see section 5 below) only represents a small proportion of our overall expenditure on programmes across our three main priority areas of Professional Standards and Workforce Development; Leadership, Management and Governance; and Vocational Education and Training. This year we will also be investing in commercial membership services and the QTLS professional formation process. Through this we aim to improve equality and diversity attitudes across the breadth of the sector and through the full lifecycle of workforce careers, ensuring greater diversity of trainee teachers as well as those progressing into more senior positions.

Building on this positive start, we know we need to do more. For 2015-16, this will involve:

- Developing the requirements of our procurement and tendering process, so that every delivery partner is obliged to incorporate minimum standards of equality and diversity consideration into their submission, and include clear ways to measure the impact of any intervention.
- Providing clear examples of best practice to encourage better innovation and to develop the expertise of delivery partners in this complex area. We will also set an expectation for consortium leads to subcontract to specialist groups to deliver the relevant sections of their programmes, to increase collaboration and awareness between different providers across the sector.
- Mandating usage of our data monitoring tools to maximise the amount of information recorded to measure equality and diversity issues across the sector.
Through several internal task and finish groups we are ensuring an inclusive approach to setting the best standards in our programme design and development.

5. Use of bespoke support projects

Priority for 15-16: Support for bespoke projects

The mainstreaming of equality and diversity goals is the most powerful strategy we have available. For as long as it proves necessary and effective, we will go beyond the core strategy of embedding equality and diversity within our big programmes and supporting under-represented groups, and also have bespoke support projects. For example, we have already funded a range of career development bursaries for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic education and training professionals in partnership with the Network for Black and Asian Professionals (NBAP), as well as providing sponsored places for “future leaders” at the Women’s Leadership Network (WLN) annual conference.

There are many high-quality programmes and projects being run by expert organisations working to address equality and diversity issues across the nine protected characteristics. These programmes can target specific, focused interventions at particular areas of inequality, and are led by trainers and facilitators who are experienced and knowledgeable about the issues and context, and how best to address these successfully. These are particularly effective at targeting better equality of opportunities across the workforce, to drive greater diversity at all levels. Bespoke programmes (especially when their impact is clearly measured) can tackle a wide variety of equality and diversity issues around workforce development in areas within and beyond the Foundation’s core priorities.

To date, the Foundation has invested £400,000 in supporting bespoke programmes to address equality and diversity issues in leadership, management and governance. These included:

- *Practical Guide to Achieving Diversity on College Boards*, and *Development Programme to Advance Women’s Leadership in Colleges*, both delivered by the Women’s Leadership Network (WLN).
- *Mentoring and Development Programme*, delivered by the Network for Black and Asian Professionals (NBAP). This programme was extended with further funded bursaries in early 2015.
- *Tackling Controversial Issues Around Faith and Belief in Further Education Today*, delivered by a consortium of the Association of Colleges (AoC), the National Union of Students (NUS) and the National Council of Faith and Belief in Further Education (FBFE) / All Faiths And None (AFAN).

For 2015-16, the Foundation will fund a select number of bursaries for bespoke programmes run by specialist network organisations to address equality and diversity issues in the
education and training sector. By providing a select number of bursaries we can target our funding directly to practitioners and ensure the most efficient use of our financial support. We will work with these delivery partners to better demonstrate the impact of their programmes through monitoring data, which can contribute to the wider available information around equality and diversity issues across the sector. It is crucial that these bespoke programmes run alongside our other equality and diversity strategies which are seeking to achieve more systemic change.

6. Working with partners to improve overall approaches and data

Priority for 15-16: Conduct further research into solutions to help drive significant change

More broadly than any bespoke programmes or use of mainstreaming in contracts, we must also work with partners to improve overall approaches and data in our sector.

The various planned activities, for 2015-16, through which we will deliver our equality and diversity strategic goals are heavily reliant on working effectively with various partners across the education and training sector. These include:

- Delivery partners, with varying levels of expertise around equality and diversity issues.
- Specialist organisations focused on particular areas of equality and diversity, who can share their knowledge and expertise.
- Providers themselves, as the end beneficiaries of our programmes and also those whose needs we are seeking to address.

To effect a wider “step change” in equality and diversity issues across the sector, the Foundation will work as part of a collaborative network of organisations, that:

- draws on high-quality research and understanding of the workforce’s challenges and requirements;
- shares expertise across the nine protected characteristics and uses integrated groups of specialists to have the maximum impact through our programmes;
- measures effectively the impact and outcomes of all of our activity so we can better target our future activity and promote best practice where we can prove it has greatest success.

We have achieved progress in all these three areas above:

- We have carried out a consultation “pop-up” tour, in partnership with NIACE, to explore equality and diversity issues and challenges nationwide in more depth (see the excellent outputs here [http://www.equalitiestoolkit.com/tour/](http://www.equalitiestoolkit.com/tour/)).
- We convened an Equalities Network (again working with NIACE), drawing together various key specialist action groups from across the sector to explore how we could better collaborate to deliver joint, “holistic” programmes that consider the needs of
more than one protected characteristic at once.

- We have designed a leading-edge equality and diversity monitoring form to collect data from participants at all our programmes so we can start to gather meaningful information to characterise issues more quantitatively and demonstrate our impact. We are now developing this into an online tool to make it more personalised and less time-consuming to complete.

But there is far more to be done on this front. For 2015-16 we aim to carry out further research involving both experts and also those affected – both learners and practitioners – to explore solutions to achieve a more significant change in the balance of the workforce, in particular how we influence recruitment into the workforce so there is a more diverse entry-level practitioner body as well as more diverse senior management. This can also identify successful approaches in other industries beyond education.

We want to encourage further collaboration between various stakeholders, in particular through our procurement approach where we can mandate the coverage of all relevant protected characteristics in programmes, using multiple subcontracted specialist partners as part of a delivery consortium. And we will also embed the usage of our online monitoring tool once this is complete to combine with our existing Foundation workforce data, and work with analytics experts to support our analysis and understanding of equality and diversity issues across the sector. It is crucial that we demonstrate to the sector the conclusions we have drawn from the data, so delegates recognise the value in providing this to us.

7. Next steps

This document is an assertion of values and ambitions; a stock-take of progress; and a setting out of our approach to supporting a more inclusive and diverse sector. To turn this into impact requires an action plan. A high level action plan is published alongside this document.