

Diversity of Thought in the Board Room

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Agenda

- Setting the scene
- Why is equality, diversity and inclusion important?
- Drivers for change
- Unconscious bias
- Discussion

Setting the scene

What is equality?

- **Equality** is about ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents. It is also the belief that no one should have poorer life chances because of the way they were born, where they come from, what they believe, or whether they have a disability.

What is diversity?

- **Diversity** refers to the presence of people who, as a group, have a wide range of characteristics, seen and unseen, which they were born with or have acquired. These characteristics may include their gender identity, race or ethnicity, LGBTQ+ status, disability status, and more.

What is inclusion?

- **Inclusion** is where people's **differences are valued** and used to enable everyone to thrive at work. An inclusive working environment is one in which **everyone feels that they belong without having to conform**, that **their contribution matters** and they are able to **perform to their full potential**, no matter their background, identity or circumstances. An inclusive workplace has fair policies and practices in place and **enables a diverse range of people to work together effectively**.

Diversity in the Sector

- According to the Inside Housing survey conducted in 2021, from the organisations that responded, how many had all-white executive teams??
 - a) 36
 - b) 41
 - c) 62
 - d) 84

Diversity in the Sector

- Based on the same survey respondents, how many associations said they had all white boards?
 - a) 14
 - b) 25
 - c) 38
 - d) 52

Diversity in the Sector

- Based on the same survey respondents, what percentage of board members were women?
 - a) 14%
 - b) 26%
 - c) 53%
 - d) 41%

Diversity in the Sector

- Based on the same survey respondents, what proportion of housing association board members identify as LGBT?
 - a) 1.6%
 - b) 2.6%
 - c) 3.1%
 - d) 4.2%

Diversity in the Sector

- What proportion of housing association board members identify as living with a disability?
 - a) 1.6%
 - b) 4.9%
 - c) 3.1%
 - d) 2.7%

“Why is diversity and inclusion important?”

Drivers for change

Drivers

- Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998
- Black Lives Matter
- Covid-19
- Governance and Financial Viability Standard
- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard:

“...demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs.”

Drivers

- Social Housing (Green and) White Paper
- Sector Risk Profile
- NHF Code of Governance 2020
- Complaint Handling Code
- Legal, moral and economic arguments

Initiatives in the sector

- Sector schemes e.g. Leadership 2025
- Designated board roles e.g. under 30
- Shadow / junior boards
- Equality and diversity working group(s)
- Reverse mentoring
- Impact assessments

NHF Code

“the board demonstrates a clear and active commitment to achieve equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion in all of the organisation’s activities, as well as in its own composition.”

“the board ensures that its workforce policies and practices support the success of the organisation and reflect its values and its commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion.”

NHF Code

“The membership of board and committees comprises people with diverse backgrounds and attributes, having regard to the diversity of the communities the organisation serves and in line with the organisation’s stated commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion.”

Unconscious Bias

What is Unconscious Bias?

- Every time you make a decision, your social background, personal and cultural values, and life experiences influence your reasoning
- This can lead to a form of **unconscious bias**, also known as **implicit bias**, which unfairly influences decision making (e.g. recruitment)
- While it is important to use your experience to make decisions, **it is a problem** when you are **influenced too heavily** by your assumptions, expectations, and preferences

8 common types of unconscious bias

Type	Definition
Name bias	a preference for someone based on their name. It can lead to you making assumptions about their race or background for example.
Affinity bias	unconsciously preferring people who share similar background or qualities with you or someone you admire
Beauty bias	unconsciously linking “appearance” (physical features/expression/ attractiveness) with “personality” (skills, ability to do the job) – they don’t always match!
Conformity bias	when your views are swayed too much by those of other people
Confirmation bias	unconsciously searching for bits of evidence that back up (confirm) your first impressions/opinions (good or bad) , rather than looking at the whole picture
Gender bias	unconscious preference for one gender over the other - stemming from our deep-seated beliefs about gender roles and stereotypes
Halo effect	which occurs when we focus on one particularly great feature about a person – similar to affinity and confirmation bias, it makes us overlook other information & negative aspects – can blind you to reality and skew your opinion
Horns effect	the opposite of the halo effect: you focus on one particularly negative feature about a person , which clouds your view of their other qualities

How to overcome your unconscious bias

- Unconscious bias training
- We all have biases - be honest with yourself!
- Take your time to make your decisions
 - avoid snap judgements
 - keep an open mind & look for evidence to back up your assessment
 - fully assess the information you are provided
 - write down your opinions/assessment
 - question your biases at all stages & ask others to challenge you

Discussion

- How do we monitor equality, diversity and inclusion?
- How can and do we lead recruitment as Board members to achieve a more diverse Board?
- How do we maximise the use of Board Members' diverse skills in decision-making?
- What will I take back for myself and my Board from today's session?

Questions?

