Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Anti Racist Approach

2023 - 2025

Our Values

VOLUNTEERING MATTERS

- Straightforward
- Positive
- Inclusive
- Compassionate
- Empowering
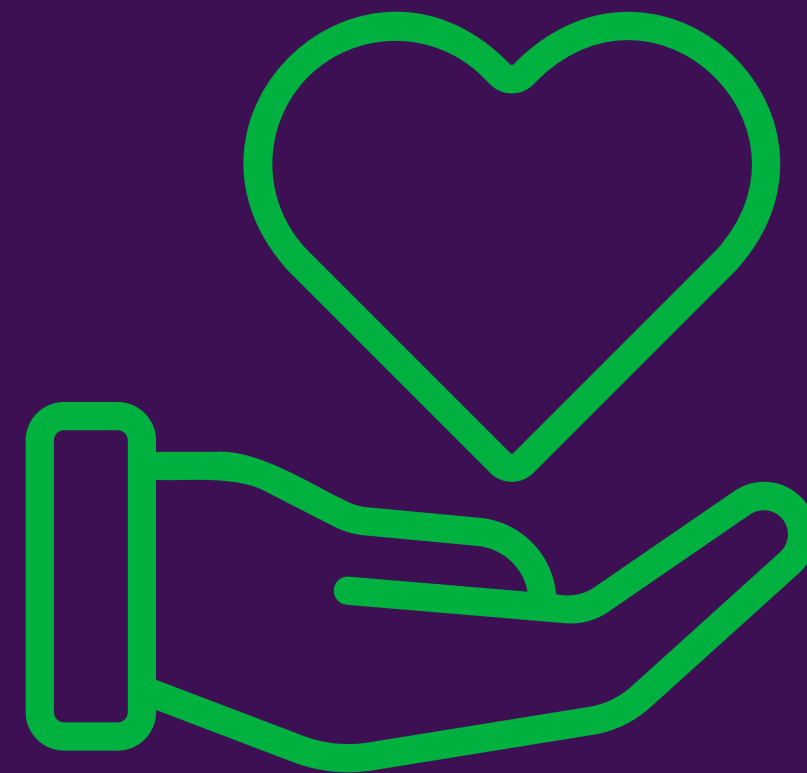
Foreword by Paul Reddish, CEO

First of all, a huge thank you to everyone in the organisation who has contributed to aspects of our new EDIA approach. This has included all the work by those involved in Shape the Change, the Brave Report and wider organisation groups and input. Much of the actions and activities will now be tracked and reported in in one place, and give us something to measure our progress against.

This work is really important. This organisation has a long and proud history in many of it's achievements, but like all things built for their time, many of the systems and cultures need constant review. The acceptance that an organisation, and it's systems, can discriminate and that it will continue to without proactively addressing and changing things is an important part of the journey of an organisation with EDIA at it's heart. I'm proud of the work we've already done, creating conversations on difficult topics and exploring new systems and approaches with equity in mind. But there is much, much more work to do. The recent census showed for example that BME population has increased to just over 18% in the UK. Our country is becoming more and more diverse all the time, and there is a huge opportunity to Volunteering Matters to be an exemplar in social cohesion, bringing people together in pursuit of a common goal, learning together and about each other as we go.

Given the current economic climate, it has made financing some of this work more challenging, but there is much we can and will still do that doesn't require financial investment. Our immediate focus over the coming months will be work that we can get on with without significant investment. There is much that falls into that category that can and will make a difference to those working here.

I think most importantly, this approach is something that we want and encourage all teams to talk about and adopt locally within their teams and settings. Our organisation by it's nature is distributed in it's power and relationships. This means that change and improvements need to be led with relevance locally with as much vigour as the changes which will be made centrally for the benefit of all.

Introduction

Global movements and events over the last couple of years have brought into sharp focus just how much work we must still do to create a fair and equal society. At Volunteering Matters, we absolutely believe that diversity enriches our organisation and we're on a journey to improve, where differences are acknowledged and celebrated, where all of our people - staff, volunteers, and people we work alongside and for, feel supported, valued and respected.

We've already put into motion efforts to better reflect the communities in which we are based and work, though understand that this alone will not address the wider issues of culture, inclusion and anti racism within the organisation. Like other organisations, when our staff and volunteers don't feel their voices are heard, ideas considered, and contributions valued, they leave; and with that, knowledge, skills, expertise, diverse lived experience and thought also leave.

We want our equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-racism (edia) practices to be co produced and run deep through the organisation, across all levels and in all decision making, guided by our values. We want to foster and protect an inclusive and equitable culture that makes all of our people feel safe, feel that they belong and importantly able to thrive during their time with us.

In people feeling safe, confident and valued, we believe we'll see the best of them and their abilities. However, what we acknowledge through two recent internal reports led by staff and supported by the Executive Leadership Team is that some staff with protected characteristics are more likely to experience microaggressions and have a poorer experience of the organisation and leadership. We are committed to changing this.

We've started laying the foundations to becoming an anti-racist, truly accessible, and confidently engaging with all communities organisation. We need people to continue understanding and embracing that edia is the responsibility of each of us and all of us, starting with our leaders who set the tone for our culture. Going forward, we commit to being transparent about our learnings, our successes and failings, and open to challenge and collaboration.

This approach sets our ambition for the next 2 years, 2023-2025, which aims to create a strong foundation from which to systematically build an equitable and inclusive organisation, recognising that the work will evolve and require regular review.

Our Staff Diversity

We aim to create a workplace characterised by a strong sense of belonging and trust. This is the first year of monitoring and publishing our data to help us understand the diversity of our people and how we reflect the communities we work alongside.

By sharing this data, we want to be transparent and hold ourselves accountable for change.

The data is for 192 staff (as of Oct 2022) and across five characteristics:

- Gender
- Disability
- Sexual Orientation
- Age
- Ethnicity

Age range of employees


Gender identities of employees
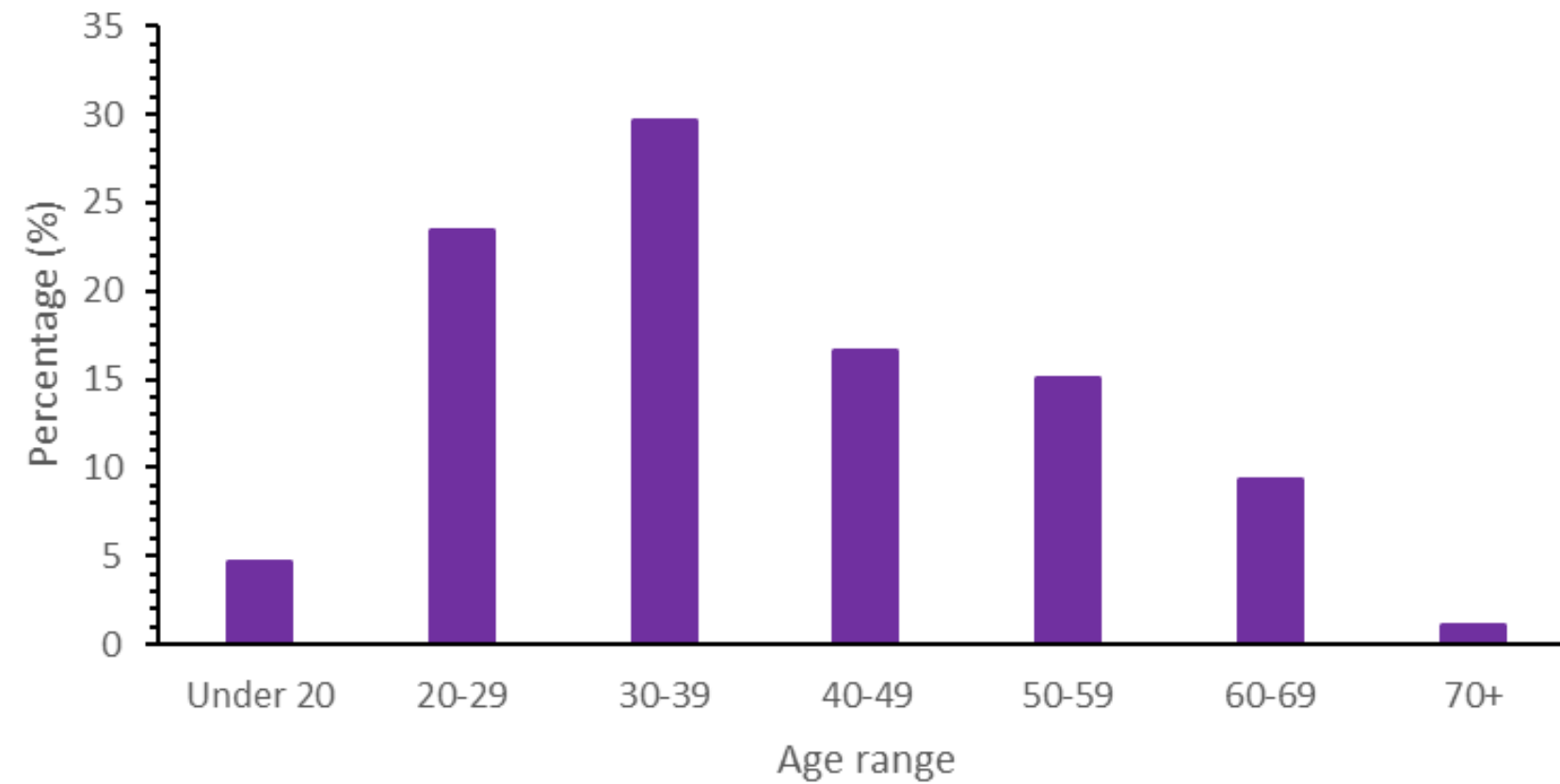
The highest number of employees fall in the 30–39-year-old age range (29.69%), followed by 23.44% in the 20–29-year-olds, 16.67% in the 40–49-year-olds, 9.38% in the 60–69-year-old range. The lowest percentage of employees fall in the under 20-year-old age range (4.69%) and 70+ year old age range (1.04%).
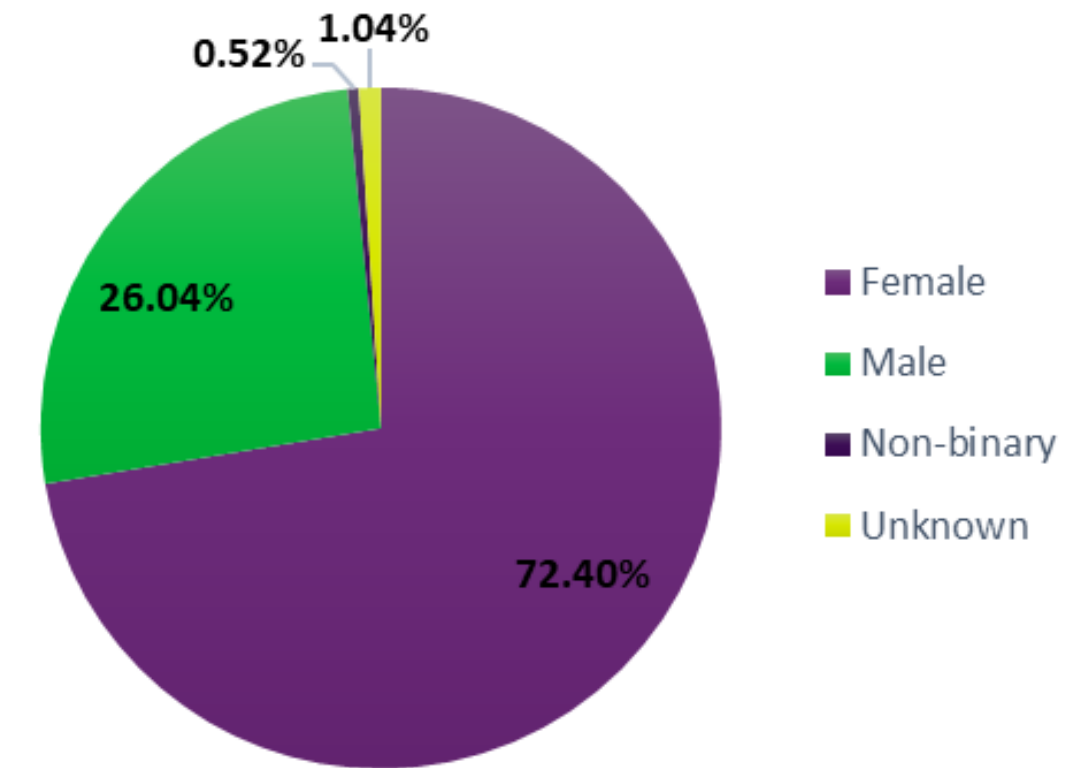
72.40% of employees identify as female, 26.04% as male and 0.52% as non-binary. Data for 1.04% of employees is unknown.

Ethnicity Group

Employees disabililty status
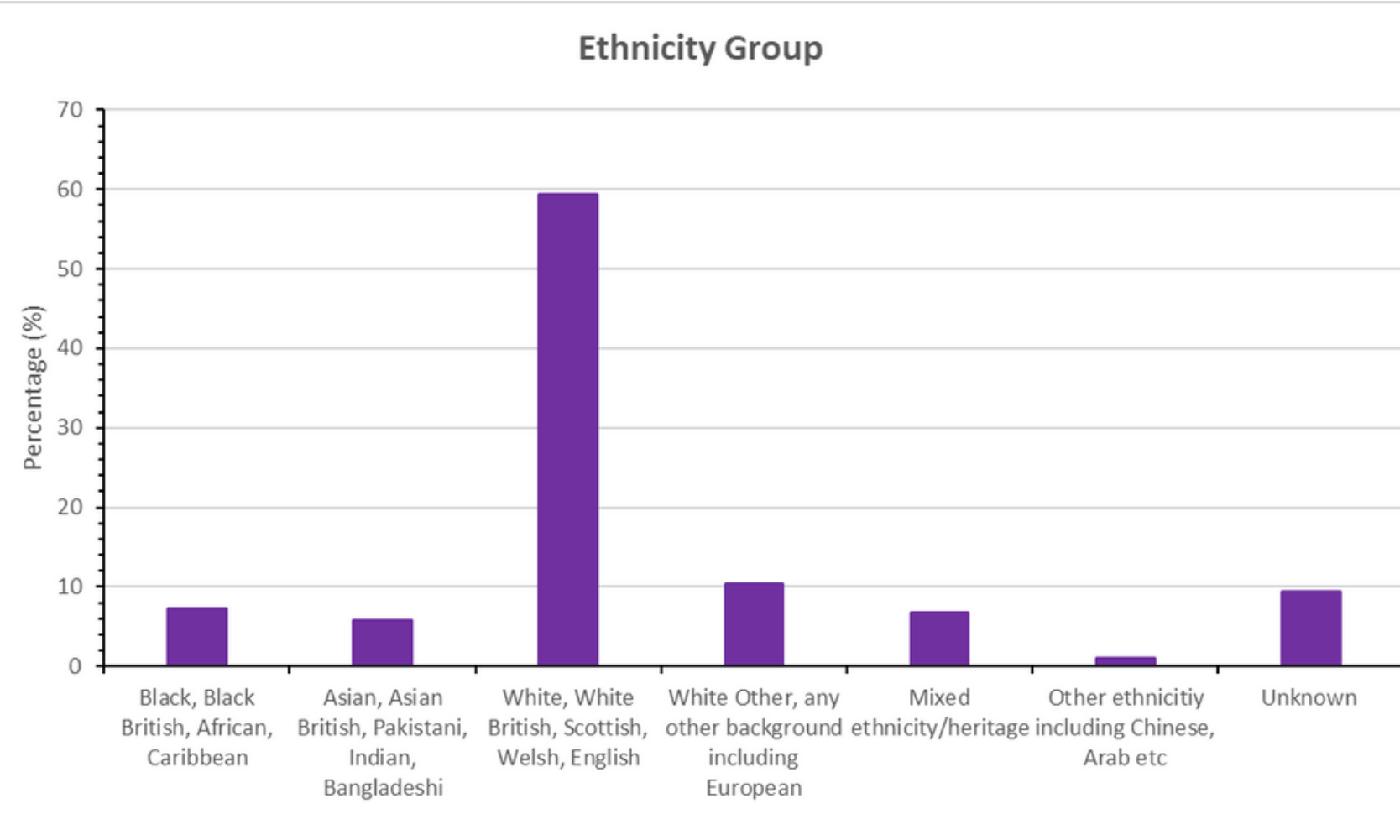
The majority of our employees identify as White, White British, Scottish, Welsh or English (59.38%), with all remaining ethnicity groups being represented by around 10% or less. 7.29% identify as Black, Black British, African or Caribbean, 5.73% as Asian, Asian British, Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi, 10.42% as White Other, 6.77% as mixed ethnicity/heritage and 1.04% as other ethnicity. Data is unknown for 9.38%
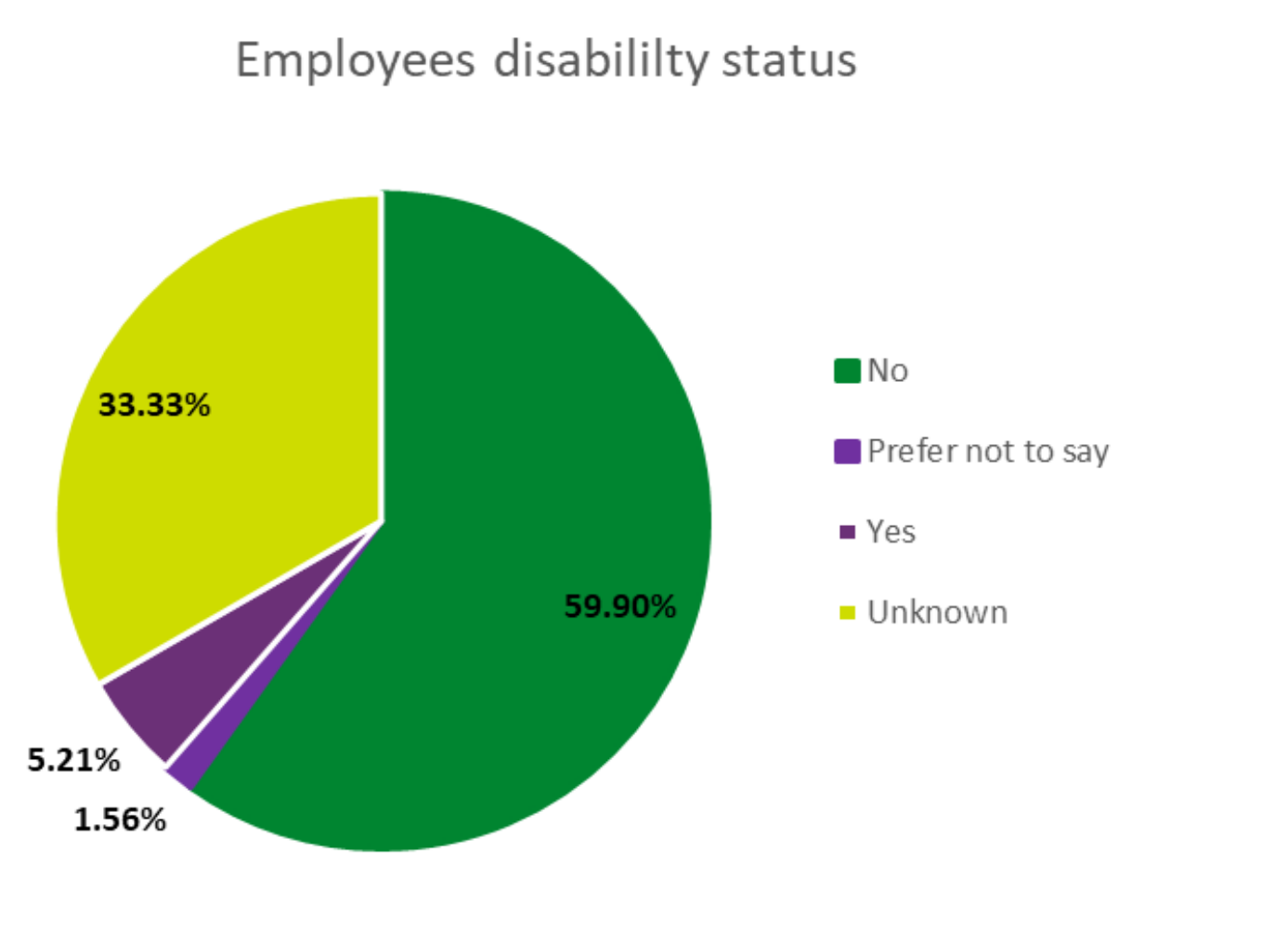
59.90% of employees do not classify themselves as having a disability, 5.21% do classify themselves as having a disability, 1.56% of employees prefer not to say. Data is unknown for 33.33% of employees.

Sequality
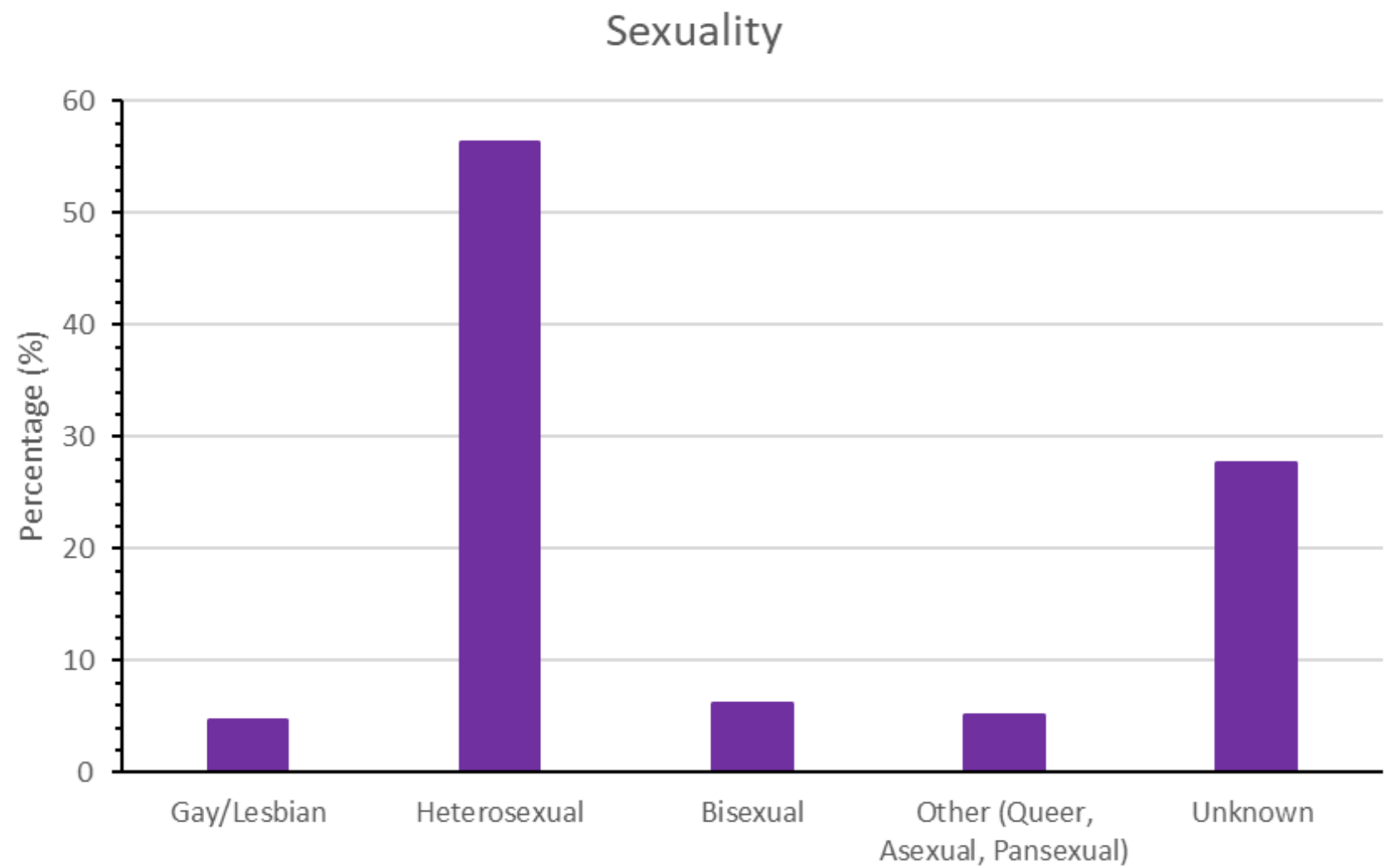
The majority 56.25% of employees identify as heterosexual in their sexuality identification. Identifying as bisexual was the next highest percentage 6.25%, 4.69% of employees as gay/lesbian and 5.21% of employees identify as other which includes queer, asexual and pansexual. Data is unknown for 27.60% of employees.

Our strategy

We bring people together to overcome society's most complex issues, building stronger communities through the power of volunteering.

We work with local communities, turning local knowledge and energy into action and progress. And because we're a national charity, we do this at scale.

Our EDIA ambition

An anti racist organisation that attracts, excites and retains staff and volunteers, committed to cultivating a culture of inclusion, where everyone thrives.

Guiding Principles

- **Listening to diverse voices:** We will proactively create opportunities and spaces to hear about and understand the lived experience of our people, using the insight to improve. We will amplify under-represented voices including those with overlapping (intersectional) identities that lead to multiple disadvantage.

- **Being curious:** We will approach edia with an open mind, checking our assumptions and continuously strive to develop our behaviours to be more inclusive.

- **Using evidence:** Where there are differences in outcomes between groups, we will look to understand why and take action to redress any unfairness, lack of opportunity.

- **Sharing practice:** We will recognise, share and build on good practice across the organisation.
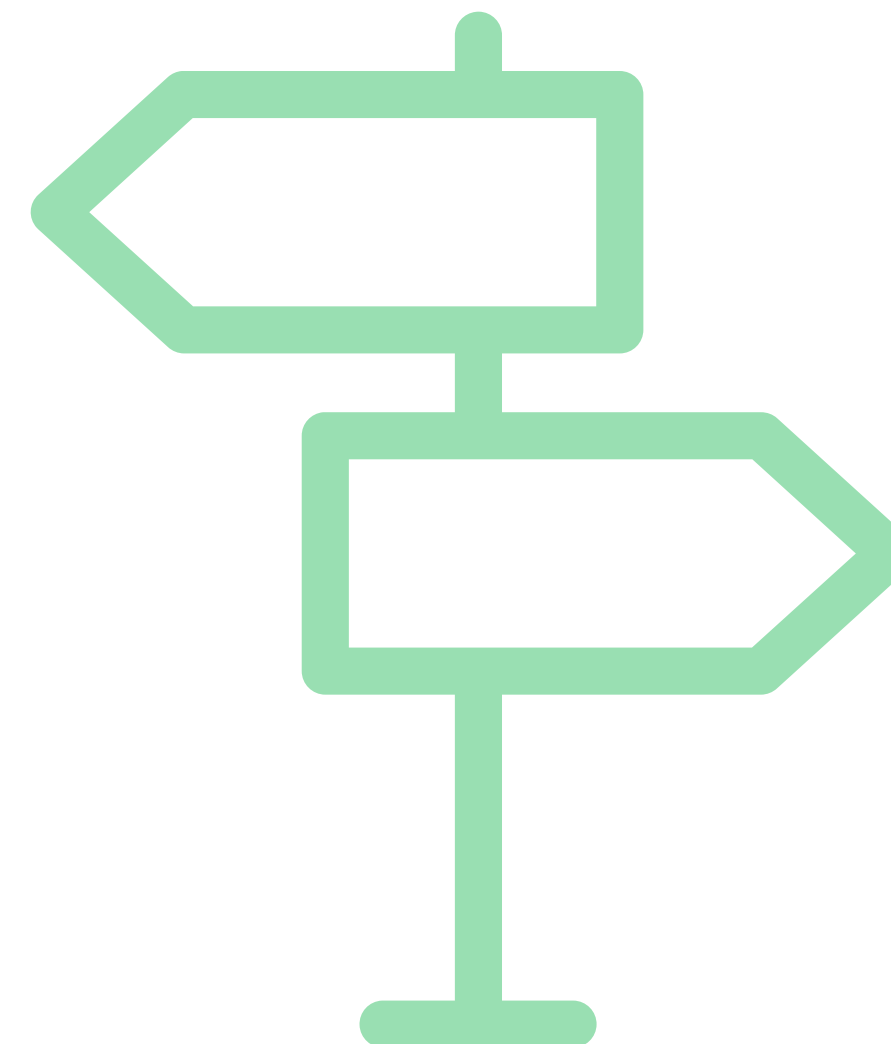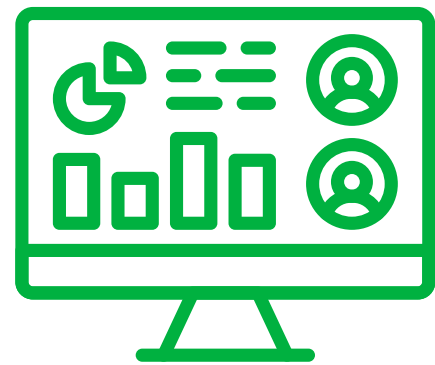
3 Themes

Who we are

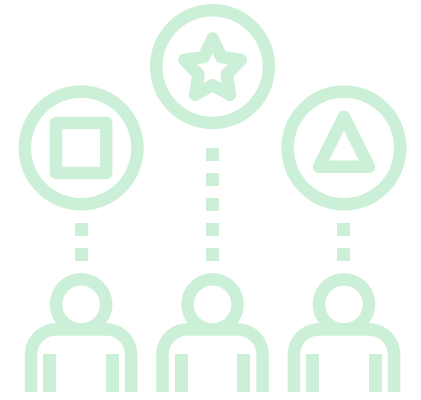1. Recruitment, Retention & Progression
2. Reputation

What we do

3. Competence & Confidence
4. Not Racist to Anti racist

## How we improve

5. Data & Insights

Who We Are

1. Recruitment, Retention & Progression: Our Trustees, Staff and Volunteers reflect the diversity of UK at all levels and are able to thrive in an open and inclusive culture.

   - All staff responsible for hiring employees will be confident in using the new organisational Recruitment Framework including understanding the impact on protected characteristic groups at various recruitment stages and where possible use positive action.

   - When recruiting for leadership roles we will conduct an equality impact assessment to identify actions to increase interest and applications from protected characteristic groups including care experience.

   - Our leadership teams will become more representative of UK diversity in terms of disability and race.

   - Action our commitment on becoming a disability confident employer.

   - Critically examine the progress and employee lifecycle of our ethnic minority and disabled staff.

Who We Are
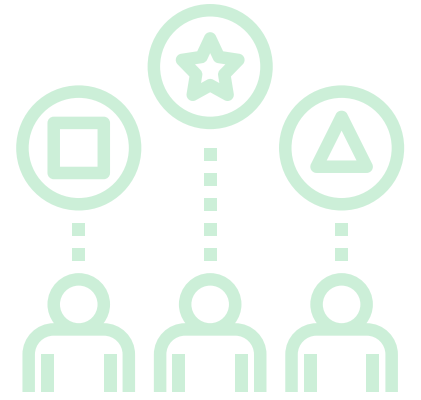
2. Reputation: Staff, Volunteers and Communities view and experience us to to be an organisation for them, committed and striving for inclusion and being anti racist.

- Research appropriate benchmarking and work towards accreditation using established Charity Sector standards.

- Publicly share our edia practice with funders through our delivery work and relevant forums, including our website and social media platforms.

- Review and improve the way we communicate with volunteers and communities to promote volunteering.

- Engage with communities not already involved with the organisation to understand and remove barriers to involvement.

What We Do

3. Competence & Confidence: All staff are aware of and as far as reasonably possible, engaged in regular edia learning and development.

- Set up a reciprocal mentoring programme.

- At a minimum, every quarter organise awareness raising and expert sessions on key diversity calendar dates and protected characteristic groups including care experience.

- Develop our internal edia resources (blogs, articles, videos and more) to increase awareness and promote self learning.

- All leaders will understand how and when to complete an Equality Impact Assessment.

- Invest in inclusive leadership training.

- Build our race fluency and facilitate/source training to ensure that staff and volunteers better understand issues of systemic racism.

What We Do

4. Not racist to Anti racist: Our systems and processes, actions and decisions do not sustain racial inequity.

- Address and take action on all allegations of discrimination, harassment, bullying, victimisation in an effective and timely manner.

- Seek to make our complaints process accessible and easy to use.

- Listen to our Black and ethnic minority colleagues, holding space for experiencing sharing.

- Adopt a "nothing about me without me" approach to key changes and initiatives.

- Review, grow and strengthen our Diversity Networks including our People of Colour Network

- Sign up to BITC Race Charter

- Create Inclusion Champions across the organisation who will support our edia work

How We Improve

5. Data & Insights: Good quality data is central to our decision making and helps us measure and drive change.

- Create a plan to increase the number of staff completing their diversity data to reduce the number of 'unknowns' for disability, race, sexual orientation.

- 6 monthly staff pulse surveys to gauge wellbeing, experience and impact of initiatives.

- Annually publish our diversity data on staff and trustees.

- Review our equalities monitoring procedures.

- Start collating diversity data for our volunteers.

Success Will Look Like...

- Our people and partners are assured that we are doing all that we can as an organisation to eliminate discrimination and promote equity, diversity, inclusion and become an anti racist organisation

- Our monitoring and evaluation of activities including our staff surveys, recruitment and other feedback loops inform us of the positive impact

- Our people feel confident to recognise and address microaggressions and bias

- Our staff and volunteer profile is more reflective of the places it operates within

- Increased opportunity for leadership development for our underrepresented protected characteristic groups, particularly disabled staff and ethnic minority staff

- We have a staff equality data completion rate of at least 75% on our new HR system

- An increased number of staff are involved in our diversity networks

- An increased number of staff are utilising edi resources on MS Teams for self learning

Accountability

We want to make sure that everyone across the organisation knows what their role is in implementing our EDIA approach and that we're open about our progress. To do this, we will:

- Communicate the approach and its initiatives to staff, volunteers and other audiences (where relevant)
- Ensure every team is accountable for implementing changes locally
- Every 6 months, report, review and discuss progress against the approach with the Culture and Equalities subcommittee of our Board
- Publish an annual update on our progress against our themes

Terminology

Equity: Often used interchangeably with 'equality'. Equality allocates the same level of support and resource to everyone. Equity goes further to recognise that each person has different background circumstances, different advantages and disadvantages usually based on their protected characteristic, and allocates the resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

Diversity: All the ways we differ and an appreciation of difference; can include visible difference eg ethnicity and non-visible eg religion, sexual orientation, socio economic status etc.

Inclusion: Ensuring everyone is given the opportunity to participate; people feel like they are valued, heard, belong, without having to conform, no matter their background, identity or circumstances.

Anti-racist: Taking action to challenge and dismantle racist behaviours, practices and structures.

Protected characteristics: The term "protected characteristics" comes from the Equality Act 2010 which aims to prevent discrimination. Protected characteristics are aspects of a person's identity that makes them who they are; everyone has at least of few of the nine protected characteristics which are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race: can refer to colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins
- religion or belief: can refer to religious or philosophical beliefs, including a lack of belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

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