

Valuing Diversity



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Why value diversity?

Society is diverse:

- One in five adults and one in 20 children are disabled in some way.
- One in 12 people are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, the figure rises to one in eight of under 16 year olds.
- One in 20 people who have a religious belief belong to a faith community other than Christian.
- One in four people are under 16 and one in six are over 65.

By 2010 only 20% of the UK working population will be white, male, able-bodied and under 45.

This factsheet provides an introduction to the concept of diversity, explains how diversity fits with the values of Scouting, and outlines how diversity has direct benefits for Scouting.

The benefits of diversity

It has been proven that by valuing diversity, organisations bring benefits to the people they work with, their local communities, as well as to themselves.

Defining diversity

There are many definitions of a diverse organisation. One of the more useful and relevant for Scouting is the one used by The National Centre for Volunteering:

'A diverse organisation is one which values difference. It is one which recognises that people with different

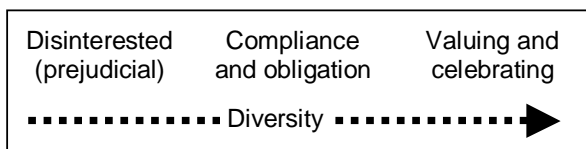
backgrounds, skills, attitudes and experiences bring fresh ideas and perceptions.

Diverse organisations encourage and harness these differences to make their services relevant and approachable.

A diverse organisation draws upon the widest possible range of views and experiences, so it can listen to, and meet, the changing needs of its users, staff, volunteers, partners and supporters.'

Diversity is more than just being 'politically correct' or having an equal opportunities policy. Embracing diversity brings benefits for an organisation. It is a move away from policies and procedures and embeds diversity into the organisation's culture. Rather than simply minimising the effect of discrimination and encouraging equal treatment it takes positive advantage of the differences between individuals and works against prejudice.

It is possible to place attitudes towards diversity on a continuum, from organisations that have a disinterested (or in some cases a prejudicial) attitude, to a position where an equal opportunities approach is established, to one where the diversity of the organisation is celebrated:



Valuing diversity is the next step in growing and developing as an organisation.

Diversity and The Scout Association

Like other voluntary organisations, Scouting gains real advantages by valuing diversity. The importance of diversity is included in the Fundamentals of Scouting, the Programme, and the Adult Training Scheme. It is supported by the policies of the Association.

• **The Fundamentals**

Many of the Fundamentals of Scouting reflect the same ideas behind the concept of valuing diversity. For instance, it reflects the fact that Scouting believes 'that the world is a better place when people:

- are trustworthy, self-controlled and self confident,
- have self-respect and respect for others,
- work together to serve other people and to improve society,
- have an active religious faith.'

(See *Scouting Essentials* - Section 1.1)

• **The Programme**

Three of the six Personal Development Areas on which the programme is based include aspects that value diversity:

- **'Faith and beliefs:** to grow in a relationship with their God, articulate and express that faith, to live out Scouting values and to respect the beliefs of others.'
- **'Relationships:** to relate to and work with many other individuals, each with their own feelings, gender and culture, and to develop mature friendships.'
- **'Community:** live in a community servicing others and valuing the contribution of all.'

(*Scouting Essentials* - Section 1.3)

• **Adult Training**

There are two modules in the Adult Training Scheme that highlight the value and importance of diversity. Module 1, *Essential Information* introduces the concepts in Scouting and the subject is further developed in Module 7, *Valuing Diversity*.

• **The Equal Opportunities Policy**

The Association's Equal Opportunities Policy states that the Association is 'committed to extending Scouting, its Purpose and Method to young people in all parts of society.'

All adults in Scouting have a responsibility to operate the Equal Opportunities Policy:

'No Member of the Movement is expected to receive less favourable treatment based on age; class; gender; marital status; sexual orientation; mental or physical ability; political or religious belief.'

• **Growth and development**

There are important growth and development issues that encourage an active and positive approach to diversity. Experience from the voluntary and commercial sectors suggests that organisations that embrace diversity are able to develop a broader membership that is more reflective of their local communities. They enjoy access to rich and previously unused pools of time and talent; gain an improved public image and find an increased motivation amongst adult volunteers, who find that they are treated fairly.

In addition, funders are increasingly seeking to only work with organisations that can demonstrate a commitment to diversity.

Diversity - the topics

Diversity encompasses a huge range of issues. In terms of the Association, the main topics are:

- Special Needs

- Faiths & Beliefs
- Black and Minority Ethnic Communities
- Gender/co-education
- Ageism
- Disadvantaged young people
- Sexuality/sexual orientation

There are a variety of resources to support work with these issues that are available from the Scout Information Centre, or from ScoutBase.

More information

Making Diversity Happen – A practical guide for voluntary and community organisations, Colin Hann, NCVO Publications, 2003

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Scouting resources:

- ScoutBase Development pages
www.scoutbase.org.uk/hq/development/
- ScoutBase Special Needs pages:
www.scoutbase.org.uk/ps/sneeds/
- ScoutBase Spiritual Development Pages
www.scoutbase.org.uk/ps/fab/
- Changes to upper age limit
www.scoutbase.org.uk/support/age/