Diversity & Governance Research Report

Overcoming Barriers to Diversity in FE Governor Recruitment: A Draft Report for Consultation

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# Contents

Executive Summary .................................................................................................................. 3  
Introduction............................................................................................................................. 4  
Section 1: Governor Recruitment and Diversity................................................................. 6  
A Review of the Literature .................................................................................................... 6  
  The Current Profile of FE Boards .................................................................................... 7  
  Recruitment of Governors ............................................................................................... 9  
  Barriers to Recruitment .................................................................................................. 10  
  Understanding the Diversity Agenda ............................................................................ 12  
  Recruitment and Diversity in Related Sectors ............................................................ 14  
  Challenges for Governance in the FE sector ................................................................. 22  
Section 2: Voices from Inside and Outside the Sector ...................................................... 23  
  Voices from the FE Sector .............................................................................................. 23  
  Voices from Outside the Sector ..................................................................................... 30  
Section 3: Recommendations and Action Plan................................................................. 41  
  Action Plan: For Consultation with the Sector ............................................................. 46  
  Recommendations from the CEL/DIUS Research Project ......................................... 46  
References ............................................................................................................................. 53  
Appendices............................................................................................................................ 55
Executive Summary

This research report outlines the findings of a two-month research project (February and March 2007) on the recruitment and diversity of FE governors. It highlights certain key barriers that appear to be restricting the development of a more diverse profile for FE governing bodies and makes recommendations about how to facilitate the appointment of people from under-represented groups. A review of the available literature explores the current profile of FE governing bodies, the few studies that focus specifically on the recruitment and diversity of FE governors, and research conducted in other related sectors that involve similar roles and responsibilities to college governors. A particularly distinctive feature of this research is that it draws on interviews conducted with people outside the FE sector. This report examines the key themes emerging from these research interviews, highlighting five primary barriers to diversity in FE governance:

1. Informal recruitment methods;
2. Lack of knowledge about FE college boards, governors and governor vacancies;
3. Lack of confidence;
4. Time pressures;
5. The absence of remuneration.

The report also outlines an Action Plan designed to increase the diversity of college governors and to ensure effective monitoring. Seeking to make governor recruitment more formal, transparent and inclusive, the report’s recommendations are to:

1. Create an effective system to monitor and report progress on governor diversity;
2. Develop a national governor recruitment strategy;
3. Enhance the profile of governors;
4. Introduce an FE governor apprenticeship scheme;
5. Consider governor remuneration and other possible improvements to governor recognition;
6. Conduct further research on the governor recruitment process.

This Action Plan makes proposals regarding which agencies should be responsible as lead organisation for enacting and monitoring progress in relation to each recommendation.

This interim report and action plan includes feedback provided by the DIUS, CEL and the 2007 Good Governance Forum.
Introduction

This research report examines the recruitment and diversity of FE governors. It highlights certain key barriers that appear to be restricting the development of a more diverse profile for FE governors and makes recommendations about how to facilitate and monitor the appointment of board members from under-represented groups. It was written at the completion of a two-month research project commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills now the Department for Innovation Universities and Skills DIUS (February and March 2007). The research remit was to review the available literature in this area, to interview 10 members of the wider community who are currently not FE governors¹, and to produce proposals on how to enhance and monitor the diversity profile of FE governing bodies. A particularly distinctive feature of this research project is that it draws on interviews conducted with people currently outside the FE sector. The report is organised into three main inter-related sections.

Section 1: reviews the available information on the current profile of FE governing bodies and presents a brief overview of the few research studies that have been conducted specifically on the recruitment and diversity of governing bodies in the FE sector. It explores the key recruitment barriers to enhanced diversity and some of the misunderstandings about “diversity” that currently characterise the sector. In order to develop a broader perspective this section then reviews research conducted on other sectors that involve similar roles and responsibilities to college governors. In particular, it examines the recruitment and diversity of lay magistrates and independent members of Police Authorities. In both these cases particular attention has been paid to diversifying the profile of board members, and a clear requirement exists for these boards to be representative of the populations they serve. This section also considers the governance of housing associations and NHS trusts. Both these sectors have undergone reform in terms of recruitment practices, and housing associations very recently began to remunerate board members.

Section 2: builds on the foregoing literature reviews by exploring the key themes emerging from thirteen research interviews (with three people in the sector and ten people currently outside the sector). These research interviews highlighted five primary barriers to diversity in FE governance:

1) informal recruitment methods

2) lack of knowledge about FE college boards, governors and governor vacancies

¹ The sample size was agreed with the DfES as a reasonable number of research interviews to provide illustrative examples for the sector within the restricted time scale of the project.
3) lack of confidence
4) time pressures
5) the absence of remuneration.

Several of these barriers can be mutually reinforcing (e.g. informal recruitment typically results in people outside the sector being unaware that vacancies exist).

**Section 3:** outlines an Action Plan incorporating a series of recommendations designed to overcome the barriers, increase the diversity of college governors and to ensure effective monitoring of these changes. The report’s recommendations are to:

1) Create an Effective System to Monitor and Report Progress on Governor Diversity
2) Develop a National Governor Recruitment Strategy
3) Enhance the Profile of Governors
4) Introduce an FE Governor Apprenticeship Scheme
5) Consider Governor Remuneration and Other Possible Improvements to Governor Recognition

These recommendations seek to make the recruitment practices of FE governors more formal, transparent and inclusive. The Action Plan includes proposals about the allocation of responsibilities to particular organisations for monitoring progress on board diversification.

**This interim report and action plan includes feedback provided by the DIUS, CEL and the 2007 Good Governance Forum.**
Section 1: Governor Recruitment and Diversity
A Review of the Literature

There is now a growing interest in the diversity composition of governing bodies in FE. In reviewing the role and key challenges of FE colleges, the Foster report (2005: 46) was “concerned” that governing boards did not reflect the diversity profile of learners in colleges. The Commission for Black Staff research report (2005) recommended the targeted recruitment of black and minority ethnic (BME) governors. Prior to this, the Nolan report on Standards in Public life (1996) highlighted the need for new systems of openness for governing bodies – for example, the use of search committees to oversee advertising vacancies and the processes through which candidates for the board are recommended, interviewed and evaluated. This report required that college governors be “truly representative of the college’s local community” (Parnham 1998:302).

This first section reviews the available literature on the current profile of FE governing bodies and on the recruitment and diversity of governors. The review examines some of the misunderstandings about “diversity” that currently characterise the sector. It suggests that this area of enquiry is largely under-researched, based mainly on work conducted by the Institute for Volunteering Research on behalf of the Association of Colleges and the Centre for Excellence in Leadership. In order to develop a broader perspective, the review also considers research conducted in other related sectors that involve similar roles and responsibilities to college governors. It explores issues in the recruitment and diversity of lay magistrates and independent members of Police Authorities, two sectors where particular attention has been paid to diversifying the profile of board members, and a clear requirement exists for these boards to be representative of the communities they serve. This literature review also examines the governance of housing associations and NHS Trusts (the DIUS specifically requested that the literature review include NHS Trusts). Both these sectors remunerate board members and have undergone reform in order to create more diverse board membership and accountable, transparent recruitment processes. In 2001, the Department of Health transferred responsibility for recruitment to a new NHS

2 In terms of police governance, there has been a review of the recruitment of independent members of Police Authorities (Myhill 2003; Hamer 2004) (as well as Independent Advisory groups consisting of representatives of different minorities). Police Authorities are independent bodies of local people who set the strategic direction of the force and hold the chief constable to account on behalf of the local community. Independent Advisory Groups are drawn up from volunteers from different minority groups to advise constabularies about local issues and policing. Following the Criminal courts review, the Lord Chancellor also commissioned a national recruitment strategy for Lay Magistrates (Auld 2001; Morgan and Russell 2000).
Appointments Commission and set recruitment targets for NHS boards to reflect the communities they serve. This section will explore the ways in which these two sectors have reformed recruitment and the process that housing associations underwent to remunerate board members.

The Current Profile of FE Boards

While there is currently no national database providing a clear profile of FE governing bodies, the small amount of research that has been conducted in this area has found that very few FE boards embody a diverse membership. A survey commissioned by The Centre for Excellence in Leadership and conducted across all FE colleges recently found that only 8% of college governors (521 of 6,705 governors) were Black or Minority Ethnic (BME); that 38% of colleges had no BME governors at all and 20% had only one (Network for Black Managers 2005). Of all 521 BME governors, only 9 were Chairs and the rest were Business or Community governors. This research also found that the profile of BME governors was heavily skewed in gender terms with 61% of the governors being men and 39% women.  

Earlier research found that 30% of governors were female; 1% - 6% were registered with a disability; 1% were aged between 18 and 29 years and the majority were aged between 40-59 years (Davies 2002; AoC 2004). Moreover, this research found that 88% of chairs were male and 98% were White British. A survey conducted in 1996 on membership of governing bodies in colleges found that 81-100% of governors were white, even in Greater London (Kedney and Hawkins 1996).

It might be assumed that, since governors are unpaid volunteers, their participation rate may be comparable with other similar volunteering groups. Research on school governing bodies found that BME people, disabled people, young people, business people and low-income people, unemployed people or lone parents were also under-represented (Ellis 2003). Yet, the Home Office Citizen Survey (HOCS 2004), that includes statistics on those involved in formal volunteering, found little difference between white people born in the UK and Asian people born in the UK (who were more likely to be involved in formal volunteering). Of all groups, people aged between 25-34 were the highest number to be involved in formal volunteering and Black women were more involved in formal voluntary work than Black men.

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3 This survey (2005) was sent out to Clerks to the governors of 389 FE colleges and had a 99.48% return.
The statistics for lay magistrates show an equal balance of gender (49% women) and
45% are aged under 55 with 55% aged over 55. They also mirror the national population
in terms of race and ethnicity (Morgan and Russell 2000). Independent members of
Police Authorities comprise above the national average of BME people (9%) and 46%
are women (Hamer 2004) with the 2003 selection round consisting of 37% aged
between 51-60 years, 26% aged between 41-50; 23% aged 61-70 and 10% aged 31-40.
The available statistics for Housing Association boards were taken before optional
remuneration was introduced (to be reviewed 5 years later to identify changes).
Although the representation of women is low at 30%, there is 15% representation of
BME people and 41% of board members are aged under 55. The profile of BME housing
associations is younger, with 70% aged under 55 years (Cairncross and Pearl 2003),
which demonstrates that younger BME people are involved in formal volunteering. Non-
executive members of NHS trust boards have a more even gender balance with 48%
representation of women; 12% are BME and 53% are aged under 55 (Cairncross and
Pearl 2003). This would suggest that representation of diverse groups can be achieved
in other sectors and is not necessarily an issue directly linked to formal volunteering. All
the foregoing comparative sectors have, or are undergoing reviews, reforms or
recruitment strategies.

Table 1 (below) outlines each type of board/governing body in terms of percentage of
women, BME people, people aged under 55 and people with a disability. Although some
statistics are not available (none for the age profile of FE governors and none for
disability for police and magistrates), the chart clearly demonstrates that FE college
governors, when compared with the other bodies, have the lowest percentage of
representation of most of these groups (with the exception of BME lay magistrates and
NHS trust members who have a disability). Housing associations have the highest
percentages of people from BME groups and people with a disability - nearly double
those of colleges; Magistrates have the highest representation of women and NHS trusts
have the highest representation of people aged under 55.

* However, the statistics are similar to FE colleges in terms of regional variations of representation in terms of
Black and Minority Ethnic people. Morgan and Russell (2000) found that benches with a Black and Minority
Ethnic population smaller than the national average had more than above average representation of BME
people, yet areas with large populations of BME people (for example London) had benches that were
disproportionately white. Research on the diversity of members of Police Authorities has also found that
some areas had a greater percentage of BME people compared with the BME population of that authority
area. This is similar to the findings of the Commission for Black staff report (2002) regarding principals of
colleges.
Table 1: The Diversity Profile of Comparative Sectors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FE Colleges</th>
<th>Magistrates</th>
<th>Police Auth.</th>
<th>Housing Assoc.</th>
<th>NHS Trust</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BME</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 55</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table suggests that the recruitment of FE governors may be more exclusionary than in other sectors.

Recruitment of Governors

The recruitment of many volunteers in various sectors is commonly by word of mouth recommendation and personal contacts and this is also typically the case for the recruitment of governors in FE colleges (Davis Smith 1998; Home Office 2004; Ellis Paine and Brewis 2006). A survey of clerks found that 95% used word of mouth for recruiting governors and it was regarded as the most effective method (Ellis 2005a).

Although 50% of respondents to the survey stated that they advertised on college websites, it was not regarded as an effective method for recruitment (Ellis Paine and Brewis 2006). Other channels of recruitment included poster advertising in volunteer centres and libraries and emailing advertisements to chambers of commerce, financial institutes and community organisations, though these methods were the least popular ways of recruiting governors (Ellis 2005b). Advertising in the press was used by 86% of respondents to the clerks survey but not ranked as a popular recruitment channel, although other evidence suggests that advertising in the local press can be considerably effective in attracting and recruiting new governors. Indeed, many governors recruited this way stated that they would not otherwise have got involved (Ellis and Brewis 2005; Turner 2006).

Research suggests that the prescription of different categories of governors required by the Instruments and Articles including business, community, staff, student, and parent governors (in the case of sixth form colleges) is understood by many in the sector as particularly restrictive of recruitment (Ellis Paine and Ockenden 2006). The survey of clerks found that the business, student and community governor positions were the most

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5 The current statutory requirement regarding categories of external board membership will be relaxed in the 2007 Instrument and Articles of Government.
likely to be vacant. Some clerks stated that the student vacancies were the hardest to fill. Indeed Ellis and Brewis (2005) found that the profile of governors could be raised higher with the learner population of a college and more could be done to engage students in governance.

The majority of clerks in this survey reported their board as being “very” or “quite” representative of the local community. However, there appears to be a discrepancy between the groups that were identified as being required to make boards more representative of the local community and the groups who were actually targeted for recruitment. While the majority identified ‘people from ethnic minorities’, women and disabled people as being necessary to recruit in order to make the board more representative, only half of respondents targeted recruitment materials at Black and Minority Ethnic groups, 28% targeted women, only 8% targeted disabled people and 4% targeted young people (Ellis 2005b). This suggests that many colleges are not strategically targeting people to make boards more representative or, alternatively, they do not know how to do so. Indeed targeted recruitment was regarded by some as “discriminatory”, “patronising” or “tokenistic” (Ellis and Brewis 2005). The majority of clerks in the survey agreed that board diversity could be increased by the possession of good practice guidelines and more information and suggestions about recruitment methods.

**Barriers to Recruitment**

The perceptions of the barriers to board diversity may be crucial in embracing the diversity agenda and in stimulating positive change. If there is a perception that there are few barriers to the recruitment of those underrepresented on boards, for example, then it could be argued that innovative and targeted recruitment methods would be less likely to be used. Ellis and Brewis (2005) found that a small percentage of clerks did not identify any barriers to involvement in college governance (or that they believed any such barriers were created by individuals themselves). The researchers concluded that there is a clear need to address the question of why people from particular groups were unlikely to volunteer. If this was not considered, it was very unlikely that the diversity of the board would improve.

Many clerks suggested that the barriers to board diversity were a lack of knowledge or interest among under-represented groups about the role of governors and the FE sector; a lack of confidence in having the relevant skills or the perception that prospective governors from under-represented groups with the relevant skills were already in high demand from other organisations (Ellis 2005b). In other words, it was perceived by some that the pool of people from under-represented groups with the relevant knowledge,
interest and skills was relatively small. This perception is found in the recruitment of board members of charities, yet few have changed recruitment strategies (Ellis and Brewis 2005).

Ellis and Brewis (2005) identified the following barriers to involvement of under-represented groups in college governance: societal issues; sector specific issues; governing issues and volunteering issues. Societal issues were identified as the structural inequalities and discrimination faced by the under-represented groups in society in general. The researchers suggested however, that the sector-specific issues may also reinforce these inequalities. A lack of knowledge or familiarity with the education system was identified as a significant barrier to becoming a governor in the education sector. This, in turn, was rooted in the barriers to access experienced by under-represented groups. Clerks also cited the very low profile of governors in general and knowledge of what was involved in being a governor as a factor. Indeed, one respondent in the research stated “we are invisible” (Ellis and Brewis 2005: 27) alluding to the very low profile that college governors have outside and within colleges. This suggests that such knowledge would be limited to a small percentage of people – most notably those already, or in close proximity to those already involved in FE governance, thus perpetuating the profile of those willing to consider becoming a governor.

Governance issues identified were the prescriptive requirements of the Instrument and Articles of Government, with the obligation for different categories of governors and the specification that the term of office for board members should not exceed a period of 4 years. However, members are eligible for reappointment under the same arrangements as for the appointment of members. The researchers found that some governors argued, for example, that it took a considerable period of time to learn about the role and gain the experience to be an effective governor (four years was not enough), while others felt that this period restricted the time allowed for new governors to be recruited with new perspectives (four years was ample or too long). Significant barriers to involvement included: a perception of the increasing responsibility involved in being a governor, the meeting times (usually early evenings), as well as the volume of reading material for meetings. These factors, it was suggested, would deter those with other responsibilities in early evenings and those for whom English was a second language or who had a sight impairment.

Another significant factor identified was the recruitment and selection process itself - for example, the volume and complexity of information in the application packs which could be very daunting for prospective governors. The research by Ellis and Brewis (2005) suggests that selection and induction procedures varied significantly between colleges, were often not transparent, and frequently had no set criteria. Issues around
volunteering were also identified as barriers, including: the time commitment, support from employers, the physical accessibility of colleges, including location as well as support and recognition for the work that governors do. These issues were also raised in research reviewing the recruitment of other forms of volunteering and governance (discussed in more detail later).

Understanding the Diversity Agenda

Research has found that perceptions of the diversity agenda vary within and across the sector. This was evidenced recently with the first Good Governance Forum, which enabled delegates to put their views on a “blog” on several topics, one of which was “developing the diversity of the workplace and governing boards”. Responses to the topic demonstrated a considerable divergence of views and a reluctance by some to embrace the diversity agenda. Much of the disagreement appears to raise issues around some recurring themes. The first question is the issue of representation on boards and what “representation” actually means; the second issue is about the diversity agenda being reduced to “ticking boxes” or compliance and the third issue is a view that recruiting people from more diverse backgrounds may be at the expense of skills, knowledge and experience. The report will now consider each of these issues in turn.

“Representation”: As mentioned earlier, the issue of representation of the local community was raised by the Nolan report (1996), but there is confusion about what “representation” actually means. The corresponding views are that “community representation” would be about the presence of a particular governor on the board as opposed to the view that the governing body should be representative, indeed reflect the local community. Governors embracing the latter interpretation of representation actually argued that their role was serving the college, rather than the interests of a group or community (Ellis Paine and Brewis 2006). Governors embracing the former view understand that the diversity agenda and “community representation” could be embodied by a governor who might have a visible “difference” (Ellis Paine and Brewis 2006; Turner 2006). In addition, there was confusion about which group governors are required to be representative of, with some interpreting it as the make-up of the student population, and some as the local community. As Ellis Paine and Brewis (2006) suggest, this confusion has implications for which profiles the board of governors might choose to target their recruitment.

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6 This was on October 31st, 2006 in London as part of CEL’s and AoC’s Leadership Skills for Governance programme. http://www.fegovernance.org/good_governance_forum.html
“Audit”: The second issue raised by the diversity agenda is the culture of audit, and “ticking boxes”. There is a perception that the sector is driven by a culture of compliance rather than a genuine spirit of embracing the diversity agenda. Ellis and Brewis (2006) found that this could foster an understanding in the sector that particular people might be on the board as a token ‘unit’ of diversity, a view which was reflected in the recent Good Governance blogs. Indeed some in the sector argue that the increasing audit culture of the sector adversely affects the diversity agenda, by making audit and compliance the reference point which defines what diversity means to a college (e.g., in terms of tokenism, lip-service and compliance) rather than a clear commitment to increasing the diversity of governors and senior management (Turner 2006).

Skills and Knowledge: The third issue explores the extent to which skills and diversity can become mutually exclusive objectives and that the requirements of a diverse board may be to the detriment of the skills and knowledge of the board (Ellis and Brewis 2006). This view was usually coupled with the belief that there was a very small pool of governors from minorities who had the necessary skills and experience and this was understood by some as one of the reasons that boards were not diverse (Ellis and Brewis 2006).

To summarise, these potentially conflicting understandings of the diversity agenda within the sector have implications for the progress of recruiting governors from underrepresented groups and for the recruitment of governors in general. In order to increase board diversity, Ellis Paine and Brewis (2006) recommend the following (these are expanded in the Action Plan in part 3 of the report):

1. **Recruitment practices**: Improve recruitment and selection procedures by developing national guidelines on recruitment and selection; provide training for governors on diversity issues and setting locally based diversity targets.

2. **Governor recognition**: Provide greater support and recognition for governors by ensuring that they are recognised for their contribution through regional recognition events; a review of expenses policies to ensure that all governors are encouraged to claim expenses and a quality induction and support mechanism for governors including peer support.

3. **Review the frameworks for engagement** by exploring different ways of engaging stakeholders and review the requirements of the Instrument and Articles

4. **Raise the profile of governors** by a national campaign and develop a user-friendly guide on the role of FE governors with the possibility of a web-based register for those interested in becoming governors.
5. **Strengthen partnerships and networks** with national initiatives that work to enhance and support governance in other sectors and those that encourage employer-supported volunteering.

Recruitment and Diversity in Related Sectors

It is significant that research studies in related areas of formal volunteering and diversity have found that the barriers to recruitment are similar to those discussed above. This section will now briefly consider the detailed findings from research conducted on the recruitment of independent members of Police Authorities and Lay magistrates. Both pieces of research have drawn up action plans to increase the diversity of members, which could be adapted as strategies for monitoring governor recruitment as well as increasing board diversity. This section will discuss the remuneration of board members with the examples of Housing Associations and NHS trusts. It explores the ways in which these sectors have reformed recruitment and details the process that Housing Associations underwent to remunerate board members. We believe there is much to be learnt in the recruitment of FE governors from a consideration of appointment practices in other sectors, especially those where diversity issues seem to have been progressed further, (see Table 1, page 9 above).

**Police Authorities**

Police Authorities are an independent body from the police made up of local people. There are 43 police authorities in England and Wales and each authority has 17 members: 9 local councillors, 3 local magistrates and 5 independent members. The police authority sets the strategic direction, maintains the budget, and holds the chief constable to account on behalf of the local community. Although women constitute nearly half of independent members on police authorities and representation of BME people as noted earlier is higher than the national average, there is concern that the majority are from a narrow age group and not all police authorities reflect the composition of the communities that they serve (Hamer 2004). The review of the recruitment and selection of independent members cited several issues that may constitute barriers to recruitment and these mirror some of those discussed above (including the time commitment for members; the volume of paperwork; the timing and length of meetings and induction for new members as well as the selection and appointment process).

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7 Hamer (2004) is very clear about the issue of representation and states that the term ‘reflective’ is preferred to ‘representative’ as members are not appointed to represent a specific section of society.
Hamer (2004) recommended an urgent review of the time commitments for members and suggested that paperwork could be reduced by accessing electronic materials online from police websites or materials sent by compact disc to members. It was also suggested that meetings should be held late afternoon or early evenings to allow members to do most of a day’s work. Hamer also recommended that more could be done to publicise the fact that the authority would pay for carer/dependant allowances to encourage more carers or mothers to come forward. The report pays detailed attention to the process of selection and appointment, focusing on advertising vacancies; application packs and the selection and appointment panels. Just as the research on FE governors has found, Hamer particularly criticised the lack of creative ways of advertising posts making the role of independent members of police authorities more widely known. Hamer used recruitment consultants to review some of the application packs and to advise on creative ways to recruit people from a wider pool. Hamer (2004) also refers to materials which offer guidance on public appointments, for example, the Cabinet Office Best Practice Guide on Making Public Appointments Commissioner for Public Appointments’ Code of Practice which is:

“A regulatory framework for the public appointments process and is based upon seven principles as recommended by the Committee on Standards in Public Life. It aims to provide departments with a clear and concise guide to the steps they must follow in order to ensure a fair, open and transparent appointments process that produces a quality outcome and can command public confidence.” (OCPA p.5)

Most notably the guidance requires independent assessors in the appointment process. This has been standard procedure on the appointment of independent members of police authorities but Hamer suggested that the selection and appointment process be streamlined, with an appointments panel consisting of 5 members; 3 from the police authority and two of whom are independent of the authority approved by the office of the commissioner for public appointments. Furthermore, he recommended that those on the appointment panel should be trained and provided with an essential reference guide which would be reviewed and updated every two years so that they could be informed and updated of best practice.

Another fundamental change suggested in this review was an introduction of a competency based framework focusing on capabilities required across the board (rather than the post alone) and drawing upon past experience and expertise (see Appendix 5 for a sample competency based application form used to appoint non-executive members of NHS trusts used as an exemplar by Hamer 2004). The competency framework would have guidelines drawn up based on what the role involved and take
into consideration the diversity of the board ensuring that members are drawn from the whole population that the body serves. The selection process also recorded the occupational and professional background of applicants in order that a range of different backgrounds was taken into account when considering the diversity of a board. Significantly, Hamer required that all decisions in the process be recorded which may be viewed in audit. This completed form would explain how the decision was made detailing what considerations were given, for example, to the geographical location of candidates, age, diversity factors and skills.

There is much that could be learned in the recruitment of governors in FE colleges from the recruitment of independent members of police authorities (e.g. the introduction of a more transparent system of recruitment with independent people on panels, a competency based approach and clear guidance materials). There is a system of monitoring the profile of police authorities, which gives a breakdown of all applicants and successful applicants by age, gender, ethnic origin (see Appendix 1 and 2). In particular, this means that an assessment can be made of the profile of unsuccessful applicants. Each police authority also has a profile of all members by ethnicity (see Appendix 3) and gender (see Appendix 4). These systems could be introduced into FE to facilitate the monitoring of the profile of all college governing bodies.

Lay Magistrates
The recruitment of lay magistrates has recently been under scrutiny with the review of the Criminal Courts in England and Wales (Auld 2001) and in 1999 the Lord Chancellor’s department launched a strategy to raise awareness of the magistracy and the fact that a wide range of people could apply to become magistrates. There are over 30,000 lay magistrates who deal with 91% of prosecuted crime (Auld 2001) and the Lord Chancellor requires that each magistrates’ bench should broadly reflect the community it serves in terms of gender, ethnic origin, geographical spread, occupation and political affiliation. Like police authorities, the magistracy also records the occupational and professional background of members as well as age, gender and ethnicity. On the whole, although there is a disproportionate amount of magistrates from professional and managerial backgrounds (Morgan and Russell 2000), the campaign to draw more people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds has been successful (Vernard et al 2004) and current statistics match the national population figures.

Research on the barriers to recruiting BME people on benches identified similar factors to those regarding recruitment of college governors. Vernard et al (2004) found that BME magistrates highlighted the following as barriers to recruitment: financial disincentives, the reluctance of employers to give staff time off and the public image of
the magistracy as white, male and middle class. Another research finding was a lack of knowledge about what was required to become a magistrate and an assumption that appointees would have to be highly educated (Vernard et al 2004) and with a knowledge of law (Morgan and Russell 2000). Morgan and Russell conducted a public opinion survey using a nationally representative sample and found that over one third of all people and over half of people aged under 24 years assumed wrongly that most magistrates had a formal qualification in law, thus a need was identified to raise the profile of magistrates and the requirements to become one.

Morgan and Russell’s research also found that the time commitment required was a disincentive which had implications on the profiles of people who became magistrates. They found that less than a quarter of magistrates claimed for loss of earnings and a significant number did not claim for expenses. Indeed they found that many were paid by employers while they were undertaking duties. Thus their personal circumstances were such that the financial implications of their duties were not a concern. Most notably, Morgan and Russell were very concerned that many benches did not have any statistics available on the composition of the lay magistracy on the age, ethnicity, employment status and occupation of the bench. It is worth repeating that both the police authorities and the magistracy document occupation as a factor for diversity, which, in turn, suggests that we also need to consider issues of class inequality in the analysis of the diversity agenda.

The Auld report (2001) was also critical of recruitment strategies of some benches, which seemed to vary considerably. Local Advisory committees are responsible for recruiting magistrates and it would seem that many (perhaps like college governing boards) drew upon a small pool of people who were members of local bodies – the ‘great and the good’ who were local councillors or members of health authorities, which would not necessarily lead to a diverse bench. Auld identified what improvements could be made in his report which has detailed recommendations.

There is now a national recruitment strategy for magistrates from a diverse range of groups. This could be drawn upon as a strategy for governing bodies in colleges. Like police authorities, the recruitment of magistrates involves people from outside the immediate institution and is accountable. Advisory committees are local bodies and are made up of two thirds serving magistrates and one third non-magistrates who recommend suitable applicants to the Lord Chancellor. Each advisory committee forms interview panels or creates formal sub-committees for interviewing candidates. The Lord Chancellor has now issued directions for recruitment to advisory committees. These are public documents recommending that advisory committees seek to achieve a balance in terms of gender, ethnic background, occupation, geographical location and diversity of
those who are recommended for appointment. The advisory committees are now supported by the national recruitment strategy which focuses on three areas: recruitment; supporting the appointment process, and raising the profile of the magistracy.

The recruitment strategy involves sourcing census data from each local area, which can then be compared with the make-up of local benches and areas can be identified where recruitment of particular groups appears problematic. Advisory committees will now appoint recruitment co-ordinators (to deal with new applicants and enquiries) to enable a good “first contact” system to be implemented; benches will establish contact with local stakeholder groups and organisations and develop partnerships and links. All recruitment literature will be reviewed and revised and targeted at employers as well as employees. Indeed, one strategy is to develop a campaign aimed at employers and the development of a recognition scheme similar to “Investors in People” awards for employers who support volunteering. This strategy also involves advertising in different media and a broader audience and also setting up support networks for under-represented groups using recently retired magistrates as mentors.

Part of the strategy in raising the profile of the magistracy involves making it clear that professional qualifications are not required and that all promotional material should have a prominent message that the Department is committed to equality of opportunity. In supporting the appointments process, the strategy involved a review of induction and training for magistrates and advisory committees, evaluation of the methods used for setting recruitment targets as well as conducting research to explore magistrates’ views about the barriers they face in carrying out their role.

Successful initiatives as part of the national recruitment strategies have included the launch of a work shadowing scheme with the help of Operation Black Vote to increase the proportion of magistrates who were black or minority ethnic. Following a pilot exercise in 2001-2 several participants have applied to become magistrates. Work with the Citizenship Foundation has helped to make the role of magistrates more widely known to young people as well as a “Magistrates in the Community” project.

There is much that the education sector could gain by drawing on the examples above to reduce barriers to diversity. Police authorities and the Magistracy have both invested in research and consultancy in relation to the recruitment of diverse members and the monitoring of procedures. The recruitment process for volunteers is now much more transparent and accountable with support, training and guidelines and involves independent people in the process. In the end of this section, these practices have been

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8 Operation Black Vote is a collaboration of two organisations; one which campaigns for democratic reform and the other is the only national Black policy research and networking organisation.
drawn upon and adapted for FE governance on recommended actions, and are also embedded in the Action Plan in section three of this document.

**Boards That Remunerate: Housing Associations and NHS Trusts**

Housing associations and NHS Trust boards have been subject to recent reform and modernisation aimed at achieving a better diversity profile of boards. In 2003, The Housing Corporation, a government agency which funds and regulates housing associations in England, introduced a scheme enabling housing associations to pay their board members (if they wished). The specific aim of this scheme was to “improve the recruitment of target groups” and adopt a similar regime to non-executive directors of NHS trust boards (Cairncross and Pearl 2003: 1). This followed much debate and a process of consultation in which the barriers to good governance were identified as recruiting the right people; managing and motivating members, as well as recognising and rewarding them (Cairncross and Pearl 2003). In the consultation stage, where there was a response rate of 9% (Miller and Jones 2001), a high level of agreement emerged about the need for change, as the process of governance was identified as becoming more complex with a need to recruit and retain high quality board members.

The question of payment for board members was controversial (Cairncross and Pearl 2003; Ayton 2004; Miller and Jones 2001) but the consultation found that only 18% wanted no change at all, 30% wanted a compensation scheme for loss of pay or other mechanisms of reward, and 27% did not want remuneration (Miller and Jones 2001). It was suggested by some that it would damage the social ethos of the sector, drain resources and change the dynamics of boards (Miller and Jones 2001) or attract the “wrong” sort of board member (Cairncross and Pearl 2003). Many other respondents, however, felt that remuneration would attract new people with skills and experience and broaden the diversity of board profiles as well as offer formal recognition of board member’s commitment.

Survey research by Cairncross and Pearl (2003) secured a much higher response rate of 49%. This research discovered that 61% of respondents were opposed to payment, but 66% of those who had joined a board in the previous year were in favour of payment. Those in favour of payment identified the following reasons: “providing a financial reward for members’ time and service” (45%), “establishing clearer expectations of achievements at board level” (43%), and “attracting board members from under-represented groups” (41%) (Cairncross and Pearl 2003:14). The most frequently cited factors which respondents identified as a barrier to attending board
meetings was work commitments. This suggests that attendance would improve with a system of remuneration.

The baseline data on the profile of housing association board members in 2003 (pre-remuneration) as discussed earlier, had 30% representation of women, 15% BME and 11% with a disability. In terms of occupational status, one third of board members were retired and nearly another third were self-employed (Cairnross and Pearl 2003). Cairncross and Pearl (2003) found that since the last baseline data were recorded, there had been an increase of the ‘professionalisation’ of boards with 81% of board members in managerial or executive positions or professional technical occupations last baseline data was recorded. It is worth noting that this trend was most pronounced in the BME housing associations whose board members were younger and better qualified than other boards, which suggests that the idea that there is a shortage of young skilled professional BME people for positions of governance is unfounded.

In terms of recruitment, Cairncross and Pearl were critical of the strong tradition of informal word-of-mouth recruitment as 40% of board members stated that they were invited to join the board by another member. It was also suggested that it would be important to monitor whether the introduction of payment would impact the predominantly male profile of board members. There are now targets for BME membership of boards under a new Race Equality Code of practice for Housing Associations and raising the profile of race equality and diversity is identified as crucial for promoting change in the sector (Cairncross and Pearl 2003).

Once remuneration was introduced to the sector in 2003, boards that had decided to remunerate members became more regulated and accountable. They were required to follow guidance prepared by the Housing Corporation, the regulatory body for the sector and produce a “business case” for remuneration. This had to include how payment would improve the performance of boards; how payment might improve retention and if the board did not reflect the communities it served, how payment would lead to a more diverse board (Housing Corporation 2003). The regulatory body also requires associations to have “robust, transparent and independent systems for recruitment and appraisal” (Housing Corporation 2003:2) including monitoring of equal opportunities and attracting a wide range of applicants; the drawing up of a person specification and identifying and involving an independent assessor. There is also a maximum payment set by the regulatory body for any one member.

Although there is no data on the current profile of housing association board members (this will be collected in 2007), a research report was written one year after the introduction of payment of board members to assess what benefits boards thought that
payment would bring. This research found that there was a cautious response in the sector. Those that did decide to remunerate stated that the main reason for doing so was 'to attract and retain high quality board members’ (Ayton 2004:3). Some cited the reason specifically to attracting under-represented groups and attaining board diversity. One participating association was recorded as seeing the benefits of board remuneration already, with more commitment and participation from the board (Ayton 2004). During research for this report, one housing association had published its business case for remuneration stating that it would impact positively upon board membership by assisting them to balance board membership with external commitments and also by helping improve the diversity of the board (Cheviot Housing 2006).

Boards that remunerate have to be more accountable and demonstrate more transparent recruitment and selection procedures. There is evidence to suggest that the diversity agenda was an important consideration in the decision to remunerate as well as recognition of the increasing demands of boards which need to be balanced with the demands of the workplace and other commitments.

**NHS Trust Boards**

As discussed earlier, NHS trust boards have good representation of women at 48% and BME people at 12%, with the highest percentage in our sample of members aged under 55 years, at 53%. Since 2001, the appointment of non-executive members of boards has been the responsibility of an NHS Appointments Commission which uses independent assessors to take part in the selection of board members and as discussed earlier, uses a competency based framework (see Appendix 5). It also ensures that existing members receive adequate training and support through semi-formal and informal mentoring networks and members receive payment as well as help with childcare and carer costs.

The Commission has clear objectives for attracting and recruiting new board members which specifically target women, BME people and disabled people. Advertisements are placed in publications aimed at people in these groups, which clearly state that applications are welcomed regardless of gender, race, disability or sexual orientation. Records are kept of the profile of applicants and of those who are successful, in order to identify which groups are not being appointed onto boards. It also ensures that those on interview panels have undergone equal opportunities training.

The Department of Health has set recruitment targets for NHS trusts, stating that boards need to reflect the communities that they serve. These are clearly set out and have time frames. By 2004 for example, 50% of appointments need to be women; 10% of appointments need to be BME people and 4% need to have a disability. The most recent
figures for the NHS suggest that actual appointments made during 2004/05 were 46% women, 11% BME and 8% disability. Approximately 68% of recruits were aged under 59 and therefore under retirement age. The age group 40-49 has increased significantly (by nearly 20%) from previous years.

Challenges for Governance in the FE sector

There is much that the FE sector could learn from the barriers to recruiting diverse boards by initiatives undertaken in other sectors. This is evidenced by the available statistics of the comparative sectors we used in this literature review, where FE colleges have the lowest percentage of representation of most of these groups (with the exception of BME lay magistrates and NHS trust members who have a disability). The case for reform of the process of recruiting FE governors is strong, with the sectors in our sample illustrating that barriers to board diversity can be reduced.

The other sectors in our sample have recruitment strategies which include monitoring the profile of boards, applicants to boards and successful applicants. Some have targets for recruiting members from BME groups, women and disabled people and they all use independent assessors or advisory groups to ensure that recruitment and selection procedures are more transparent. Indeed it is worth noting that recruitment procedures by housing associations (many of which recruited by word-of-mouth) changed with the introduction of remuneration of board members. The recruitment procedure is now more accountable, independently assessed and monitored.

As the example of housing association boards has shown, the question of remuneration is controversial. The most common case for remuneration was to attract high quality people with skills and experience from diverse backgrounds and facilitate board participation by helping members to balance work board responsibilities. It is yet to be seen whether remuneration has enhanced board diversity, but there should be no doubt that payment for time off work for the board will improve attendance at meetings. The DIUS has consulted with the sector on the issue of remuneration including 2006, and to-date the sector has continued to say it is opposed. However, the feedback from the 2007 GGF mentions the consideration of some form of remuneration. This issue needs to be debated in the FE sector and further research needs to be done to explore if remuneration can remove barriers to diversity.
Section 2: Voices from Inside and Outside the Sector

This section of the report builds on the foregoing literature reviews by exploring the key themes and patterns that emerged from research interviews with a number of people within the sector and then examines the voices of members in the community who are currently outside the sector. During this two-month project, thirteen people were interviewed (3 in the sector and 10 outside). These research interviews highlighted five primary barriers to diversity in FE governance: (1) informal recruitment methods; (2) lack of knowledge about FE college boards, governors and governor vacancies; (3) lack of confidence; (4) time pressures, and (5) the absence of remuneration. Several of these barriers can be mutually reinforcing (e.g. informal recruitment typically results in people outside the sector being unaware of specific vacancies).

Voices from the FE Sector

“Yes the board is very important, particularly for the principal. It can be a great source of strength or an added burden. Only when you are principal do you fully appreciate the importance of the board. Before that you are shielded, even deputy principals are shielded from the board. If the principal does not get on with the board it can be intolerable.” (Principal)

This section begins by exploring the key barriers highlighted by research interviews with 1 principal (who is also a member of the search committee) and 2 student governors.

The View from the Principal

The first interview for this project was conducted with the principal of a highly successful college, which has achieved consistently outstanding OFSTED evaluations. It has also won numerous national awards in relation to its equality and diversity policies and initiatives. Despite these achievements, the principal (who is a member of the search committee) acknowledged that a number of barriers restricted the diversity profile of governing bodies. In particular, she highlighted:

1. the informality of recruitment, and
2. the lack of knowledge of potential candidates about the governor role.
Informal Recruitment

This particular college governing body comprises 15 members, including the principal, 2 staff governors, 1 student governor and 11 “external” governors (i.e. members from HE, the local council, employers and local schools). Whilst there are 4 women on the board, including a woman from the Chinese community (the second largest ethnic minority in the local area), the principal acknowledged that the governing body consists primarily of white, middle-aged and middle class men. In relation to the board’s current composition, the principal explained that,

“We try to reflect our key stakeholders as well as being guided by The Articles and Instruments for FE. We want to be as employer-led as possible so it is important that we have representation from the local business community. We want our board members to have sector representation and a specific skill. We are looking for people with specialisms, in particular, in HR, finance, property and legal backgrounds. If they have a specialist interest they can bring professional expertise and an understanding of the issues.” (Principal)

In describing what makes “a good governor”, the principal emphasised the key issue of “commitment to the role”,

“A good governor needs to have an interest in and commitment to education and what we’re aspiring to do here. It’s also important that they’re prepared to express their views with measured, rational judgement and are prepared to listen as well.”

The principal acknowledged that it can be “quite a challenge” to find people who have the interest and the commitment to undertake this role, explaining that, whilst the college looked for people from the business community who were quite senior and could appreciate strategic issues, these people were often “very busy in their day jobs”,

“For us, the worst kind of governor is the one who doesn’t attend regularly, consequently they are not clued into the agenda of the college and so they don’t understand the complex business we’re in and they do not get to grips with the issues. So the commitment of time is of fundamental importance.”

9 The principal also explained that OFSTED monitor the board’s diversity profile and governor attendance. “This is another reason why governor attendance is a very important issue for us. It is another performance indicator. OFSTED see failure to participate by board members as failure of strategic direction.” Board meetings usually occur in the early evening, after working hours. The principal acknowledged that scheduling board meetings during the day might enable women (with children) to attend. There are currently no women with children on this governing board.
To fill governor vacancies, the college advertises extensively in the local press, running positive stories about specific governors (who are quoted emphasising how much they enjoy their role). Yet, the principal commented that, “We have found this to be a very poor way of generating a good response.”

Observing that there is always a shortage of people wishing to become governors, the principal explained that informal mechanisms had consistently proved to be the most effective way of identifying and attracting candidates. Typically, a number of names would be considered by the “search committee” (comprising the principal, chair, clerk and one governor) and, after consultations with these individuals, their name(s) would be put forward to the full board for ratification. Accordingly, this relatively informal selection procedure confers considerable power and authority on the search committee (and we would propose that more research is conducted specifically on this key aspect of the governor recruitment process). On several occasions throughout the interview (and without prompting), the principal acknowledged the dilemma that this degree of informality can have detrimental effects on the board’s diversity profile,

“So we do a lot of asking around, and canvassing. The problem is this – it is quite an exclusive way to attract people. It can exclude a lot of very good people, I’m sure. But I have to balance that against getting good people in…. It’s a very imprecise science.”

The principal outlined a current vacancy in the category of catering and tourism (a key sector in the local economy). This particular board governor has resigned because she is leaving the area and the search committee asked if she could recommend any colleagues working locally within this sector, as the principal elaborated,

“She has suggested two names of potential new governors so, yes, we do recruit on the basis of the recommendations of governors who are leaving. I know this smacks of the old boys network, but it’s having the knowledge of the profession we are trying to recruit from. They know a lot more than we do in that area. For example, when our legal governor left, he had knowledge into their own professional world and networks. This is very valuable to us. But I fully appreciate that the disadvantage of this approach is the equality and diversity effects.”

10 It should be noted that the female Chinese governor was recruited through informal networks.
The principal repeatedly acknowledged this dilemma that, by drawing on the networks of current and resigning board members, informal methods facilitated the recruitment of governors with the requisite expert knowledge, but that this process typically had unintended, exclusionary outcomes,

“We are a very middle-aged board. It’s difficult, this issue of being white, male and middle class. The issue of diversity has to be balanced with the performance of the board. …..This is crucial. It is a real issue…..A properly balanced board should be representing the whole community. An ideal balance would have a broad mix of men and women, a broad range of ages, not just older people, people with different ethnic backgrounds…but we also have to take into account people’s expertise and skill here.”

In relation to governor recruitment, the principal concluded that,

“It would really help if the recruitment process could be less adhoc, less informal, less dependent on networks and on ‘who you know’.”

**Lack of Knowledge about the Governor Role**

In response to a question about the key barriers to developing a more diverse governor profile and improving recruitment generally, the principal stated,

“No I think this is a fascinating question. The main thing is lack of understanding about what constitutes being a board member. Here I’m talking about the barriers of social class, it’s a barrier to insight into what is involved in being a governor. There are also barriers of perception. People who have never been a governor or who have never been into a college think that a governor must be highly articulate and intelligent. It is not seen as a role for the average person in the street (if there is such a thing) who often does not realise that they have a valuable role to play. Also, everyone has been to school and has an opinion on school, but by no means everyone has been to an FE college, so for many people, educational level may be a barrier.”

The principal therefore identified a widespread lack of knowledge about the governor’s role across the community as a key barrier to a more diverse profile. Accordingly, the principal highlighted the need for induction and training to articulate more clearly what is expected of an effective board member, as she believes that many new governors do not fully understand their responsibilities,
“There needs to be a way of making more clear what is expected of an effective board. A formal induction process is essential for supporting the governors so they understand the role. Not all colleges do this. We have a very structured induction. It is important that they know they are responsible for the strategic role of the college but also that they should not interfere with the operational role of the college.”

Hence, for this principal the key barriers to a more diverse board profile are informal recruitment methods and a lack of knowledge about the role. In practice, these two dynamics, especially when combined together, are likely to perpetuate the exclusion of applicants from under-represented groups.

**The View from Student Governors**

This research project included interviews with two student governors, one of whom also completed a questionnaire survey. These respondents highlighted various barriers to diversity. When asked what they would identify as the main weaknesses of their current governing body, they both agreed that the board did not represent the diversity profile of the college or the community,

“The members of the corporation are quite old and therefore less in touch with college life which affects their ability to make any decisions except business ones, such as money and inspection and current government legislation…..The majority of governors are upper middle class…..the majority of (the local town) are middle class and upper working class.”

Both students acknowledged that, whilst there needed to be governors on the board with specific skills and knowledge, the current age and background of the majority of governors meant they were rather detached from the college student body, as one elaborated,

“A lot of governors seem very distant and detached, especially in the sense that many students are from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds, whilst many of the governors are from much more affluent and middle class backgrounds.”

Both student governors stated very clearly that a more diverse board profile would change and improve the nature of governing body interaction. For example, they each
expressed the view that some board members did not always take student governors seriously, as the following statement demonstrates;

“Some seem to have little respect for me because of the ‘student’ in my title. But I’m very outgoing so am able to interact easily.”

**Lack of Knowledge about Governor Vacancies**

The students stated that there was generally insufficient information disseminated about student governor vacancies and this often resulted in very few applicants,

“Knowledge that such a position is available is often very low, so people don’t look around to see if there are any opportunities.”

This statement demonstrates the importance of connecting with students and their representatives in order to encourage greater student participation in governing bodies. Both respondents highlighted the importance of increased student engagement in FE board recruitment processes if colleges are to comply with proposed government requirements to provide two places for student governors on all governing bodies.

The students also considered that not all governors participated fully in meetings and that improvements could be made to their training,

“I think there should be more opportunities for governor training and this should be made more widely available, as many would benefit from training.”

They believed that more training for governors could help to broaden discussions and interaction at board meetings,

“I think more views would be heard, and issues from different angles would be raised making it a more effective meeting.”

**Absence of Remuneration**
Both respondents also strongly favoured some form of payment for governors (especially for student governors who are paying their way through college). They argued that there was “an out-dated attitude to the role of governor”, which restricted the participation of students and people from a wider section of the community, as the following two statements illustrate,

“Students find it hard to be involved when they study full-time and have to work part-time to support themselves.”

“People need to work to support themselves and tend to be unable to be involved in such things as being a governor because they only earn enough to support themselves. If you were to provide an income stream, students would volunteer and wouldn’t have to work on top of volunteering and studying. Also people from outside will be drawn in as they could afford to get involved.”

In these statements, the student governors argued that some form of remuneration would facilitate a wider and larger set of applications for vacancies. In particular, they recognised that such an initiative would benefit those on low incomes.

To summarise, all the foregoing interviewees acknowledge that FE boards need further diversification. Student governors, in particular, highlighted the apparent distance between governors and the student body. The main barriers emphasised by these three respondents were: informal recruitment methods; lack of knowledge about the governor role, and (in the case of 2 out of the 3 respondents) the absence of remuneration. We now outline the barriers to diversity identified by people currently outside the sector.
Voices from Outside the Sector

“The barriers to people becoming FE governors are, firstly, ignorance. Most people do not know about the governor’s role. The second thing is time. In day-to-day living there are a lot of demands on everyone’s time. Creating the time, especially when there is no payment, can be very difficult. So some form of payment might also help.” (BME hospital consultant)

The available research on FE governor recruitment generally, and diversity matters in particular, has tended to concentrate on the experiences of governors, clerks and principals. A research focus on those outside the FE sector has been largely absent, even though this would seem particularly important when trying to understand why more people do not apply to become a governor. Accordingly, this research project also examined the views of members of the community who are currently outside the sector. During this two-month project, ten qualitative research interviews were conducted with members of local communities (in the North of England) to explore:

1. What they know about FE governors and governing bodies,
2. Whether they would be interested in becoming a governor
3. What could be done to encourage a more diverse group of people to become governors

These interviewees were carefully selected to reflect as broad and diverse a range of people as possible (given the size of the sample and within the restricted time constraints of the project).

The profile of the ten research interviewees was as follows: 6 men and 4 women, including 3 BME respondents. Their ages were: 1 aged 25+, 3 aged 30+, 2 aged 40+, 3 aged 50+, and 1 aged 60+. A more detailed description of individual bio-details is provided in appendix 6. Of this sample, 4 work in the public sector and 6 are drawn from the private sector. The 4 public sector employees are: an NHS hospital consultant, an NHS GP, a Business Link senior manager and a County Council employee. The 6 respondents from the private sector are: a small business owner, a large business entrepreneur (who is also a lay magistrate), a solicitor, a skilled manual worker, a full-time mother and a retired woman. The NHS hospital consultant had just been invited to

11 A research interview with a disabled person had to be cancelled at a late date due to their personal circumstances and the respondent could not re-arrange within the tight timescale of this project.
sit on an FE board as a co-opted member. At the time of the interview, he had just attended his first board meeting. His interview provided insight into the perceptions and experiences of a (younger, BME) newly co-opted member of an FE board. The following analysis presents a brief summary of the key barriers to diversity, as highlighted in their responses. In particular, this focuses on:

1. Lack of Knowledge about FE College Boards, Governors and Governor Vacancies
2. Lack of Confidence
3. Time Pressures
4. The Absence of Remuneration

1. Lack of Knowledge about College Boards, Governors and Governor Vacancies

Our research confirms that the extensive reliance on informal recruitment methods described earlier result in those outside the sector having little knowledge about the governor role and vacancies. We began these research interviews by asking respondents what they knew about governing boards of FE Colleges. Six of the ten interviewees confirmed that they were unaware that FE boards (and FE governors) existed. Even some of the respondents who had studied in FE colleges, did not know about the existence of the board. Interviewees expressed differing views about the nature of the governor’s role:

“I would have to guess what it might entail, but I would imagine it would include the responsibility for spending the budget, for raising money, for hiring and controlling staff, and for how the college operates legally.” (lay magistrate)

Most interviewees believed that governors should be concerned primarily with enhancing the student experience.

“I would have thought that a governor’s role would be to meet the needs of the students attending the college.” (BME general practitioner)

All respondents argued that the governing body of any FE college should be representative of the community from which it draws its students. Whilst acknowledging that it would be necessary to recruit governors with certain key skills, the respondents all expressed the view that a board which was representative of the local community (as much as possible), would be more effective than one which did not:
“The board needs to be made up of all different people who are more representative of the community. It is essential that the college involves local people.” (BME hospital consultant)

“If the board of a college is not representative of the community then the governors would be very detached from the student body, which is the lifeblood of any college.” (small business owner)

“A lot of my patients do use the local college, both young and mature patients. There are a lot of students from deprived areas who attend the local college. The college plays a really important role in giving a lot of people a second chance. I would think it is important for governors to understand where the students come from and how the college interacts with the local community.” (BME general practitioner)

After considering the detailed description of the governor’s role (as defined in the Instrument and Articles), all but one of the research interviewees confirmed that they would consider applying for this position at some stage of their career/life.

None of the respondents had ever seen an advertisement for a vacancy for a Governor.

“I have never seen any advert for a governor’s position.”
(lay magistrate)

“I have not seen any adverts for the position of a governor in the FE sector, I do not know what the recruitment procedure would be.” (small business owner)

Given the extensive reliance on informal recruitment channels, this is a rather predictable, but very important research finding. Although none of the interviewees had seen an advert for a governor vacancy, the majority were surprised to hear that the main recruitment methods relied primarily upon informal networks. All the respondents consistently expressed the view that this informal selection method could lead to a governing board that was not representative of the community. They therefore emphasised the value of advertising vacancies, and in several cases, also highlighted the need for specific types of advertisements, that, in particular, encouraged people from diverse backgrounds to be confident to apply.12

12 Recognising that a reliance on informal, word of mouth recruitment was likely to reproduce the current governor profile, one respondent (Business Link manager) recommended targeting particular under-represented groups. He also suggested that local employers such as banks and accounting firms often have a ‘strong community-driven orientation’ and they could play a key role in identifying and encouraging their employees from under-represented groups to sit on governing boards. These organizations could stress to their employees the career benefits of becoming a governor. He thought that the governor role was worthwhile in “giving something back”, so long as the board had some autonomy and influence and was not simply
2. Lack of Confidence

All the interviewees saw the role of FE governor as a very worthwhile way of contributing to the local community. The only person who stated that she would definitely not consider becoming a governor was the retired woman and this was because she believed that she did not have the necessary knowledge, skills, qualifications and underlying confidence to undertake the role,

“If the college wants to attract people who have not thought about being a governor, then they will need to understand that some people will just not have the confidence to apply.” (retired woman)

Yet, this retired woman demonstrated considerable knowledge about the local college and, during the course of the interview, offered various illuminating insights into how the college might improve itself (particularly about how the college could become much more welcoming to visitors). It was clear that such perceptions could make a very useful contribution to the deliberations of the governing body.

In relation to the diversification of FE boards, five respondents raised the issue of candidates’ possible lack of confidence to apply:

“I would imagine that for certain groups of people, joining any board of governors would be something that is totally out of their experience, could be quite intimidating and therefore they may think that you have to be very highly educated to become a governor.” (full-time mother)

The interviewee who had just been co-opted onto a board talked about his initial reticence about becoming a governor (after being approached informally by the principal). This NHS consultant initially had thought that he was probably too young to join the board:

“When I was approached, I was hesitant because I thought I was too young (35 years old) compared with the existing board members. Most of the board tend to be retired and from business, management and accountancy backgrounds. They have never had a doctor on the board. So I thought they were looking for someone very different from me.” (BME hospital consultant)

“rubber-stamping decisions”. Similarly, the solicitor recommended that colleges contact the local law society who could email details about a governor vacancy to all law firms in the local area.
After his initial board meeting, the consultant realised that he did have a contribution to make and also that his comparative youth was actually an advantage:

“After my first meeting as a co-opted member I now realise that I have just as much to contribute as the others. They do not have my perspective and I have something quite different to say. I am from a different age group and look at things totally differently than that generation of people who are a little bit out of touch with the current generation. It’s not the same world as my parents’ era.” (BME hospital consultant)

Several interviewees emphasised that board diversification would require vacancy advertising that incorporated a particular style and tone, designed to instil confidence in candidates from diverse backgrounds to apply for governor positions. For example, they argued that adverts should state clearly that colleges are seeking to attract a broad cross-section of experience and are not necessarily looking for extensive academic qualifications:

“The wording of adverts needs to encourage applicants from different backgrounds. It should specify what the college is looking for and it should not use language that is off-putting to people who do not fit the present profile of governors.” (retired woman)

Another respondent stated that, if colleges wanted to recruit people who were more representative of the community, then they should emphasise this in their advertisements and also make it very clear that there was help and support for potential new governors. A number of interviewees argued that adverts should specify exactly what the college is looking for and should be “eye-catching” and encouraging.

All respondents stated that the provision of training was vital not only to encourage a wider spectrum of applications for governor positions, but also for ongoing support for recruits in performing their new role. They emphasised that it was essential for all governors to understand fully the requirements of their role and how board decisions directly related to college goals. The lay magistrate highlighted the importance of training provision for volunteers, citing his experience of the excellent training he received when becoming a magistrate:

“The training was very thorough, very professional. I was very impressed. The trainers were first class. I absolutely loved the training
Conducted by the clerks, the eight training days for magistrates included visits to jails and remand centres, “so we could see where we were sending people”. In addition, all new magistrates were then allocated a mentor who observed, advised and completed a log documenting their performance during the first ten sessions. The magistrate also viewed the training as a continuous process and saw it as being particularly vital in relation to updates on changes in the law. It was very clear that the quality of ongoing training had served to capture this respondent’s interest and enthusiasm for the position of magistrate. It had also given him a great deal of confidence to undertake the role.

A second respondent who had also been a magistrate was also very positive about the training she had received. She considered that this focus on training was absolutely essential in order to retain people who volunteer their time to the role of governor:

“There should be a very thorough induction course and also mentors who are there to assist and support newly appointed governors for the first twelve months.” (BME council employee).

Relatedly, the majority of respondents argued that it would be necessary to have or to acquire a basic knowledge of the FE system in order to become a governor, as the following comment demonstrates:

“I would think that it is important to have a basic knowledge of FE. If governors do not know about the important issues, not just around finances but also for the sector, staff and students, then they are making decisions without understanding the full consequences.” (small business owner)

The issue of confidence relates to communities as well as individuals. In relation to encouraging under-represented groups to apply for governor vacancies, interviewees again emphasised the need to reach out and establish confidence and trust with local communities. A consistent message here was that colleges needed to educate various stakeholders about the nature of the governor’s role. One respondent was very clear about the action needed by colleges to facilitate board diversification:

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13 The lay magistrate also described the relatively formal procedure he underwent at the recruitment stage. This involved completing a detailed form that explored attitudes, background and required two referees and then a formal interview with two magistrates and an independent person. He considered this interview process to be ‘very thorough’.
“They need to connect and consult with their students, staff and community. This can be done through focus groups and questionnaires. They need to get the information about becoming a governor out into the wider community. This is essential if you are going to encourage diversity. A college needs to work with its parents on how they might become parent governors. This would provide a link with the community and would serve to encourage people from within the community to also consider becoming governors.” (BME council employee).

This respondent also stressed the importance of embedding the concept of diversity within formal documents:

“There should be terms of reference that include a clause stating that for the next three years the college will positively recruit governors from diverse backgrounds. The statement of intent should be supported by targets linked to race, gender and disability” (BME council employee).

Hence, in addition to the widespread lack of knowledge about the role of governors, for many people a lack of confidence might also inhibit their willingness to apply for vacancies.

3. Time Pressures
When asked what they thought might be the barriers to people volunteering to take the position of Governor, all respondents highlighted time pressures as the major barrier to their own (and others’) participation in FE governance, as the following statements illustrate:

“I think that time is a big consideration. If you are going to do it properly, then you need to give the necessary time. If you haven’t the time, I don’t think you should take it on.” (Business Link Senior Manager)

“I think it could be especially difficult for women to give the time. Women are needed in lots of different ways in our society and they have very wide responsibilities, both in terms of work and in the home.” (retired woman)
“As a GP, the working days are very long now. There’s a lot more to do than ever before. Surgeries often drag on, letters have to be sent out in 48 hours and you can have to work till quite late. So, yes, time is definitely an issue. For everybody, time is very precious.” (BME general practitioner)

“I work long hours. It could be difficult to go out in the evening for a board meeting. I could not go straight from work. I would need to go home, have a shower and change out of my work clothes.” (skilled manual worker)

“There is a lot of time pressure. My daughter is ten months old and has been ill recently. That is our main consideration. To be a governor you’ve got to have a real motivation to contribute to education.” (BME hospital consultant)

“It’s a question of time and competing interests. As a solicitor I am self-employed and put a price on my time. As a partner you have to build the practice and my first obligation is to my partners to build the client base. Then of course there’s home and my wife has just had a baby. Then there’s leisure pursuits. I really value spare time. Work life balance is a real issue. There’s so much pressure for people to take work home with them. I invariably take files home with me. So, yes, time is by far and away the biggest barrier, in terms of quality of life.” (solicitor)

The long hours working culture in many UK organisations is now well documented in numerous research studies, as is the particular pressures on many women who seek to combine employment with domestic and caring responsibilities. As the GP states, ‘for everybody, time is very precious.’ The temporal pressures on people in very different walks of life suggests that any serious attempt to enhance diversity needs to consider a number of incentives if a broader range of candidates is to be attracted.

4. Absence of Remuneration
The absence of any remuneration was a concern to all but one of our respondents. They believed that payment in some form would serve as an appropriate way of acknowledging people’s commitment and could be an important factor in attracting representatives from all sections of the community to become involved in college governance:

“I think there should be some payment as acknowledgement for people’s
commitment. Nowadays, everyone’s free time is precious. Work has become so intensified in all occupations that it already eats into family time. If you are going to do the job of governor properly, then you would have to put in the necessary time and that is an additional pressure on the quality of family life. You’re also likely to get more out of people if you pay them a nominal sum. You’ll get a lot more commitment.” (BME general practitioner)

“This is not charity work, governors should be paid for their time. It’s also very important for lay people to get the opportunity to be governors and payment could be a trigger to attract a broader spectrum of people. Payment would also give some leverage to monitor attendance.” (small business owner)

“Payment would make it more attractive to a lot of people. I think there’s payment linked to it in the NHS and the police. Yes, it would attract new people to be governors.” (BME hospital consultant)

“It might be good to offer some payment to governors. It seems appropriate as they have a high level of responsibility with the large budgets of colleges. You need people who have the experience of spending huge amounts of money. You need the right person and the right chair. If you’re paying someone, it’s easier to say ‘well these are your responsibilities, we’re not begging you to do this, but this is the deal.’” (lay magistrate)
“If the college wants a governing body that is representative of the community then it cannot just rely on people who are retired or who are on a salary and do not lose money by volunteering to become a governor. It has to draw people from the wider community…. If I received some payment as acknowledgement, I would be much more likely to seriously consider the role.” (full-time mother)

“The majority of people on a weekly wage work long hours and cannot afford to give up any part of their wages. Most people are living from one wage to the next even in quite good jobs. Therefore if sitting on a governing board means that they have to lose money, then they just cannot even think about it”. (skilled manual worker).

“Nominal remuneration is bound to be an inducement as otherwise ordinary people will lose money.” (retired woman)

“Yes, payment would help, particularly in attracting certain groups like civil servants. For self-employed people who have a high charge out rate, it would be unrealistic to expect the college to pay me for being there. But payment would definitely broaden the base.” (solicitor)

Accordingly, the absence of payment for individuals who volunteer to become a governor was widely considered to be a key barrier, in the context of attempts to diversify FE governing bodies.

When asked whether the NHS might be supportive if the payment was made to the organisation rather than the individual, the BME hospital consultant agreed:

“Yes, this would make it much easier to get released during the day. That way you could do something for the college that was not in your own time.”

His response suggests that payment (to the employer) might also relieve the time pressures on individual governors.

To summarise, the foregoing research interviews provide further support for the view that the extensive use of informal mechanisms tends to not only exclude under-represented groups, but also to reproduce and reinforce a lack of knowledge about FE college boards and governors from those currently outside the sector. This, in turn, can unwittingly perpetuate a self-fulfilling circle of social exclusion, in which the lack of knowledge (and lack of confidence in some cases) of those outside the sector informs their reluctance to apply for governor vacancies, which then increases the likelihood that
colleges will draw upon informal channels to recruit governors with the necessary skills and expertise (as defined in the Instrument and Articles). The hospital consultant recognised this exclusionary dynamic and, based on NHS experience, he recommended the introduction of independent people onto the search committee:

“The decision about who goes on the board is with the people who are already in place and it’s human nature they will tend to recruit people like themselves. Boards by their nature will try to recruit people who are like-minded and governors can get re-elected year after year. So, in order to get some fresh thinking onto the board, it might help to have independent people on the search committee.”

Our research therefore suggests that governor recruitment practices contain an in-built tendency to become a closed system, in which those outside have no knowledge of vacancies (whilst those already inside are strategically placed to hear about other opportunities and to develop their knowledge and experience). Of those we have interviewed, many outside and inside the sector can see the potential benefit of offering some form of payment to governors or their organisations as a way of acknowledging their time commitment to this important role.
Section 3: Recommendations and Action Plan

The foregoing analysis has highlighted five key inter-related barriers to developing a more diverse profile for FE governing bodies:

1) informal recruitment methods,
2) lack of knowledge about the governor role and governor vacancies,
3) lack of confidence,
4) time pressures, and
5) the absence of remuneration.

These research findings suggest that FE board recruitment tends to be informal, drawing largely upon word-of-mouth recommendations. Within the FE sector informal recruitment for governors is widely seen as a relatively effective mechanism for identifying “appropriate people”. Yet, such practices tend to reproduce a self-fulfilling circle in which similar kinds of people to those already on the board are recommended and appointed to the role of governor. Informal recruitment practices can therefore constitute an important barrier to establishing a more diverse board. This reliance on informal channels is informed by the current stipulations for boards to be constructed according to the guidelines in the Instrument and Articles, where governing bodies are required to include specific numbers of certain categories of governors for external board membership. It is also a consequence of a system that tends to rely upon unpaid volunteering as its dominant mode of board membership.

From a diversity perspective, the routine use of informal mechanisms tends to reproduce the status quo in terms of board member profile. Informal mechanisms typically reinforce a closed system of recruitment, in which those outside the network are (unintentionally) excluded from applying. Frequently they do not have any knowledge about the role of governors in FE colleges. Indeed only four of our ten interviewees from outside the sector even knew that governors existed. Equally, none of the respondents

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14 Research on recruitment and diversity more generally suggests that selectors in many private and public sector organizations prefer to use informal recruitment channels, criteria and procedures. While selectors often believe that informal recruitment processes (such as internal search and word-of-mouth recommendation) are the most effective way of attracting (and assessing) the best candidates, research also indicates that such practices tend to reproduce a segregated workforce, especially in terms of ethnicity (Jenkins 1986) and gender (Curran 1986, Collinson et al 1990). These studies illustrate that one possible consequence of such informal and often unaccountable practices is the intended or unwitting reproduction and reinforcement of labour-market segregation. They suggest that informality can constitute an important barrier to fair selection, where notions of “fairness” are informed by the principle of equality of opportunity (Collinson 1988). While much of the research has examined private sector recruitment, this report suggests that the issue of informality in recruitment practices would seem to be particularly relevant in the context of volunteering.
had ever seen or noticed an advertisement for a governor vacancy. Such practices are particularly likely to exclude those in under-represented groups and communities. If informal channels are the preferred method of recruiting governors, how do those outside these networks become aware of vacancies or understand the role of governors?

This analysis therefore suggests that in order to overcome these barriers and to diversify the board profile, there needs to be more open and formalised mechanisms of recruitment, in which advertising not only reaches all levels of the wider community, but also very clearly states what is required of FE board governors. Extensive advertising would give social inclusion a much greater emphasis. Equally, 90% of the research respondents were strongly in favour of some form of remuneration being paid to governors (or their employers), as an appropriate way to acknowledge the considerable commitment involved in the governor’s role.

In the light of these research findings, this final section now proposes a series of recommendations and an Action Plan designed to overcome these barriers and facilitate monitoring. This section assembles the various recommendations in a cohesive way so that they can be taken forward strategically. Several of our recommendations recognise the inter-connections between the need to widen the diversity profile of the board and the current scarcity of prospective governors more generally in applying for particular vacancies. The following Action Plan also makes suggestions regarding which agencies should be responsible as the lead organisation for ensuring progress in relation to each recommendation. Based on the findings of this two-month project, the Action Plan outlines the following recommendations:

1. **Create an Effective System to Monitor and Report Progress on Governor Diversity**

Whilst acknowledging the need to reduce bureaucracy within the sector, it is difficult to monitor diversity without baseline data. Detailed and accurate baseline data are a necessary precondition for the effective monitoring of progress in relation to the diversity profile of governing bodies. This baseline data should cover the national profile of governors listing age, ethnicity, gender, occupation and disability (see Appendix 3 and 4 for examples). Once this baseline data has been collected, colleges should be required to maintain this information on the profile of governing bodies, which can then be monitored and compared with the local census data. It is also important to maintain data on the profile of applicants. This is currently undertaken in equal opportunities reviews with staff in colleges. The profile of those applying to become governors should be gathered and compared with data on successful applicants (see Appendix 1 and 2). This will help to clarify which groups the college is failing to reach in advertising and which
groups are not succeeding past the application stage. There should be a review every four years or so of the national profile of governors, by colleges returning their data on the current profile of the governing body to CEL.

2. Develop a National Governor Recruitment Strategy
A national recruitment strategy for governors would strengthen the recruitment process and give guidance on a standard procedure in all colleges. There also needs to be the development of national guidelines on advertising of governor vacancies which would include a requirement that all advertising material carries a clear message about encouraging applications from all sections of the community. The introduction of independent assessors from outside the sector who would sit on search committees could enhance the transparency and accountability of governor recruitment. As part of a more transparent approach, the introduction of a system that records how decisions are made would be helpful for auditing and also evidencing equality of opportunity. Colleges could also implement community outreach initiatives by having more dialogue with students and parents, which would enhance applications from under-represented groups.

3. Enhance the Profile of Governors
Information packs could be developed explaining what competencies are required, what governors do and a detailed explanation of duties and timescales. This could include the creation of a dvd/video that captures governors talking about their role, how they manage to combine paid employment and the role of governor and outlining the interesting nature of the post. As Ellis Paine and Brewis have indicated, the sector could take advantage of existing networking opportunities with national agencies which support volunteering. This could include links on existing websites for registers of interest and information packs. By raising the profile of governors, more people from wider groups will be aware of what is required to be a governor and governors will become less ‘invisible’.

4. Introduce an FE Governor Apprenticeship Scheme
Our research with those outside the sector indicates that such support for volunteers has been very valuable for respondents in undertaking their roles. The sector could build upon the success of previous mentoring and shadowing schemes by introducing a scheme for retired governors to mentor new governors. There could also be a pilot shadowing exercise where people from under-represented groups can shadow governors. Prospective governors could be invited to attend meetings as “observers” of the board’s deliberations so that they can experience first hand what it means to be a
governor. Another way of providing a “taster experience” would be for prospective governors to be invited to sit on governing body sub-committees (such as the “audit”, or “quality and standards” committees). There could be special events (for example ‘taster’ sessions) for newly recruited or prospective governors at the Governors Annual Conference, which would also be an ideal opportunity to consult and network with current governors across the country. Our research has highlighted the vital importance of the induction and training of magistrates. National guidelines and statutory requirements for governor induction should be drawn up with a specific requirement for equality and diversity awareness training for governors. There also needs to be more formal recognition of the work that governors do and, as Ellis Paine and Brewis have stated, local recognition events would help.

5. Consider Remuneration and Other Possible Improvements to Governor Recognition
The subject of remuneration needs to be explored in the sector particularly with the increasing commitments of those in work and those with caring responsibilities (who may need to pay to be relieved of their responsibilities when attending meetings). It might also help to encourage applications from younger people in paid employment who would otherwise lose pay by attending meetings. There could be a system of remuneration for employers in the case of those who are employed but do not want any remuneration. This would formally acknowledge the contribution that an employer has made to the college and the community.

6. Conduct Further Research on the Governor Recruitment Process
FE governing bodies in general and their diversity profiles more particularly are very under-researched areas and much could be gained for the sector by more detailed investigation. More research needs to be conducted on current recruitment practices in colleges as well as recruitment practices in other sectors which have encouraged more diversity. The question of remuneration of governors requires more in-depth research – particularly whether it has encouraged applications from under-represented groups. In relation to diversity, more research could examine the barriers preventing governors from carrying out their role effectively (for example, a national questionnaire followed by focus groups). The results of this research could feed into the development of changes in the sector – for example, (like the recommendations for magistrates), the availability of carer’s allowances for those with caring responsibilities.
Together, these recommendations are designed to make the recruitment practices of FE governors more formal, transparent and inclusive, whilst recognising that a significant supply of applicants does not currently exist. The recommendations seek to enhance the diversity profile of FE governing bodies through specific recruitment and retention policies and practices, and to facilitate the future monitoring of progress in this area. At this stage of the draft report these recommendations and assigned responsibilities for implementation are proposals for consultation with the DIUS and other partners.
**Action Plan: For Consultation with the Sector**

**Recommendations from the CEL/DIUS Research Project**

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<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Proposed Responsibility</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Create An Effective System to Monitor and Report Progress on the Diversity of Governors.</strong> &lt;br&gt;(Will need to be considered as part of the move to self regulation)</td>
<td><strong>National Database:</strong> Each college to maintain a database of the profile of serving governors with a breakdown of age, ethnicity, gender, occupation and disability. The development of this database is an essential precondition for establishing a clear profile of all governing bodies across the sector, for identifying specific groups that are under-represented in the current board profile and for monitoring progress. This information can then be used to compare the profile of each college with local community census data and with the student profile of the college.</td>
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<td><strong>Audit:</strong> Consider developing a system of audit in which colleges submit data every 4 years on their current profile of governing bodies. This can then be measured against local census data and student profile.</td>
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<td><strong>Targets:</strong> On the basis of this information and the auditing process, customised targets for each college can be set to guide future practice. This can then inform campaigns to recruit from particular under-represented groups and communities. For example, a three-year programme specifically designed to recruit BME people could be instigated.</td>
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<td><strong>Application Data:</strong> Colleges to collect data on: &lt;br&gt;<strong>Applicants</strong> for governor vacancies in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, occupation and disability (see Appendix 1). &lt;br&gt;<strong>Successful applicants</strong> in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, occupation and disability. (see Appendix 2).</td>
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<td>2. Develop A National Recruitment and Induction Strategy for Governors.</td>
<td><strong>Develop National Guidelines on Recruitment.</strong></td>
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<td>Open and Formalised Advertising of governor vacancies, with specific requirements on outlets used. Advertising should clearly specify the skills required to become a governor.</td>
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<td>Clear Messages in Advertising Material that ‘the college strongly encourages applications from all sections of the community’.</td>
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<td>Consider Independent Assessors on search committees who contribute to the screening, interviewing and assessing of applicants.</td>
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<td>Formalised Records on Appointment Decisions, which can then also be viewed in audit. As recommendation 1 (above), this will include information on all applicants.</td>
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<td>Formalised Induction and Training Procedures (especially on equality and diversity issues). The Leadership Skills for Governance Programme plan to run workshops for governors and clerks on understanding diversity and inclusion from September/ October 2007.</td>
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<td>Community Outreach Initiatives: to enhance applications from under-represented groups, colleges should explore creative ways to reach out to local communities, consulting with students, staff and parents, for example, by focus groups and surveys.</td>
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<td>3. Enhance the Profile of FE Governors.</td>
<td>Information Packs: Develop at national level detailed documentation outlining the role of governors and highlighting the importance of social inclusivity. Make packs available to view on college websites and in colleges in different languages.</td>
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<td>Interactive DVD/Video: Information packs should include a DVD, produced at national level, that can be used in and by colleges. Highlighting the importance and intrinsic value of governors’ work, this DVD would include clips of current governors from diverse backgrounds talking about their roles and the value of their contribution to colleges, students and the wider community. It might also show clips of actual meetings.</td>
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<td>Governors’ Website: Develop an enhanced website link so that people interested in governance can register their interest. This can provide detailed information about the role, current legislation and broader key issues in the FE sector.</td>
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<td>Develop Links with National Agencies that Support Volunteering. For example, it would be helpful to liaise with bodies/initiatives supporting student governors and staff governors.</td>
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<td>4. Introduce An FE Governor ‘Apprenticeship Scheme’ to include:</td>
<td><strong>Mentoring Schemes:</strong> Recently retired governors could become mentors for new governors, providing on-going advice and feedback over a specified period (e.g. the first 12 months for new governors). This might build on the Black Leadership Initiative which was developed for principals.</td>
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<td><strong>‘Observer’ Schemes:</strong> Prospective governors, and especially people from under-represented groups could be invited to attend board meetings as ‘observers’, and to sit on governing body sub-committees.</td>
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<td><strong>Shadowing Schemes:</strong> Prospective governors, and especially people from under-represented groups, could be encouraged to shadow governors.</td>
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<td><strong>Governors’ Annual Conference - Special Events:</strong> Prospective and recently recruited governors could be invited to special events held during the annual conference specifically designed to be introductory, ‘taster’ sessions. This conference would also provide an ideal opportunity to meet and consult with current governors from across the country and learn about their experiences and ask questions.</td>
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<td><strong>5. Governor Remuneration and Improved Governor Recognition</strong></td>
<td><strong>Remuneration for Individuals:</strong> Given the concern to diversify governing body profiles, consider the feasibility (including any necessary legal changes) of providing an honorarium payment for governors’ work. This can be important for sections of the community (particularly those on limited incomes). The issue of remuneration is also present for FE Governors who also sit on public sector Boards.</td>
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<td><strong>Travel Payments:</strong> Given the concern to diversify governing body profiles, emphasise the provision of (at minimum) travel payments and associated expenses to ensure that governors (especially those on limited incomes) are not out-of-pocket by attending board meetings. This does not appear to be universally practiced in all colleges.</td>
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<td><strong>Remuneration for Employers:</strong> For those in paid work, who do not wish to be remunerated, the honorarium could be paid to their employer organisation as a way of acknowledging their employees’ time sacrifice for the college and the contribution of local organisations to college development. (See point 1 above in relation to any necessary legal changes).</td>
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<td><strong>Recognition for Individuals:</strong> Develop a system of formal recognition for governors (e.g. through regional recognition events).</td>
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<td><strong>Recognition for Employers:</strong> Develop a system of formal recognition for local employers who encourage staff to be governors (e.g. through regional recognition events). This would especially recognise the contribution of those employers that help to identify appropriate individuals who enhance the board’s diversity profile.</td>
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<td>6. Conduct Further Research on the Following Issues:</td>
<td><strong>Current Recruitment Practices:</strong> This would include an examination of: college reliance on informal recruitment channels, a wide range of perceptions about the nature of the Governors’ role, and the way chairs, clerks of boards and search committees are currently appointed (including succession planning arrangements).</td>
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<td><strong>Current Barriers</strong> that prevent governors and other members of the community from carrying out their role. Use the results as guidance for making the role of governors more accessible for all groups (possibly introducing a carer’s allowance, where not already available).</td>
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<td><strong>The Feasibility of Remuneration for Governors and the funding implications.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Recruitment Procedures in Other Sectors</strong> that have encouraged the diversity of employees. This can further inform FE recruitment practices. In particular, this would seek to provide positive case studies of ‘good practice’ and the beneficial consequences of greater board diversity.</td>
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<td><strong>Recruitment Strategies</strong> that might be aimed at employers and how awards could be developed for employers who support volunteering and who facilitate board diversification by identifying employees from under-represented groups to be governors.</td>
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<td><strong>Case Studies</strong> that critically examine the current strengths and weaknesses of recruitment practices in different colleges, particularly in their impact on the diversity profile. The Leadership Skills for Governance Team is looking to add case studies highlighting good practice in recruiting governors to the governance good practice guide during October 2007.</td>
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<td>Recommendation</td>
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<td>Consider The Most Effective Way of Deploying Independent Assessors for the</td>
<td>screening, application and interview processes.</td>
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<td>The Feasibility of A Competency Based Framework and Governor Certification for the sector.</td>
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<td>Recently Retired Governors who could act as mentors for new governors.</td>
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<td>Student and Staff Governor Voice - examining their experience of governor</td>
<td>recruitment and board practices.</td>
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References


Cheviot Housing Association (2006). *Business Case of Payment of Board Members.*


Appendices

Appendix 1: Breakdown of applicants by age, gender and ethnicity (Hamer 2004)
Appendix 2: Breakdown of successful applicants by age, gender and ethnicity (Hamer 2004)
Appendix 3: Individual authorities by ethnicity
(Hamer 2004)
Appendix 4: Individual authorities by gender
(Hamer 2004)
Appendix 5: Sample competency-based application form (Hamer 2004)
Appendix 6: Brief Summaries of Research Interviewees

The ten interviews were designed to elicit information about the perceptions of members of the community currently outside the sector. All interviewees were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. The first three interviewees listed below (who had experience of volunteering in other areas of the UK public sector) were also able to compare the recruitment practices in other sectors with those found in the FE sector.

1. **The County Council Employee** is a BME female in her early fifties, who has served as a non-executive member of an NHS trust and in the past had also been a magistrate. She was aware of the role of FE governor and was very keen to find ways to enhance the diversification of governing bodies.

2. **The Magistrate** is a white, male local entrepreneur running a relatively large business. Now in his early fifties, he is also a former FE student who has been a practicing lay magistrate for approximately six years. Although he was unaware that FE governing bodies existed, he confirmed that, if approached, he would consider becoming a governor.

3. **The General Practitioner** is a BME male in his early forties, who used to sit on the board of the local primary care trust as a medical representative. Although he was unaware that FE governing bodies existed, he felt that being a governor was very worthwhile.

4. **The Small Business Owner** is a white female in her late twenties. Although she had studied at the local FE college, she was unaware that a governing body existed and had never seen a governor vacancy advertised. She confirmed that she would consider becoming a governor.

5. **The Skilled Manual Worker** is a white male in his mid thirties, who was unaware of the governor’s role. Working long hours it was difficult for him to see how he could also manage to take on the role of governor without the role impacting negatively on his finances.

6. **The Full-time Mother** is a white female in her mid thirties who attended an FE College in the 1990s. Although her college experience had made her aware of the existence of the governing body, she had never seen an advert for a governor vacancy. She might be interested in a vacancy.

7. **The Business Link Senior Manager** is a white male in his early fifties who is a former FE student (to degree level) and has some knowledge of one local college as a result of a recent collaborative project. He would consider becoming a governor.

8. **The Retired Woman** is a white female in her early sixties who had worked all her life. Although one of her children had previously studied at an FE college, she had no knowledge of FE boards and doubted that she would have the knowledge to be a governor.

9. **The NHS Hospital Consultant** is a BME male in his thirties who has just attended his first meeting as a co-opted member of an FE board. He is highly committed to the value of FE education and believes the sector can play a major role in improving people’s life chances and in re-skilling.

10. **The Solicitor** is a forty-year old white male, who has lived in the local community all his life and studied at the local university. He specialises in conveyancing and property matters (both private and commercial) and therefore has an important expertise that colleges are seeking in their governors.
Further information

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