

National Equality Partnership draft response to Capacitybuilders Single Equality Scheme consultation September 2009

This is about what we think Capacitybuilders should do to challenge discrimination and promote equality. Please contact us on 020 7324 3052 or email equality@wrc.org.uk if you would like a summary of this information in Easy Words and Pictures.

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Introduction

This is National Equality Partnership's draft response to the consultation on Capacitybuilders single equality scheme. We will circulate this draft and welcome feedback on it, so that we can best represent the views of a wide range of third sector organisations. Specifically this response is informed by our reference group, made up of organisations from a wide range of equality groups from all over England.

We welcome Capacitybuilders single equality scheme. As a public body Capacitybuilders has a duty to promote equality and eliminate unlawful discrimination (the 'general' equality duty). It is not listed in the current law as a body that also has to comply with the 'specific' duties, such as writing an equality scheme and conducting equality impact assessments, but has chosen to do this as good practice. This sends an important signal to other government and third sector organisations that equality is a key priority for work with the third sector.

We believe the draft single equality scheme is a good one, but as it stands it would not result in sufficient elimination of discrimination or promotion of equality. There are several key easy actions which we believe need adding or amending in order to achieve the outcomes set out in the plan.

Get involved

We would like you to respond to the consultation yourself as well. Please go to www.wrc.org.uk/equality/consultations for more information including links to the draft scheme and an online survey. Alternatively call Ravi Chauhan on 020 7843 6130 or email ravi@voice4change-england.co.uk if you have any questions or would like to give your views by phone, or to tell us what you think of this response. **The consultation deadline is 25th September 2009.**

Summary of key points

These are the most important actions Capacitybuilders should take to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality. They should be included in the Single Equality Scheme action plan.

- Continue to fund specialist equality support providers, through targeted programmes such as Improving Reach and the Campaigning Research Programme.
- Equality impact assess all its funding programmes to ensure they reach a mixture of generalist and specialist equality organisations, and organisations from all equality sectors (i.e. Black and minority ethnic people, children and young people, Deaf people, disabled people, Gypsies and Travellers, lesbians, gay men and bisexuals, migrant workers, older people, refugees and asylum seekers, religion/belief groups, Trans people and women).
- Ensure that all the organisations it funds take steps to target their services at marginalised parts of the third sector through the application process and reporting requirements.

People

We agree with all the outcomes and actions set out in the scheme under the 'People' section.

We would also like Capacitybuilders to actively aim to recruit staff who have experience in equality organisations in the third sector, whose expertise would help to ensure that the rest of the scheme is a success. We are aware that several staff and board members do have this experience so we think this action would simply make explicit something Capacitybuilders already does.

We suggest the following additional outcome and action to help ensure that Capacitybuilders staff have a good understanding of the third sector.

Outcome	Action
We recruit employees and Board members with experience in third sector equality organisations.	When recruiting, include 'experience of working in a third sector equality organisation' as desirable criteria in person specifications.

Business

Targeted investment (outcome 5)

We agree with outcome 5. However the draft scheme does not include actions that will achieve this outcome. We agree with action 5.1 but it will not achieve outcome 5.

In order to achieve this outcome, Capacitybuilders needs to understand the needs of marginalised communities, and ensure that any future funding programmes reach them.

We strongly suggest addition of the following actions (5.2 and 5.3):

Outcome	Action
5) Capacitybuilders provides targeted investment to support marginalised communities where appropriate	<p>Keep: 5.1) Capacitybuilders ensures that the independent evaluation (2008-11) looks at the impact and outcomes of our investment in the Improving Reach programme and the Equality NSS workstream. These findings will be published and freely available.</p> <p>Add: 5.2) Capacitybuilders specifically targets marginalised communities to ensure they are involved in consultations on future funding programmes.</p> <p>Add: 5.3) Capacitybuilders ensures that its funding programmes include a balance of targeted and mainstream funding.</p>

Mainstream funding supports all sectors (outcome 6)

We strongly support outcome 6 but believe a further action is needed to address it. Capacitybuilders needs to ensure that the organisations it funds work inclusively and target their services at marginalised parts of the sector. All Capacitybuilders' grant recipients should monitor how well their services are reaching all marginalised groups and report on steps taken to reach under-represented groups. In addition we strongly support action 6.1 and the findings of this exercise should be made public, as with the other evaluation findings.

Outcome	Action
6) Mainstream grant programmes deliver benefits to all parts of the sector, including equality groups	<p>Amend: 6.1) Establish the profile of new applicants for funding. From this we will assess the extent to which equality groups are: a) bidding for funding and; b) successful in their applications. These findings will be published and made freely available.</p> <p>Add: 6.3) Review grant application and monitoring processes to ensure grant recipients' performance on equality and diversity is measured across all funding programmes.</p>

Equality impact assessments (outcome 7)

We strongly support outcome 7 and action 7.1 and believe that carrying out equality impact assessments on future investment programmes will improve the cost-effectiveness and impact of Capacitybuilders' funds. Capacitybuilders should follow best practice in involvement and consultation on its equality impact assessments to get the best use from them.

Outcome	Action
7) The design process for all future investment programmes will fully consider the potential impacts on equality groups	Amend: 7.1) An equality impact assessment will be conducted prior to the introduction of new funding programmes. Capacitybuilders will follow best practice on involvement and consultation on its equality impact assessments. All assessments will be published and made freely available.

Stakeholder engagement and communications (outcome 8)

During consultation events held so far on the equality scheme, feedback on Capacitybuilders communications has generally been very positive, although there remain some concerns about accessibility. In our own experience we have seen an improvement in the accessibility of Capacitybuilders communications, with lots of willingness from staff to reach best practice. In particular we think Capacitybuilders has achieved a great deal in use of Plain English to describe complex, jargon-heavy information.

However we do think more needs to be done around visual accessibility in particular. We have recently found we had to provide an alternative word version of an article we had posted onto the Improving Support website because it could not be read by somebody with a visual impairment.

We agree with outcome 8 and actions 8.1 and 8.2. We presume that 8.1 refers to an *equality* impact assessment, and this should be made explicit. Also this equality impact assessment should include reviewing the accessibility of communications mechanisms including the website.

Outcome	Action
8) All stakeholders engaging with Capacitybuilders have a positive experience	Amend: 8.1) Conduct an equality impact assessment on our external communication strategy and mechanisms (eg website).

Governance

Diversity of Capacitybuilders Board – outcome 10

We agree with this outcome but the action will not achieve it. We understand that Capacitybuilders is not currently recruiting new Board members but when it does, diversity should be a significant factor in the recruitment process.

Outcome	Action
10) Capacitybuilders Board comprises members from diverse backgrounds	Add: 10.2) When new Board members are recruited, Board diversity will be reviewed and members with experience of a wide range of equality issues will be recruited wherever possible.

Training (outcome 12)

We support action 12.2 (all Capacitybuilders staff to undergo equality training). The equality training should be tailored to Capacitybuilders' work and should include training not just on equality and human rights issues and legislation, but also on equality groups in the third sector.

Decisions informed by best possible data (outcome 13)

We support outcome 13 and especially the use of equality impact assessments, which should be carried out with involvement of those affected by the policies or decisions according to best practice. This should be made explicit in action 13.2, as well as the publishing of equality impact assessments as set out in action 7.1.

Outcome	Action
13) Capacitybuilders decisions are informed by the best possible data	Amend: 13.2) Equality impact assessments will be conducted prior to the introduction of all new policies or programmes. Capacitybuilders will follow best practice on involvement and consultation on its equality impact assessments. All assessments will be published and made freely available.

About the National Equality Partnership

The National Equality Partnership supports the third sector to challenge inequality and promote equality and human rights. It is a three year project (2008-11) funded by Capacitybuilders under the Improving Support Programme. Our national programme covers the whole of England.

What do we do?

We offer training, information and one-to-one support to umbrella organisations to help them challenge disablism, homophobia, racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination and human rights abuse. We enable equalities organisations to increase their voices so that inequality is tackled effectively. All of our work promotes collaboration and partnerships, sharing expertise and encouraging long-term relationships between equalities organisations and the wider third sector.

Our work is closely informed by our reference group encompassing all equalities sectors as well as generalist organisations. The partnership of NEP is made up of:

- Women's Resource Centre (WRC)
- Voice4Change England
- Consortium of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Voluntary and Community Organisations
- National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA)

Women's Resource Centre is the lead partner with core staff based at our London office.

We believe that organisations run by people with direct experience of inequality and discrimination have a unique and vital role in creating lasting solutions to inequality. At NEP we ensure that all work to address quality, diversity and human rights in the third sector is done with close involvement of equality organisations.

