

What is Equality and Diversity Monitoring and how can it help AVPB?

Equality monitoring is simply a data recording process that enables organisations to record sensitive information about a person's background and identity in a confidential and anonymous way.

It can allow AVPB to capture an annual snapshot of what our volunteer and participant range looks like in terms of factors such as gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, race and religion. This can then enable us to consider whether or not the diversity of our volunteers and participants fully reflects the diversity of the communities we serve (or wish to serve).

Equality monitoring is an important means of demonstrating an established commitment to promoting equality of opportunity within the organisation. Monitoring is also the best way to determine the success or otherwise of the policies and practices that we have adopted for the purpose of maintaining or promoting equality.

Monitoring can assist Trustees to develop solutions such as positive action plans, or alternative policies and practices. For example: In an attempt to encourage more disabled people to participate in AVP, a supported volunteer project could be targeted at this group. Monitoring data would then show by what proportion the number of volunteers and participants with a disability rose in a given year.

Typical grounds monitored in a volunteer context include Gender, Community Background, Disability, Race, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Age. Using a monitoring questionnaire is an appropriate method of collecting quantitative monitoring data.

There is no legal requirement for volunteer-involving organisations to undertake equality monitoring. However, many funders require us to monitor on specific grounds as a way of tracking the impact of actions aimed at encouraging more people from specific backgrounds to volunteer. The GDPR places a responsibility on organisations to identify why they are collecting personal data, how it will be stored and for how long.

Some individuals may be reluctant to respond openly and honestly to questions which they perceive to be of an extremely personal nature. That is why each question should have a "Prefer not to say" option. It should be made clear that if an individual chooses not to complete all or part of the equality monitoring form they will not be excluded from participation.

It is also important to be aware that there are particular sensitivities associated with several of the equality grounds and that these can hinder the effective monitoring of those grounds. The grounds of sexual orientation, civil partnership status, disability and political opinion are particularly affected by these sensitivities.

To address these concerns, it is important to establish and maintain an environment of trust which acknowledges that the collection of personal data is a highly sensitive issue and that it will be managed in a sensitive and secure way. Thus, there is a need to openly explain our reasons for monitoring while establishing and maintaining data protection safeguards. It is good practice to highlight the existence of our data protection safeguards as this may encourage individuals to answer the questionnaire.

This includes stressing that it is not compulsory for them to fill in the questionnaire, and that the questionnaire will not be reviewed by facilitators or used in workshops. This can be enhanced by providing an envelope where participants can put the form themselves and which is then sealed once the last form goes in. It is only opened by the designated person in the office. It should also be

stressed that the forms are anonymous, and will only be used to compile a broad statistical analysis, and that they will be destroyed once this is done.

It will also be important to appoint a Monitoring Officer. They will be the only person to see the monitoring forms and undertake the task of processing the information. The Monitoring Officer could be someone who works in the office or they could be a Trustee.

Monitoring information should be stored in a secure way that is fully compliant with responsibilities under the GDPR. Data on equality grounds should not be collected and then stored away without fully considering it and taking appropriate action. AVPB must use the information by analysing and reviewing it for the purpose of promoting equality of opportunity.

So Trustees will need to determine when and how they will conduct reviews of the data collected. The primary purpose of a review is to enable the organisation to determine whether or not the diversity of our volunteers and participants fully reflects the diversity of the communities that we serve (or wish to serve). Where a review indicates under-representation, this can help to determine what positive steps would be reasonable or appropriate to try to make workshops more accessible.

The most important thing to remember when preparing data for presentation to a wider audience is to ensure that characteristics relating to one individual cannot be identified.

It is also up to Trustees to determine what questions to ask that would be helpful in monitoring progress against AVPB's policies. I would suggest at a bare minimum:

- **Age** – we need to know the age groups we are attracting.
- **Gender** – What is the gender balance of workshops? This question can include gender identity.
- **Ethnicity** – we need to know if there are marginalised ethnic groups that we are not reaching.
- **Disability** – Are people with disabilities not attending workshops? How can we make them more accessible?
- **Religion** – Are we attracting people from predominantly one faith? If so, what do we do to diversify?
- **Sexual Orientation** – If we aren't attracting people of certain orientations, what can we do to improve this aspect of diversity?
- **Employment Status** – Are we attracting mainly older retired people? How do we make workshops more accessible to other groups?

These are the sorts of questions that funders will want to see the answers to. There are other questions that could be asked if Trustees feel the responses would be helpful in understanding who participated and making AVPB more diverse.

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December 2018