

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: Data, Monitoring and Evaluation

Case study: 1625 Independent People (1625ip)

Vicky Harwood, Operations Director

Analysing diversity data helps devise, implement, monitor and evaluate initiatives to address inequities in the workforce and in services.

We spoke to Vicky Harwood, Operations Director at 1625ip, to learn more about the lessons they've learnt about collecting and monitoring diversity data.

At 1625ip you've been collecting diversity data about colleagues and young people accessing your services for quite some time. What does this involve?

For our young people, we use In-Form. Quarterly, I run reports on missing data, and share with managers for them to follow up with teams.

For our colleagues, we collect the data through our PeopleHR (PHR) system - the system through which people request annual leave, complete timesheets etc. People are in control of their own data: they can update at any time, and there's always a "prefer not to disclose" option. Then three to four times a year, when people log into PHR, a reminder pops up asking if their data is complete.

We also collect diversity data around recruitment (people applying for roles, getting to interview, to offer stage and into employment.) We do this via an optional diversity form which accompanies their application; this form goes straight to our People team and is not seen by the shortlisting/interviewing panel.

What challenges have you faced around data collection, and what have you learnt from that?

Until last year, managers provided their statistics on missing young people data, and to be honest, we spent more time debating the accuracy of that (e.g., are they missing 5% of data or 6%?) than doing anything meaningful with it. But then we agreed that In-Form is the one version of the truth, and we trust the reports from that, and so we no longer spend time quibbling over the % of how much is missing.

To be honest, we often have better data on the young people with whom we work than our colleagues, so this is an ongoing challenge. We keep looking for new ways to promote this and the value of this data.

Do you have any tips around how to persuade people of the importance of collecting data?

This might sound obvious, but one of the game changers has been explaining, with a range of real examples, what the data can help us do. In turn, this helps to make them more positive about asking the questions, as they are more confident about the purpose and can describe that.

I compile a list of positive things that we have done with the information (for example deciding the main translation options on our website and evidencing the need for more services for refugees and asylum seekers) and we find that is helping us collect the data as we have real, practical examples of how it is used, and how it has made a difference. Whenever I share the missing data reports with managers, I also share an updated list of things we have done with the data so they can demonstrate to teams, and young people, the value of the information and the use to which it is put.

One service went from about 30% missing data to less than 2% once the team understood the purpose of collecting it. This was a relatively new service, and so I was able to make the examples very relevant to them, as EDI data was a large part of making the case for the funding for this service in the first place – so I was clearly able to say, that your service exists partly because we had this data to help make the case to funders and commissioners, which made it very real for the team.

As you mentioned earlier, it's important to offer "prefer not to say" as an answer choice. But it does mean that the size of the dataset that you are able to analyse becomes smaller. How do you encourage people to provide the data?

"Prefer not to say" is a valid and respected choice by anyone – colleagues, young people, applicants for jobs. And we recognise that our young people may not be willing to disclose to a stranger when they first arrive at our service. We've been talking about revisiting at first support plan review, as the young person may be more willing to disclose to their keyworker three or six months later. Similarly, with colleagues, prompts automatically come up on our People HR system, 3 or 4 times a year, so people may feel more able to complete as their trust in the organisation grows.

What do you monitor the data you collect against?

We compare the demographics of colleagues to those of our young people and the local population in Bristol, and South Gloucestershire.

We've measured and reported on recruitment, across the protected characteristics for years. We're currently looking more deeply into concerns such as the number of applications from people who say they are Muslim is pleasingly high, but a lot not

making it to interview, and then to offer. We want to understand this much better so we can do something.

What are some of the lessons you've learnt along the way?

You have to be realistic in your targets and consider carefully what you are benchmarking against.

Initially, we set ourselves a target around racial diversity of colleagues to reflect the demographics of the young people we work with - we were aiming for 37% of colleagues to be of BME heritage. However, when the 2021 census, results were released and analysed by Bristol City Council, only 18% of the current working age population in Bristol are of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic heritage. Therefore, us setting ourselves a target of 37% was unrealistic and unachievable. A more appropriate target for us was to reflect the demographics of the working age population.

We know people from BAME communities can be over-represented in the care cohort, homeless population, etc. 30% of the BAME population in Bristol is children, so our 37% target might be achievable in five to ten years' time, once the children grow to working age, but for now, it's more than double the BAME working age population in Bristol.

And the largest and most steadily increasing non-White British populations in Bristol are European - one third of the total population growth in Bristol in last 10 years was from people born in the EU. So, we need to look at it again and still have a stretch target, but a more achievable one, whilst also re-thinking definitions.

What about targets in relation to other diversity characteristics?

We may have a similar situation with sexuality/gender identity. There seems to be a link with age, and this may also be affected by the massive student population in Bristol. Younger people not in the workplace are not necessarily reflected in the cohort seeking work, and therefore our targets are not aligned with the reality of the working age population.

What this is teaching us about is the importance of intersectionality when analysing and using - we weren't intersecting age with ethnic origin or sexuality, for example, and so were not setting targets with enough nuance.

What are your future ambitions around data?

This year we're focussing on the experience of colleagues once in 1625ip. We've collected recruitment data for a long time, but we'd like to now also look at promotion, disciplinary, grievance. For example, whether people with different protected characteristics are represented differently in these areas, and if so, why, and what can we do about that?