

***Barnwood Trust  
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion  
Strategy and Recommendations  
Report***

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# Strategy Aims

The Better Org (TBO) has partnered with Barnwood Trust to assess and strengthen the Trust's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices, policies, and culture. This aims to enhance the Trust's awareness, competency, and capability in DEI focusing both on internal organisational processes, practices, and culture, as well as on external aspects, such as the grant-making process and community engagement. Building on previous DEI work at Barnwood Trust, this strategy and supporting recommendations have been co-developed to support the Trust's future DEI efforts.

Guided by the findings from the sensemaking report, this strategy outlines key priorities, actionable recommendations, and concrete steps to support meaningful change in relation to the following dimensions:

1. Organisational Commitment
2. Leadership\* and Governance
3. Culture and Belonging
4. Community Engagement and Partnerships
5. Funding, Influencing and Power Sharing

This strategy is designed to support Barnwood Trust in creating and sustaining a culture that values diversity, ensures equity across all its practices, and fosters belonging, particularly for individuals who experience systemic and social marginalisation.

*\* By leadership, we intend CEO, Directors, Heads of in addition to People Managers*

# Glossary

We are providing the key definitions that relate to our approach and work as outlined in the strategy.

1. **Anti-ableist** - Ableism is one of the most common forms of prejudice. It includes both unconscious bias and overt discrimination. Part of becoming anti-ableist is sitting in your discomfort and honestly reckoning with your own power and privilege. That is, anti-ableism is about recognising abled privilege and actively dismantling it.
2. **Anti-racist** - Anti-Racism is defined as the work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life.
3. **Belonging** - A sense of belonging—the subjective feeling of deep connection with social groups, physical places, and individual and collective experiences—is a fundamental human need that predicts numerous mental, physical, social, economic, and behavioural outcomes.
4. **Diversity** - Recognition of all dimensions of human demographic differences and representation of the range of this difference within a group. Diversity embodies respect, multiple perspectives, and serves as a catalyst for change resulting in equity.
5. **Equity** - Aims to ensure the contextual needs of individuals is seen and considered in the distribution of resources, access, and opportunities that benefit some social groups/communities and harm other social groups/communities. Sometimes justice demands, for the purpose of equity, an unequal response.
6. **Inclusion** - The act of creating environments and structures via procedure and policy in which any individual or a group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. At the Trust, inclusion is defined as 'Connecting and collaborating with openness and honesty, we ensure all voices are respected, heard and valued'.

# Glossary

7. **Intersectionality** - The concept of intersectionality describes the ways in which systems of inequality based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class, and other forms of discrimination “intersect” to create unique dynamics and effects.
8. **Positionality** - This is the way in which our various, intersecting social identities (gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, dis/ability, geographical location, etc.) combined go on to shape how we understand and engage with the world around us, including what we know, our attitudes and perspectives and our work practices.
9. **Power** - The capacity of individuals or groups to decide or influence who does what, who gets what, who sets the agenda, and who decides what. Power can influence our positionality and vice versa.
10. **Racism** - The set of circumstances artificially created over generations, through European colonialism, and which holds ‘whiteness’ to be superior. Structural racism affects individuals on a day-to-day basis and also means that, collectively, people of colour are held back from achieving their cultural, political, and economic potential, and are kept distant from power, representation, and resources.
11. **Systems change** - An approach that targets the root causes of social issues instead of directly tackling the issue itself. It aims to alter or shift underlying structures such as policies, mindsets and power dynamics, which enable the system to function in a particular way.

# Barnwood Trust's Context

To frame this strategy, we have included some important context that frames our strategic recommendations.

- *Barnwood Trust's history and power:* In 2022, the Trustees released a statement on the history of the Trust's funds, and [subsequent report](#) which details a comprehensive and transparent account of the Trust's historical links to slavery. This was a significant moment for the Trust in naming its anti-racism aspirations, but also in its open acknowledgement of the past. As a key funder within Gloucestershire, the Trust also holds significant power and it is seen to be a key stakeholder in supporting place-based change.
- *DEI and Anti-Racism commitment:* Since 2020, the Trust has engaged in numerous DEI and anti-racist work streams that include training, coaching in addition to revisiting the Trust's values and processes. There has been extensive efforts in supporting the Trust in its DEI and anti-racism journey, though organisational changes have impacted the sustainability of these efforts. There seems to be an overlap in relation to how the Trust articulates its commitment to DEI and anti-racism, with the terms often used interchangeably, which in some instances can cause confusion.
- *Organisational shifts and transitions:* The Trust has undergone significant transition marked by restructuring processes which have led to reduction in functions, such as HR as well high turnover of staff. This has greatly impacted the Trust's culture and sense of belonging, and the organisation carries a historical legacy of bullying, harassment and exclusion which has to some extent impacted how trust, safety and belonging is nurtured and sustained. Changes to CEO leadership in 2025 also present another marked shift for the Trust, which may further impact Barnwood Trust's culture.

# DEI Assessment Observations

1. **Organisational Commitment:** Barnwood Trust has made progress in DEI, particularly around disability and mental health, but lacks a clear, actionable strategy, and there is a disconnect between its stated goals and actions. The focus has been more on inclusion and accessibility, with limited emphasis on race equity, anti-racism, and intersectionality, hindering broader systemic change.
2. **Leadership and Governance:** The Trust's leadership\* needs to foster more collective ownership of DEI efforts across all levels, with clearer accountability structures. Tensions around power imbalances, especially due to the Trust's role as a major funder, highlight the need for transparency in decision-making processes, particularly in grant funding, to support its DEI goals. Additionally, leadership should build confidence in DEI work to ensure staff feel equipped to engage in conversations about race, inclusion, and anti-racism without fear of making mistakes.
3. **Culture and Belonging:** The Trust is people-centered with a focus on inclusivity, but challenges around psychological safety, communication, and inconsistent policy implementation have impacted the culture and sense of belonging. A legacy of fear and sensitivity around DEI have created uncertainty. Despite this, opportunities to build relationships and form connections was noted to be important. Staff desire more involvement in policy development to ensure policies reflect lived experiences and intersectional perspectives.

*\* This includes the Board, CEO, Directors/Heads of and people managers.*

## DEI Assessment Observations (cont).

4. **Community Engagement and Partnerships:** The Trust adopts a highly relational approach to community engagement, though greater visibility and outreach to marginalised groups is noted. While Barnwood Circle is a successful example, it needs more diversity to better represent the diverse communities within Gloucestershire. The Trust's engagement with underrepresented communities outside disability and mental health is limited, presenting an opportunity to expand into broader sectors like the arts and healthcare. Additionally, tensions between the Trust's funding power and DEI goals highlight the need for greater transparency in funding decisions to address power imbalances.
5. **Grant-making:** Barnwood Trust's power as a funder is both an asset and a source of tension, with considerations of how power imbalances can limit access to funding and influence for marginalised communities. Grant-making practices could be further aligned with DEI and intersectional principles, prioritising marginalized groups for more equitable resource distribution. There is a need for targeted investment in outreach, community engagement, and capacity building, particularly for excluded groups, to foster stronger partnerships and systems change. Expanding funding portfolios to include a more intersectional approach will support broader DEI goals and systemic change.

# Strategy Roadmap

To support the Trust's transition from Current to Future State



# Strategic Roadmap Overview

This Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Strategic Roadmap provides a clear assessment of the Trust's current state and sets out a compelling vision for its future DEI journey. It identifies both short-term (6 months to 1 year) and long-term (1 to 2 years) priorities, offering a structured framework for action. While the proposed timeframes serve as an initial guide, they are intended to be refined through ongoing internal dialogue, ensuring alignment with organisational capacity, readiness, and commitment.

The aim of the roadmap is to support the Trust's leadership\* and staff to identify where the Trust is 'at' in respect to its current DEI journey, and identify key indicators that can help it move forward.

The roadmap identifies 5 organisational dimensions spanning:

1. Organisational Commitment
2. Leadership and Governance
3. Culture and Belonging
4. Community Engagement and Partnerships
5. Funding, Influencing and Power Sharing

*\* This includes the Board, CEO, Directors/Heads of and people managers.*

# Dimension 1: Organisational Commitment

To implement a clear, actionable DEI strategy at Barnwood Trust that aligns stated goals with actions, with a focus on race equity, anti-racism, and intersectionality, alongside ongoing efforts in disability and mental health inclusion, to drive broader systemic change.

## Current State

**Gaps** in understanding of and **action** relating to DEI leading to disconnect between intention and action.



## Future State

Cohesive and **unified** organisational **commitment**, with **clear understanding** of organisational priorities relating to DEI.

### Short-Term

- Develop and deliver a learning series across the organisation on DEI.
- Develop a strategy implementation plan, including an accountability framework.
- Conduct an internal review of current DEI policies and practices.
- Establish an internal DEI Advisory Group to oversee progress.

### Long-Term

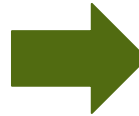
- Implement structured DEI metrics at organisational and strategic level to monitor progress of organisational commitments. This could include integrating DEI measures into organisational annual reviews.
- Conduct an external audit of DEI progress and adjust strategies accordingly.
- Maintain and improve DEI training programs with updated best practices.

## Dimension 2: Leadership and Governance

To strengthen leadership\* and governance at Barnwood Trust by fostering collective ownership of DEI efforts across all levels, establishing clearer accountability structures, and promoting transparency in decision-making processes.

### Current State

Accountability structures for DEI unclear, with leadership leading DEI efforts resulting in **lack of collective ownership**.



### Future State

DEI efforts owned collectively, with clear **accountability structures** to support this.

#### Short-Term

- Review organisational accountability processes, including decision-making.
- Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) for leadership accountability on DEI.
- Ensure diverse representation at all levels of leadership.
- Implement leadership development opportunities for staff across the board.

#### Long-Term

- Develop succession planning strategies that prioritise diversity.
- Regularly review and update governance policies to enhance inclusivity.
- Foster an internal culture where inclusive leadership is a core competency.

*\* This includes the Board, CEO, Directors/Heads of and people managers.*

## Dimension 3: Culture and Belonging

To create a culture of belonging at Barnwood Trust by addressing challenges around psychological safety, communication, and inconsistent policy implementation, and fostering opportunities for co-development, relationship-building and connection across the Trust.

### Current State

Focus on inclusivity and **people-centred culture**, with **some challenges** in maintaining psychological safety and connection.



### Future State

Strong **culture of belonging**, nurtured by **safe spaces**, open communication and acknowledgement of lived experiences.

### Short-Term

- Conduct staff and community engagement sessions to gather feedback.
- Review policies to address workplace discrimination and microaggressions.
- Organise cultural awareness and inclusion events.
- Review of cultural competency, including training and mentorship opportunities for staff.

### Long-Term

- Develop mentorship and sponsorship initiatives for employees from underrepresented backgrounds.
- Foster a psychologically safe environment where all employees feel valued.
- Maintain ongoing learning programs to sustain cultural competency efforts.
- Conduct biennial DEI climate surveys to measure progress and identify gaps.

## Dimension 4: Community Engagement and Partnerships

To nurture the Trust's community engagement and partnerships by increasing visibility and diversifying the Trust's partnerships and network, and expanding engagement with underrepresented communities and prioritising transparency.

### Current State

Relational approach to engagement, though **lack of diversity** to represent broader Gloucestershire community.



### Future State

Strong connection and **visibility of diverse communities**, with transparent and community informed decision-making.

### Short-Term

- Develop an engagement framework to include diverse community voices in decision-making.
- Launch a community listening initiative to understand local challenges, which can support DEI efforts.
- Establish a community advisory board to co-design initiatives.
- Collaborate with external organisations to share best practices.

### Long-Term

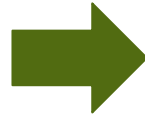
- Maintain and expand strategic partnerships with diverse community organisations.
- Develop long-term impact measurement tools for community engagement.
- Foster leadership roles for community members in Barnwood Trust's decision-making processes.

## Dimension 5: Funding, Influencing and Power Sharing

To align Barnwood Trust's funding practices and influencing activities with DEI and intersectional principles through equitable resource distribution, addressing power imbalances, and ensuring targeted investments in outreach, community engagement, and capacity building.

### Current State

Funding is distributed with support, however, **power imbalances** relating to grant-distributions exist.



### Future State

Funding practices and influencing activities are **aligned with DEI principles**, resulting in equitable resource distribution and transparency.

#### Short-Term

- Review grant-making criteria to ensure alignment with DEI principles.
- Introduce targeted grant opportunities for historically underfunded groups.
- Review grant review panel to ensure diverse representation to assess grant applications.
- Track and analyse funding allocation data to ensure equity in grant distribution.

#### Long-Term

- Embed DEI considerations into all funding and influencing activities as standard practice.
- Regularly review and adapt funding models to respond to emerging community needs.
- Publish annual reports on the impact of grant-making efforts on diversity and inclusion.

# Strategic Recommendations

Based on the observations in this report, we have outlined a series of recommendations to support Barnwood Trust's DEI efforts. These are structured across three categories - Cultural Change, Structural Change, and Leadership Action - and span both short- and long-term implementation timelines. They build on the measures identified in the organisational dimensions in the previous section and are intended to be applied holistically across the organisation.

Our recommendation is that implementation should not be seen as a series of standalone actions, but as part of a cohesive and organisation-wide approach to support sustained and meaningful change to the Trust's DEI commitments. This speaks to identifying timeframes for implementation based on internal dialogue, ensuring alignment with organisational capacity, readiness, and commitment.

Building collective buy-in will be a key ingredient in the successful implementation of the Trust's DEI strategy, supporting this to become relevant to the Trust's everyday work, rather than viewed as too complex or disconnected. A shared understanding of its relevance is key to sustaining engagement and momentum.

While we anticipate there may be a need for greater specificity in relation to the implementation phase, these recommendations are intended to guide and support further internal dialogue, prioritisation, and action. The next phase requires intentional effort from within the organisation to review, adapt, and operationalise them in a way that aligns with Barnwood Trust's unique context and strategic goals. To support this, TBO has developed action planning tools, included as supporting documents.