



**Governance  
Apprenticeship  
Programme**



# Introduction

## The opportunity

The lack of diversity at board level across every sector is a pressing challenge, and the current trajectory to creating truly representative boards is simply too long. Whilst many organisations have taken positive steps towards this goal, it is clear that there is still much work to be done if governing bodies are to be representative and reflective of the communities they serve.

Many organisations have undergone due reflection on their own governance in recent years, and there are multiple approaches to next steps being debated and tested as internal conversations around culture and structures have ramped up. These are welcome debates and it is important to utilise this opportunity to create effective, lasting change.

Recently reports have emerged revealing that diversity is worsening at board and C-suite level, and progress is painfully slow.

At the current rate of change, it would take until the year 2237 (216 years) until ethnic minorities were proportionately represented (13%) at Chair, CEO, and CFO levels in FTSE 100 companies ([Green Park diversity report 2021](#)). We also know that 29 per cent of the biggest charities in the UK have all-white trustee boards, according to Inclusive Boards 2022 Inclusive Governance Report.



**The same challenges are largely replicated in the Trustees of mission-driven sectors:**

**Arts sector:**

**17%**  
**Black, Asian or Ethnically Diverse;**

**53%**  
**50 years old or older;**

**49%**  
**Female;**

**9%**  
**Disabled;**

**8%**  
**LGBT.**

**Higher Education sector:**

**2.6%**  
**Black;**

**5.3%**  
**Asian;**

**89.2%**  
**White;**

**5.4%**  
**Disabled;**

**53.9%**  
**56 years or older;**

**35.6%**  
**of HEIs\* have no disabled members;**

**21.1%**  
**of HEIs\* have no BAME members.**

*\* Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)*

**Charity sector:**

**84%**  
**White**

**16%**  
**Minority Ethnic backgrounds**

**40%**  
**Women**





# The Governance Apprenticeship Programme

Creating diverse and inclusive boards is a highly complex challenge with no single solution. Such a complicated challenge requires a fresh approach and that is why, in 2021 we founded the Governance Apprenticeship Programme (GAP), bringing together the resources of Perrett Laver with our partners to create opportunities and bridge the gap to board diversity, shortening the timeline to creating truly representative boards.

Perrett Laver supports the development of diverse and inclusive boards across our sector clients in several ways. From setting ourselves ambitious targets in our executive search function, to partnering with Advance HE on the Board Diversity Toolkit, released November 2021, to delivering large-scale Trustee campaigns with an emphasis on diversity with partners including Sport England and UKRI, we are deeply committed to driving the diversity agenda forward. However, we felt there was still more we could contribute to the conversation, and that we could utilise our position to affect positive change at board level.

“Ensuring governing body diversity is a critical issue for our universities. The Governance Apprenticeship Programme is a really positive step towards addressing this pressing challenge.”

Dr Paul Greatrix, Registrar, University of Nottingham

GAP provides the opportunity to shadow a board for one year, offering the skills, insights, and networks that will build a solid foundation for future board roles.

The GAP network we engaged over 2021, 2022 and 2023 included:



It represents a great number of hugely talented individuals from a wide range of professional backgrounds, spanning technology, finance, arts, charities, and consultancy.

The lack of diversity at board level is, in part, caused by a limited pipeline of individuals from underrepresented backgrounds who have the requisite experience to join a board – GAP seeks to address this by providing that experience.

In the initial years of the Programme in 2021, 2022 and 2023 GAP focused its efforts in the Higher Education sector, where 36 individuals have served or are serving as apprentices to Partner Boards. GAP has the opportunity to change the conversation about board diversity, now, and for years to come.



# Showcase



**US**  
UNIVERSITY  
OF SUSSEX

“ One council meeting in so far and I am really enjoying my time. The chair and board at Sussex were so incredibly welcoming and continue to be so. I have also been paired with a mentor/buddy who has really been supportive and helping me to navigate this new experience. I am looking forward to the rest of the year”.

**Rubeca Hussain, Head, Programme Delivery, Social Mobility Foundation; Apprentice, University of Sussex**



**CARDIFF**  
UNIVERSITY  
**PRIFYSGOL**  
**CAERDYDD**

“ I've learned so much from the GAP programme - it's a fantastic opportunity to *get first-hand experience of boards*. It's been incredibly helpful in building the necessary skills and contextual understanding that will help accelerate my journey into a board/trustee position”.

**Bruna Gil, Channel Partner Lead & Global Co-Chair, Out@In Employee Resource Group, LinkedIn; Apprentice, Cardiff University**

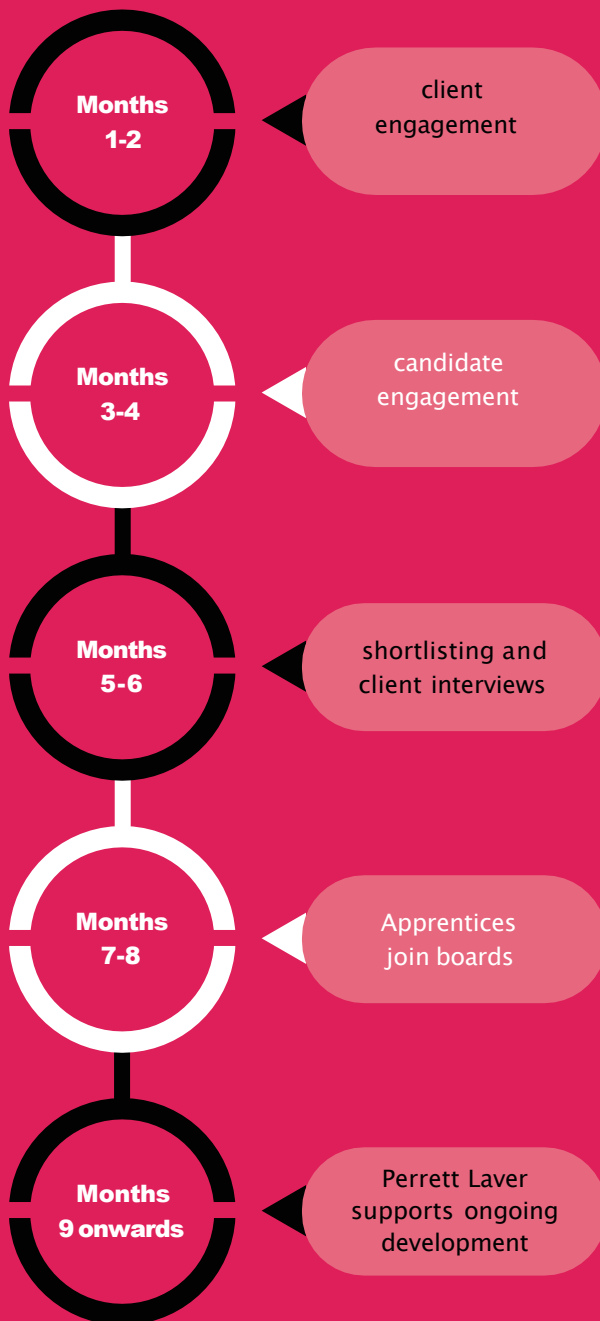


  
University of  
**BRISTOL**

“ Great way to learn to become board members. Without such an apprenticeship programme, I would not have thought it would be possible. So thank you!”

**Freddie Quek, Chief Technology Officer, Times Higher Education; Apprentice, University of Bristol**

# Timeline



Perrett Laver will build a network of highly talented individuals who:

- All come from an underrepresented minority group;
- Have little to no board experience;
- Demonstrate huge potential in their executive career;
- Have a passion for education but have not yet had the chance to engage in the Arts, Cultural, Higher Education and Not-for-Profit sectors;
- Are collectively representative of a variety of backgrounds, sectors, regions, and experiences.

Host Boards will invite applications from our network. Potential Apprentices will provide a standardised application – the Host Board will invite two to three Apprentices to interview for the role. The Host Board will make offers to Apprentices following their standard reference checks. We will provide the Apprentice with a sector guide.

# Why is this important?

## Outcomes for Apprentices

- The opportunity to develop an understanding of the complexities of non-profit governance; They will begin to develop the skills, networks and confidence to successfully apply for board roles in future;
- The Apprentices will have the opportunity to learn about new business models, a new sector and corporate governance best practice. This understanding will support their overall career development;
- An opportunity to become part of a response to building a diverse pipeline for the future of board diversity.

## Outcomes for Host Board

- Different viewpoints may improve inclusion awareness and impact on your board;
- Hosting an Apprentice will demonstrate your commitment to EDI and support your CSR and diversity goals;
- An opportunity to become part of a response to building a diverse pipeline for the future of board diversity.

## What will it mean for the future of governing bodies?

- This is of course just one solution to what we all recognise as a much larger, systemic challenge. But after a few years of investment, there will be a fresh cohort of diverse “board ready” candidates who will represent the future of governance in a number of sectors.



*“ I'm grateful for having been selected by the UEA to be the Governance Apprentice to the Council. Overall, it has been a great learning experience, understanding the role of the Council with the support of my mentor. The Council Meetings have been very interactive and there is a close collaboration with the Vice Chancellor, Vice Chancellor Office, and the Executive Team. I recommend this program as a way to expand your knowledge and network in this space.”*

**Disa Lee Choun, Head, Innovation, Global Clinical Sciences and Operations, UCB; Apprentice, University of East Anglia**





# What makes this different?

Through the work delivered by Perrett Laver's Board Practice, we have been able to make significant change across a number of sectors in terms of board representation and diversity.

Together with the Higher Education, Arts, Cultural, and Not-for-Profit sectors, we recognise that unless proactive change is made soon, then the timeframe by when boards will be properly representative of the communities that they serve and countries as a whole will be unacceptably long. We therefore launched this initiative with a number of partners designed to bring a commercial mindset to solving a systemic problem.

Using our platform as an executive search firm, with the resource and capacity we possess, means that we are in a powerful position to drive this initiative. Our knowledge of, and strong relationships across, the sectors will help us in bringing a number of organisations together and delivering GAP.

We have the necessary experience, expertise, networks, and a dedicated team, all of whom are deeply committed to diversity and inclusion. We are expert in identifying and engaging with talented individuals in a multitude of sectors who are interested in joining mission-driven boards. We will deliver on quality and assess each member of the network using our tried and tested assessment methods.

Perrett Laver further has a great depth of experience in running large-scale programmes focussed on diversity. Whilst the GAP initiative is different given its focus on developing board talent for the future rather than identifying board talent for now, there are many learnings we have developed about running inclusive board campaigns at scale. We denote two examples on the following page.





## Learnings from Sport England & UK Sport

In order to address the lack of diversity on sports boards across the UK, Perrett Laver is currently engaged by Sport England and UK Sport in an unprecedented initiative to identify 180 “board ready” diverse candidates by 2021, offering them development and exposure to opportunities, and supporting boards with their recruitment strategies. This has required us to search for high calibre non-executive and executive leaders from underrepresented minorities in every geography, with a range of skillsets, motivations, and previous board experience.

Perrett Laver has been delivering this initiative alongside a consortium of partners, including the Sport and Recreation Alliance, Birkbeck University, Women on Boards, Stonewall, Rimjhim Consulting and Activity Alliance.

The initiative has been a huge success with over 30 appointments made to sports boards across the sector so far.

**We have appointed over 55 Sport England board members**

**74%** female  
**61%** BAME

*“Sport England’s Board initiative with Perrett Laver is a very timely and effective intervention to address what has been a perennial challenge in terms of attracting new, diverse talent into the sporting sector.”*

**Tim Lawler-CEO, SportsAid**

## Learnings from UKRI

In 2020, Perrett Laver was engaged to support UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) on a campaign to appointment more than 30 new Council Members across its nine Councils. In addition to senior and strategic leadership experience in a relevant area of research and/or innovation, candidates were expected to demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to the mission and priorities of UKRI and the respective Council. The campaign also sought explicitly to support UKRI’s diversity goals, with a clear brief to deliver genuinely diverse candidate fields for each Council, including with respect to gender, ethnicity, sector, career stage and geography. Perrett Laver subsequently supported UKRI with 20 further appointments in 2021, and across the two years 50 new Council Members have been appointed across all 9 Councils. We have just been asked again by BEIS to advise on a further round of Council Member recruitment.

**The campaign concluded with 32 new Council Members being appointed across the nine Councils**

**more than half** and **seven**  
**53%** **22%**  
**were female** **were BAME**

**Other diversity targets (e.g. sector, geography) were also achieved with**

**53%**  
**from private sector**



# How to become a Host Board

## Be part of the change

The investment from Host Boards at this point is simple and straightforward.

We request an upfront fee of £4,000 per apprentice. This fee is a commitment to take on one apprentice for one calendar year. Some Partners may choose to take on multiple apprentices to join their board/committees.

If this is the desired approach, we weight the pricing as follows:

**£4,000 for one**    **£7,000 for two**  
**Apprentice**        **Apprentices**

There are no additional costs involved unless you chose to permanently appoint your apprentice or another individual introduced to you through the process, at the end of their time with you.

We strongly hope that you will consider being part of the change and support your sector in bridging the board diversity gap.



# Further information

For further information please get in touch with Perrett Laver's GAP Leads:



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