Social mobility and the charity sector

New insight from young people living in low-income households
While there may be precious little quantitative data on the scale of the issue, there is a wealth of anecdotal evidence from people who have experienced the sector — and those intangible barriers — as an employee from a working-class background. ... many begin by pointing to a culture that leaves them feeling excluded.

Third Sector Magazine, 22 April 2022
How socially mobile is the charity sector?

The charity sector is a significant employer, with 163,000 registered organisations employing 827,000 people across the UK.\(^1\)

But the level of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) – and specifically, social mobility – does not appear to be well understood.

To try and find out more, the EY Foundation, a social mobility-focused charity, commissioned the Bayes Business School to carry out a review of published research on this subject.

What the evidence tells us

Key points from the Bayes Business School analysis, concluded:

- The evidence suggests that the non-profit sector has lower levels of diversity than across the wider UK population.
- The available evidence shows a significant DEI challenge for the non-profit sector across a range of issues. In particular, there are clear barriers-to-entry facing those young people from ethnic minorities and/or lower socio-economic backgrounds.
- Diversity is not prioritised as an issue that needs to be addressed and there is no sector-wide push to take ambitious action, particularly on the issue of embedding good DEI practice in attracting and retaining young people as employees.

Do young people from low-income backgrounds want to work in the sector?

The EY Foundation supports young people overcome barriers to employment, so we want to better understand why 16-24 year olds from low-income backgrounds do not appear to be well represented in the sector.

In April 2022, we commissioned Savanta to run a nationwide survey with 1,000 16-24 year old young people who live in homes with an income below £16,000.

Young people in a household with an income of less than £16,190 are eligible for free school meals – a widely used measure to assess whether someone is living in poverty.

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1 Source: NCVO ‘Fast facts about the charity sector’
Full survey participant break down:
Survey respondents were representative of the overall population breakdown across all UK regions.

**Gender**
- Male: 47%
- Female: 52%
- Identify in another way: 1%

**Ethnicity**
- White: 70%
- Mixed: 4%
- Black: 15%
- Asian: 6%
- Other: 5%
- Prefer not to say: 1%
Social mobility and the charity sector: New insight from young people living in low-income households
A positive perception

A majority of young people trust the charity sector, with less than 1 in 5 having a negative view:

- **54%** of young people trust and have confidence in charities
- **28%** don’t have an opinion

Young people are also aware that the sector offers a range of employment opportunities:

- **70%** of young people know they could pursue a career in professional functions such as: human resources, legal services, strategy and governance, finance and communication
Working in the charity sector

Over half of young people in low income households are interested in working in the charity sector

55% would consider, have done or currently do, work in the charity sector:

40% interested in a career in the sector
9% have worked in the sector
7% currently work in the sector

There is also a high level of interest in volunteering

89% either volunteer, have done, or have considered it:

22% currently volunteer
32% have volunteered
35% would consider volunteering
### Barriers to entering the sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Don't know where to search for and apply for jobs</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Think there are poor opportunities to develop a career</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Think there is a poor variety of different job roles in the charity sector</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Believe charities do not pay staff fairly or offer good benefits and flexibility</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These factors were flagged as the best way to encourage consideration of a career in the charity sector:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Improved pay, benefits and flexibility</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Wanted to have better understanding of the job opportunities that are available</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Identified the need for clear progression routes</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Wanted better understanding of where to search for and apply for vacancies</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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2 Two options could be selected
The findings from the desk research indicate that while charities need to improve the level of social mobility, the survey results show that many young people from a low-income background want to work in the sector.

In response, charities must look at how we can make ourselves more accessible to a broader range of young people and address the barriers that have been identified.

The EY Foundation would like to collaborate with organisations who share our commitment to tackling this issue and welcome the opportunity to develop new actions that achieve a meaningful impact across the sector.

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The EY Foundation

About the EY Foundation

The EY Foundation is a UK registered charity that works directly with young people, employers and social entrepreneurs to create or support pathways to education, employment or enterprise. EY Foundation operates and is incorporated independently of EY and is governed by a separate trustee board.

The EY Foundation is a charitable company registered in England and Wales and Scotland with registered charity number 1157154 and SC045076. It is also a member firm of Ernst & Young Global Limited.

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