



THE LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

2024-2025

**Trustee and Governor Equality and Diversity Survey
Summary Report**

Report Published April 2025

CONFIDENTIAL

TLP Governance Equality and Diversity Survey 2024-2025

Context

1. The TLP Trust Board, through its Governance Committee, committed to undertake an equality and diversity review of volunteers across the TLP.
2. A data collection exercise was undertaken during December 2024. All Members, Trustees and governors were invited and encouraged to participate. Data was collected via the completion of an MS Forms survey that included a set of multiple-choice questions. Responses provided were managed as confidential. Respondents, when completing the survey, were only asked to voluntarily provide their initials rather than their full names.
3. When commissioning the work, Governance Committee was mindful that the data sample was likely to be small and given the sensitive nature of the information being sought, the focus of outcome reports should broadly be at the level of Trust-wide outcomes. However, whilst it was thought that some aspects of the reporting might make it possible to present some School/LGB level outcomes, this would depend upon the level of responses secured.
4. Throughout this report, the terms “the Trust” and “volunteers” represent both Trustees and governors. Where outcomes are available at a level other than Trust-wide, the terms Trustee and governor are used.

Key findings

5. There was a positive response rate to the survey with 71 responses (reflecting 70% of the available sample), with representation secured from across all parts of the Trust, thereby providing confidence in the response data.
6. There is a broad gender balance across the Trust, with a few more male than female volunteers, although responses to the survey were weighted more towards male respondents (59% compared with 41% female). However, when considering governors only, the male: female response rate was 55% : 45% respectively.
7. There is a broad distribution of ages across the Trust above the age of 40. However, there remains a lack of volunteers under 40, (only 25% of respondents were below 40 yrs of age), with only three of these 18 respondents serving on secondary school LGBs. The Trust should actively seek to attract more volunteers under the age of 40 to support succession planning and increase the diversity of experience from this segment of our communities.
8. There is very limited evidence of diversity with respect to ethnicity and, consequentially, the volunteers are more likely to have English as the primary language within the household. 97% of respondents recorded their first language as English and 92% self-declared their ethnicity as “White British”. The current make-up does not reflect the diversity within the school (pupil) communities that we support.

9. Less than 7% of respondents declared a disability. Of those that did, only one indicated that adjustments were required.
10. The Christian faith is represented (55%) across the Trust and within each school. Other faiths made up 4% of the responses. 41% declared no religion or choose not to say.
11. Volunteers reside close to our schools. Almost four-fifths of volunteers live within five miles, or 10 mins drive, of their school. Only 4% reside more than 30 minutes travel time away. This implies that our governors and Trustees will understand the needs of their local communities.
12. The responses indicate that the Trust has good levels of parental representation. Parents (or grandparents) with children in our schools make up around one-third of the volunteers.
13. Trust governance is well-served with experienced volunteers. 21% of the overall respondent population each bring 12+ years' experience. Newly appointed governors represented 15% of the sample. Overall, 56% of the sample indicated they had less than five years' experience and this highlights the importance of providing training and support for new governors.
14. Retention of volunteers should remain a priority. Whilst 66% indicated a willingness to serve in two years' time, a further 20% (15 volunteers) were undecided or not committed. Many of these 15 volunteers currently serve in primary schools. Seven of the 15 respondents are aged 60+.

Priority actions and outcomes:

15. Recruitment should remain a priority with a focus towards increasing the number of volunteers under the age of 30, particularly within secondary schools.
16. Recruitment should focus on increasing the ethnic diversity across the Trust and within the LGBs so that ethnic diversity reflects a position that is closer to the diversity found within our local communities and pupil demographics.
17. Recruitment materials should be adapted to highlight and welcome applications from people with a disability as well as non-White-British candidates. Consideration should be given to ensuring that the information is accessible to the under-represented groups. This could include the format, language(s) and platform(s) used.
18. Governor retention should seek to maximise the continuation of governors who remain undecided about continuation in two years' time.
19. An action plan is included in Annex A.

Summary of Responses

20. At the time that the survey was conducted the Trust had four members, 10 Trustees and 93 governors in role. The constitution for Local Governing Boards is nine governors, of which a minimum of two and maximum of three are designated for parent appointed governors, albeit all governor appointments are subject to the approval of Trustees.
21. Responses were secured from 71 Trustees, Members and governors. This represented around two thirds of all volunteers serving with the Trust at the time the survey was conducted. The distribution of these responses is displayed in Chart 1.
22. Responses from Trustees and Members were combined due to the relatively small number of Members. However, for these two groups the overall response rate was high (100%).
23. Elsewhere, the overall response rates from primary school governors was 70% whereas the corresponding value for secondary schools was 56%.
24. With the exception of three schools, the responses rates were 50% or above for schools. Only one school secured a 100% response rate.
25. Hence, the survey sample provides a useful, representative and workable data set from which broad Trust-wide themes and insights can be derived.



CHART 1: Distribution of Responses by School

Gender

26. There is a gender imbalance across the Trustees (6:3) and Members (4:0) that is weighted towards males. Trustees and Members are aware of this and have already taken steps to address this and become more inclusive as part of their recruitment strategy.
27. Data¹ taken from the Trust's GovernorHub governance platform indicates that there is a broad gender balance of governors (49:51 for F:M).
28. However, for this survey there was a weighting towards male respondents. (55% of respondents to the survey were male). Table 1 breaks this response distribution down further by educational phase.

Governor response	Primary	Secondary	Total
Female	19	7	26
Male	21	11	32

TABLE 1: Gender distribution of LGB governor responses by phase

29. Female governors who responded to this survey served mainly on primary school LGBs.
30. Whilst not presented here, the gender balance between individual schools can vary considerably, and is not a function of educational phase.
31. Recent data secured from outside this survey (in February 2025) indicates that female representation can vary from 22% to 86% on individual LGB within the Trust. This highlights the need to ensure that inclusivity is considered at the local (school) level as well as at the macro level when recruiting governors. Monitoring this should remain part of the governor recruitment and approval process.
32. Male representation on primary school LGBs is closer to 50% and is a welcomed value. A similar survey undertaken by the predecessor trust (The Learning Alliance) in 2022-23 found that only 28% of the male governor population served on primary school LGBs. However, the number of primary schools and therefore opportunities within the TLP is now considerably larger than was in the TLA.
33. The data from this survey suggests a gender balance for those governors who are parents (12:14 F:M).
34. Gender balance within the Trust Board is less balanced, with males accounting for more than two thirds of the Trustee membership. Members and Trustees are aware of this and are already taking action to address this imbalance.
35. In terms of leadership opportunities, eight LGBs have a female Chair whilst six have a male Chair. A similar pattern exists for Vice-Chairs.

¹ Data extracted from GovernorHub February 2025. Data relates only to governors and excludes Trustees and Members

Age

36. There is a broad distribution of volunteer ages across the Trust.

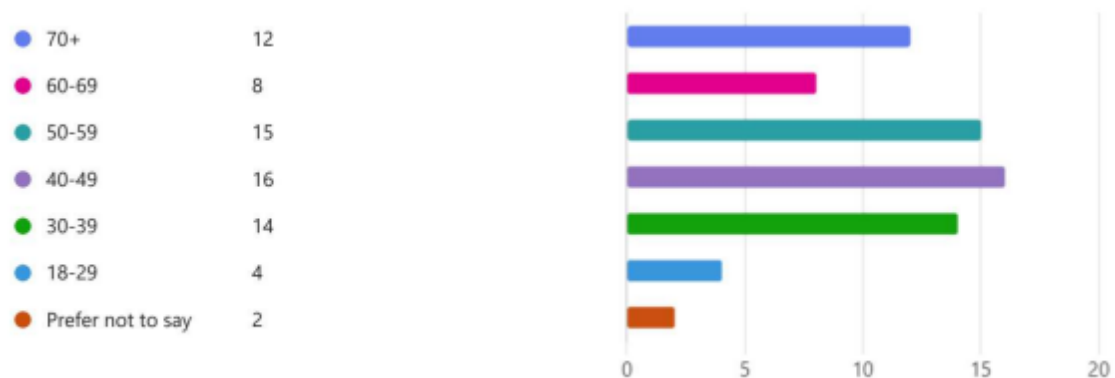


CHART 2: Distribution of volunteers by age

37. The peak age profile of volunteers is found within the 40-49 year old bracket and this accounts for 23% of all volunteers. More broadly, 45% of volunteers are within the 40-59 year-old age range. The number of volunteers below the age of 40 accounts for 25% of the population.
38. There is a second peak in the age profile, with 12 respondents aged 70+. The vast majority of these offer considerable experience of governance (only one has less than nine years governance experience), and nine of these serve as LGB governors.
39. The vast majority of the younger governors (i.e. those under 40 years old) contribute as primary schools' LGB governors. Only three contribute to secondary schools, two of whom are aged under 30.
40. The National Governance Association (NGA) 2024 Annual Governance survey indicated that nationally 52% of volunteers are now aged 60+. Hence, the corresponding value within the TLP of 29% is a marked improvement. Nevertheless, more than three-quarters of our group of volunteers each offer more than eight years of governance experience, and so the loss of these would have a significant impact on governance within the Trust.
41. The challenge of attracting younger governors, particularly those under 40 years old, is not unique to TLP. It has been identified as a national issue. The NGA 2024 survey highlighted that the percentage of governors and Trustees below the age of 40 is low, currently 9%, and those under the age of 30 remains at 1%. Hence, our value of 25% appears to slightly buck the trend.
42. Whilst the Trust's relative performance appears stronger than that outlined by the NGA, the Trust should recognise the ongoing importance of attracting volunteers under the age of 30. This challenge should not be underestimated. The Trust should consider what actions could be taken to secure the recruitment of younger volunteers into LGB governor positions. This will contribute towards effective succession planning and mitigate risks associated with natural loss and turn-over often seen within older volunteers. Securing ways in which to address the deficit of

younger governors in secondary schools should also present an opportunity to improve the age profile distribution.

Disability

43. Only 7% of respondents declared a disability. This value was 4% in the TLA survey conducted in 22-23. However, even at 7% it can be contrasted with the pupil demographics across the Trust where around 18% (1311)² of pupils are identified as SEND or on a SEND pathway, and the ONS/UK Government 2019 national statistic³ of 9% of school age pupils have SEND needs. Whilst the demographic distribution of SEND pupils varies considerably between Trust schools, the limited sample size does not enable the volunteer analysis to be secure at a level lower than whole Trust. Nevertheless, it does suggest that there is a need for volunteers with experience of SEND to be able to serve.
44. Only one respondent that declared a disability also indicated that additional adjustments were needed to enable them to discharge their responsibilities. Given the low numbers of volunteers with declared disabilities, it would be prudent to include positive statements that encourage and welcome volunteers with disabilities when governor recruitment opportunities arise and are promoted.

Sexual Orientation

45. 89% of respondents declared their sexual orientation as “straight/heterosexual”. 4% declined to respond to the question. In 2016, the ONS estimated that 2% of the UK population, or just over one million people, identify as having a minority sexual orientation⁴. Results recently published from the 2021 census indicate that 91.5% of people within Cheshire East identify as heterosexual. No course of action is proposed here at this time, other than to continue to monitor the position in future surveys.

Ethnicity

46. Respondents were invited to use the “self-definition of ethnicity” (SDE 18+1 codes) to define their ethnicity. 92% identified themselves as “White-British”. Nationally the NGA 2024 survey reported that nationally, 95% of governor volunteers identify as “White”.
47. Cheshire East has very limited ethnic diversity within its population with nearly 94.6% identifying their ethnicity as “White”. This 2021 Cheshire East census figure is almost 13% above the average for England. However, within Cheshire East there is significant variance, with the wards of Crewe South and Crewe Central being the two

² Internal TLP Pupil Data taken from DCPro- Feb 2025

³ UK Government/ONS Family Resources Survey: financial year 2020 to 2021

⁴ UK Government Equalities Office: National LGBT Survey: Summary report 2019

most ethnically diverse wards in East Cheshire, each with 21% non-White British, as identified in 2011 census⁵.

48. Whilst the Trust-wide volunteer profile appears to be aligned to the ethnic characteristics of Cheshire East, the natural variance of ethnic diversity found across communities in Cheshire East means that the Trust should ensure that there is appropriate representation in schools where it serves a more diverse local community.
49. Within the geographical footprint of the Trust there is evidence of considerable variation in the ethnic background of our communities, demonstrated by our pupil profile⁶. Across the Trust around 10.5% of our pupils do not have English as their first language. The distribution does vary between schools, with Crewe-based schools higher than elsewhere within the Trust. Here diversity is expressed predominantly through White-Eastern European family heritages.
50. Due to the relatively low numbers of individuals that make up the composition of an LGB and/or Trust Board (with the consequence that each respondent would have a value of a double-digit percentage point) it is challenging to monitor and develop actions at a level below that of the Trust. Nevertheless, positive action should be taken to increase the diversity within the ethnicity profile of volunteers with the Trust.
51. Ethnicity at the level of Trustee and Member is not diverse. Trustees have already agreed that a positive approach to increasing diversity and improving inclusivity within the Board should be adopted and applied to future Trustee and Member recruitment.
52. The demographic data suggests that implementation of Trust-wide actions should be prioritised to deliver outcomes that increase diversity within governors serving the Crewe-based schools.

Religious Beliefs

53. Christian religious beliefs were expressed by 55% of respondents. Other faiths and religions were represented by 4% identifying with other religions, whilst 41% indicated that they did not hold religious beliefs.
54. All schools were found to have LGBs with governors that expressed religious beliefs. Census 2021 data recently published by the ONS indicated that 59.3% of the population of England and Wales declared Christian religious faiths whilst 25.2% declared no religious faith. No course of action is proposed here at this time, other than to continue to monitor the position in future surveys.

⁵ Cheshire East Council Borough Profile (2019-20) data pack

⁶ Internal TLP Pupil Data taken from DCPro- Feb 2025

Locality and Accessibility of Volunteers

55. Volunteers reside close to our schools. Almost four fifths of volunteers live within five miles (or 10 mins drive) of their school. Only 4% reside more than 30 minutes travel time away (see Chart 3 below). This suggests that our Trustees and governors will have a good or reasonable understanding of the local context within which the schools are operating.
56. The Trust seeks to secure local representation and parental representation through its LGB membership. The LGB terms of reference include a minimum expectation of two parent governors on each LGB (which is typically 20-25% of the LGB). Whilst the survey didn't explicitly seek data on the number of appointed parent governors (since this can be obtained from other sources), it did seek to secure information on the number of volunteers with children/grandchildren attending a school within the Trust. This approach was taken to act as a proxy for understanding and actively representing the local communities.
57. The survey replies indicated that 37% of volunteers are either a parent governor or have a child/grandchild within our schools. This suggests, albeit with the caveats for the need to diversify the volunteer base further, that those who already volunteer, have an interest in, or are a stakeholder of, the community served by the School and Trust.



CHART 3: Locality of Volunteers

58. Data obtained elsewhere from the Trust⁷, as at February 2025, indicate that only six schools in the trust have a parental vacancy.

Governor Experience and Future Intentions

59. The Trust has considerable governance experience contained within its volunteer base.
60. Volunteers indicated that they undertook further study after school either as Higher (65%) or Further Education (33%), with 2% through an apprenticeship route. This

⁷ Data obtained from GovernorHub 15 Feb 2025

suggests a well-educated volunteer group, who can relate to the opportunities afforded by education.

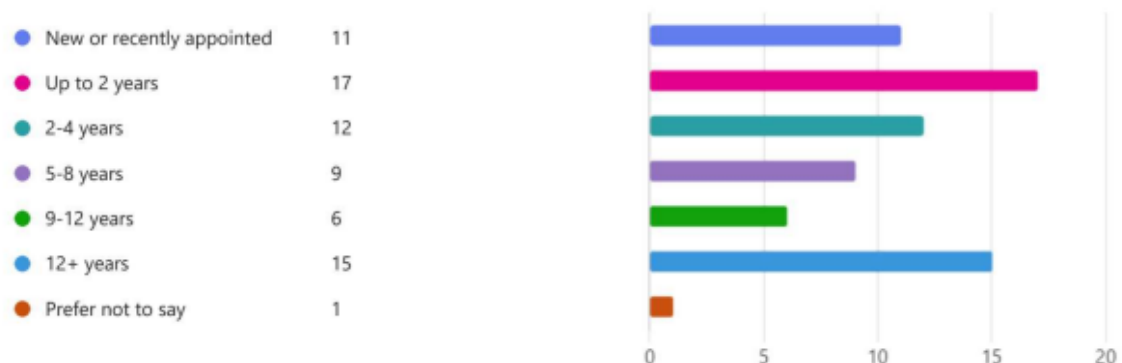


CHART 4: Governor Experience

61. There are 36 volunteers (50%), distributed across the Trustees and schools, who offer more than nine years' experience of governance. Only four school LGBs don't include any governors with more than nine years' experience, although within these four schools each has a reasonable depth of experience within their whole governor team.
62. Across the schools, 28 governors (50% of governor respondents) indicated that they have less than two-years' experience as a governor. These inexperienced governors are distributed mainly across the primary schools (24 primary governors and four secondary governors). This large sample reflects the significant recruitment work undertaken during 2024 by the central governance team, headteachers and LGB chairs to increase overall governor capacity.
63. All LGBs have experienced governors who can mentor and support inexperienced colleagues. Chairs and headteachers need to ensure that experienced governors are used to support the development of less experienced governors.
64. In 2024 the central governance team introduced a more formal and structured induction and training programme for governors. This needs to be kept under review to ensure that it meets the requirements of new and inexperienced governors as well as meeting the statutory training requirements expected from all governors.
65. Retention of volunteers should remain a priority. The survey invited volunteers to offer an indication on their intention to continue serving as governor or Trustee in two years' time.
66. Whilst 66% indicated a willingness to serve in two years' time, a further 21% (15 volunteers) were undecided or not committed. Many of these 15 volunteers currently serve in primary schools and seven of the 15 respondents are aged 60+.



CHART 5: Governor & Trustee intentions to continue after two years

67. Of the 15 volunteers who indicated that they were unsure of their intentions in two years' time, half (eight) hold more than nine years of governor experience. Seven of the 15 volunteers are aged under 50 and six are aged 70+.
68. Within the overall survey population there were 28 respondents who were new or had been in role for less than two years. Notably only two of these indicated that they were planning to step down in two years' time and another two were undecided.
69. Of the volunteers who provided a clear intention to stand down, four were parent governors and three respondents were aged 70+. Only two served as governors on secondary schools LGBs.
70. 10 volunteers with more than nine years of governance experience returned a positive indication that they expected to remain active in two years' time. This is welcomed, especially since the majority of these continue to offer the greatest level of governance experience across the Trust. Four were Trustees/Members and five served on the boards of secondary schools.
71. However, longevity of service can also be associated with risk, particularly where service is contained exclusively within a single school. Therefore, consideration should be given to exploring ways in which long-serving governors who wish to remain active in their contributions might be utilised across other schools within the Trust. This could take the form of either changing the LGBs on which they serve or undertaking cross-Trust or cross-LGB activities. Beyond this survey, there is evidence that the latter is already taking place, with examples including LGB Chair mentoring, peer observations of LGB meetings, and cross-membership on specialist LGB governor panels (such as Pupil Exclusions reviews).

Conclusion

72. There has been positive engagement with this work across the Trust. The relatively high response rate provides an authenticity that will allow the data to be used to support planning activities and actions. The relatively small data sample sizes involved does restrict the ability to drill down to provide an individual LGB or school-level analysis. However, Trust-wide actions can be identified and locally these can be considered for adoption and implementation.
73. There are a number of immediate actions that the Trust can consider. These fall mainly within two broad themes.
- a. The first is to focus on trying to ensure that the volunteer profile is more inclusive and representative of the communities that it serves. Positive actions to secure volunteers from wider ethnic backgrounds and also from a younger age demographic, particularly under 40 years old may help encourage this.
 - b. The second is to identify opportunities and activities that will support retention of current volunteers. This will consolidate the investment in time and skills development for both the Trust and the volunteer that has already taken place. These opportunities may need to extend beyond the LGB that the governor is currently involved with.
74. The exercise has demonstrated good engagement from our volunteers. It is recommended that it should continue to be repeated periodically (e.g. every two to three years). Within the intervening period governor appointment and resignations should be monitored to ensure that an inclusive approach is in place to support governance.

Annex A

Proposed Action Plan:

- 1 Trustee Recruitment:
 - a) Governance Committee to continue to undertake search-related activities to extend ethnic and gender diversity within Trustee membership.
- 2 LGB Recruitment:
 - a) Central Governance Team and other Central Services Team to work with Crewe Schools / LGB to develop marketing materials that can promote governor opportunities to wider ethnic groups. [Summer 2025]
 - b) LGB Chairs to actively consider age and gender composition alongside skills requirements when nominating or identifying potential (non-parental) governor candidates. [Ongoing]
 - c) Central Governance Team to monitor diversity characteristics within governor appointment and renewal process. [Spring 2025]
- 3 Governor Retention:
 - a) LGB Chairs to identify opportunities to utilise the skills and experience of longer serving governors to support induction of new governors (e.g. mentoring and shadowing) [Summer 2025- to support next governor cohort intake]
 - b) Central Governance Team to work with LGB Chairs to offer cross-Trust and cross-LGB opportunities for experienced governors. [Ongoing]
 - c) LGB Chairs to identify longer serving governors prepared to support governors and activities within other Trust schools [Summer 2025 then ongoing]
 - d) Central Team to review governor induction and training to ensure that new and inexperienced governors are provided with adequate support and opportunities for development. [Summer 2025]
 - e) Governance conference to be used to facilitate cross school networking [Summer 2025]

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