

ENGLAND ATHLETICS DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

UPDATE - JANUARY 2021



England Athletics is the not-for-profit membership and development body for grassroots athletics and running in England. Its purpose is to inspire more athletes and runners of all abilities and backgrounds to fulfil their potential and to have a lifelong love for the sport. Its vision is for athletics to become an inclusive sport where everyone belongs and can flourish. England Athletics works in partnership with other regional and national organisations, including UK Athletics, to support the successful delivery of the sport's UK-wide strategy for the benefit of every participant.

Diversity Action Plan – background

In 2017, England Athletics shared its four-year Diversity Action Plan in line with [A Code for Sports Governance](#), the requirements of which are mandatory for organisations in receipt of public funding for sport and include areas such as transparency, accountability and financial integrity.

Diversity Action Plan – update on progress

In 2020, England Athletics updated and published its Diversity Action Plan to check progress since 2017 and set out its continued commitment to ensure greater diversity within the governance, leadership and decision-making structures of England Athletics and running in England.

Progress to date

- Diversity champions appointed onto the England Athletics Board and senior leadership team
- Improved ethnically diverse representation at England Athletics Board level to **25%** [the Code of Sports Governance states that organisations should achieve 'greater diversity generally' at board level]
- Improved female representation at England Athletics Board level to **50%** [the Code of Sports Governance sets a target of at least 30% of each gender represented at board level]
- Continued support of Sporting Equals' British Ethnic Diversity Sports Awards [BEDSA] and its LeaderBoard programmes
- Unconscious bias training and transgender training for England Athletics Board members
- Equality and diversity training for all England Athletics staff and unconscious bias training for those staff more likely to be involved in recruitment
- Dedicated 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion' section created on the England Athletics website including publication of the organisation's Diversity Action Plan
- Continued engagement and relationship building with equality bodies such as Sporting Equals, Activity Alliance, and Women on Boards.
- Silver standard in Mind's Workplace Wellbeing Index, reflecting England Athletics' commitment to supporting the mental health of all staff as part of the organisation's efforts to create an inclusive culture for all

Despite progress being made by England Athletics through delivery of its Diversity Action Plan, certain groups are still largely under-represented in specific areas of the organisation's governance structure as well as across participation within the wider sport **as can be seen in Table 1 below**. England Athletics is committed to continuing to address these inequalities in collaboration with its valued partners across the sport, which is why the organisation has updated its Diversity Action Plan.

Table 1: showing diversity data for the England Athletics (EA) personnel and the wider sport

Role	Women	Ethnic diversity	Disability	LGBT+
EA Board	50%	25%	10%	0%
EA Senior Leadership Team	40%	20%	0%	0%
EA Council ¹	-	-	-	-
EA Staff	60%	11%	2%	5%
Registered Athletes	47%	8% ²	5% ²	-
RunTogether	75%	-	6% ²	-
Volunteers	43%	3%	10%	-
Coaching ³	48%	8%	2%	-
Officiating	41%	6%	3%	-
General Participation ⁴	49%	14%	9%	-

NOTES

- Where no data is shown it has not currently been captured – enhanced data collection is in the process of development.
- 1. Audit required, pending results of regional council elections in April 2021.
- 2. Significant proportion non-recorded or non-specified.
- 3. Inequality still exists at different levels of the coaching pathway.
- 4. Measured through our monthly running, nationally representative participation tracker (33,000 respondents per annum).

The importance of inclusivity is a golden thread which runs through the new England Athletics strategic plan 2021-2032. The benefits of this to the wider athletics and running community are evident in the five key areas England Athletics will be focusing its work on over the next 12 years:

- Support and develop **clubs, club leaders and facilities** to ensure the environments where athletes and members will train, compete and socialise are safe, sustainable and inclusive.
- Support, regulate and work in partnership to influence a modern, safe, inclusive and fun **competition** structure and pathway across all disciplines that enhances experiences for athletes, coaches, officials and spectators at all levels of the sport.
- Engage, value and support respected, expert and athlete-centred **coaches, leaders and officials** to create an inclusive, positive athlete experience and support the successful delivery of competitions.
- Maximise athletics opportunities for all **young people** in schools and communities to enhance their first experiences of the sport, and ensure the growth of **participation** in running.
- Work in partnership to create an inclusive, athlete-centred, integrated, clear and transparent **talent** pathway to develop athletes and their coaches to progress and improve performance levels.

Ambitions for 2021 and beyond

The newly updated England Athletics Diversity Action Plan focuses on addressing some of the inequalities which still exist as well as building on the progress from the first plan developed in 2017. It aims to be ambitious with its priorities [below] but realistic with the resources available to the organisation.

- Continue to improve representation of disabled people at England Athletics Board [currently 10%] and at Regional/National Council level
- Ensure gender equality at England Athletics Board level [currently 50% female representation, exceeding the 30% target set in the Code of Sports Governance] and at Regional/National Council level
- Aim for 20% ethnically diverse representation at England Athletics Board [England Athletics minimum target of 20% achieved] and at Regional/National Council level
- Update England Athletics' recruitment and selection policies to set out how the organisation will engage with a diverse range of people to support its work. The organisation will provide appropriate training to enable this
- Provide equality and diversity education, training and support to athletics and running clubs, coaches, officials, volunteers and Regional/National Council members
- Continuation of the unconscious bias training for England Athletics staff
- Appoint or co-opt a National Council Diversity Champion at England Athletics
- At the conclusion of the 2021 Regional Council elections, collect demographic information to better understand Regional/National Council membership and to inform recommendations for future actions to improve diversity
- Sign the Sporting Equals Race Equality Charter and embed within the organisation the recommendations from the 'Let's Talk About Race' series
- Improve representation of young people on Regional/National Councils through a mentoring/observer role
- Ensure a robust review and reporting process
- Ensure alignment with UK Athletics and with England Athletics' wider strategic and operational plans.



England Athletics Diversity Action Plan – FAQ

What is a diversity action plan and why do England Athletics have one?

A diversity action plan outlines how England Athletics will ensure opportunity and representation from diverse groups of people across its governance, leadership and decision-making structures. This means that a range of voices and diverse experiences are considered when decisions are made at board, council and operational level. All organisations in receipt of government funding, through UK Sport and/or Sport England, and the National Lottery must have a diversity action plan in line with [A Code for Sports Governance](#). This mandatory code sets out the levels of transparency, accountability and financial integrity which are required.

Is this in response to Black Lives Matter?

No, the England Athletics diversity action plan was first developed in 2017 and covered the period until March 2021. During 2020, the plan was reviewed so it can continue in 2021 and beyond as the organisation acknowledges it has more work to do. In response to the death of George Floyd and Black Lives Matter, England Athletics worked with UK Athletics on the 'Let's Talk About Race' series to listen to and better understand the experiences of black people and those from other ethnically diverse communities within the sport. The recommendations from the 'Let's Talk About Race' report that followed are embedded within England Athletics' updated diversity action plan which sets out how the organisation will continue to improve ethnic diversity in the sport.

Is there still bias, racism and other forms of discrimination in the sport?

Tackling all forms of discrimination within grassroots athletics and running in England is a matter England Athletics takes with the utmost seriousness and works collaboratively with its partners to address. Whilst England Athletics has made significant progress both in the diversity of decision-makers within its own structures and around participation in the sport itself, it acknowledges it still has a lot of work to do. Inclusivity is one of England Athletics' core values and the organisation acknowledges that everyone has a part play to ensure athletics and running is a sport where all feel welcome.



Outside of governance what progress has been made in improving participation from under-represented groups?

More than half of all current competitive track and field athletes under the age of 17 are female. Over 50% of Run Leaders are women and more than 100,000 women have been engaged in running through England Athletics' RunTogether programme. Over one third of all athletes and runners are from an area of deprivation and the 'Sport for All' research conducted by Sport England states that Black adults and young people are significantly over-represented in track and field athletics compared with other sports. The number of disabled registered athletes and runners has increased by c.20% since 2017 to 9,250.

How does this relate to UK Athletics?

UK Athletics [UKA] have their own diversity action plan to improve diversity within their organisational governance structures. UKA and all the Home Country Athletics Federations [HCAFs] countries work closely together on equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Is enough being done by the sport to address issues around a lack of diversity?

A lot is being done but inequality and under-representation unfortunately still exist, so England Athletics recognises there is more to do. Diversity and inclusion are everyone's responsibility and England Athletics is working hard to improve the organisation's diversity. England Athletics will also learn from and share the great work that a number of athletics and running clubs and volunteers are doing to make the sport more diverse so, in turn, the organisation can help provide further support to its members in this vitally important area.

What initiatives has England Athletics delivered or supported in the areas of equality, diversity and inclusion?

England Athletics aims to embed diversity and inclusion in everything it does so that it cuts across all areas of its work. It does this by ensuring all products, programmes and campaigns are inclusive and by providing education and development opportunities such as webinars, resources and training. In addition to this, the organisation delivers several positive action programmes to address specific under-representation in the sport, some examples include:

- **This Girl Can Run Together** – a project focussing on supporting women from ethnically diverse communities in areas of deprivation to become Run Leaders
- **#RunAndTalk** – supporting mental health through running
- **Find A Guide** – supporting visually impaired people to run
- **This Girl Can Run** – a national campaign which celebrates women up and down the country who are running, jogging or walking their way to a more active lifestyle
- **Women's Coaching Network** – supporting women to progress through the coaching pathway via the 'Women in Coaching Programme' launched in January 2021



How is diversity representation changing at the grassroots' governance level?

The diversity of the England Athletics Board has changed significantly since the Diversity Action Plan was first developed in 2017 with improved representation from women, disabled people and ethnically diverse groups. Female representation on the Board is currently 50% whilst its ethnic diversity is at 25%. England Athletics recognises there is more work to do around representation at Board level.

With England Athletics Regional Council elections taking place this year, the organisation is working hard, together with its members and partners, to attract more diverse nominations to continue to improve representation at council level. The Diversity Action Plan outlines plans to address any inequalities that may still exist after the election process, including co-opting members, mentoring programmes and observer roles.

What steps do England Athletics take to deal with incidents of discrimination?

England Athletics is working hard to support its affiliated clubs to be inclusive and welcoming. This includes supporting them to develop appropriate complaints and grievance procedures and to tackle discrimination.

How can individuals who experience discrimination report it through the appropriate channels?

All incidents of discrimination should be reported whether they are directed to that individual or observed by that individual. In the first instance they should be reported directly to the club through the club's complaints procedure. More information is available on the England Athletics website and can be found [here](#).

- [England complaints](#) about its services or activities
- [UKA complaints](#) about a licenced coach or official

Are there enough positive role models within the sport's governance structures to create and inspire change?

England Athletics has a number of positive role models both on its Board and in positions of responsibility across its volunteer network. England Athletics has plans in place to not only increase the number of role models but to improve their visibility and tell their stories to inspire others.

FIND OUT MORE

For further information on the work England Athletics is doing around equality, diversity and inclusion, please contact Liz Purbrick
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