

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Introduction: I submitted my competitive proposal by the deadline of 21 August 2020 and was subsequently called to interview on 9 November. I commenced my review on 19 November with interviews taking place between Monday 23 November and completed on Friday 11 December.

In an acknowledgement of the significance of the Black Lives Matter movement, I have contributed extra days in preparing this analysis and report, in memory of yet another brutal police killing of US African American citizen George Floyd in May 2020 that really brought the BLM movement to global attention.

In June 2020 the outgoing EHRC chair, David Isaac, said: *“The Covid pandemic and the Black Lives Matter campaigns have sharpened society’s awareness of inequality, and the need for human rights.”*

Perhaps the best phrase comes from a placard held by a young Black Lives Matter protester in summer 2020: *“George Floyd isn’t a “wake up call”. The same alarm has been ringing since 1619¹ - y’all just keep hitting snooze.”*

How this report is set out:

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¹ The year slavery, fuelled by millions of stolen lives from the African continent, became institutionalised in the Americas.

Main Heading – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Managing change and making it stick² requires instilling refreshed or new more explicit values, leadership behaviours and culture change. There are three main issues for leadership and management; setting direction and why it matters, building capabilities, and creating commitment and involvement. Without culture change, one that is involving, participatory, and collaborative, change won't stick.

I have tried to achieve this in the review, ie to give voice via involvement, participation and a collaboration of ideas and suggestions. As it happens, it turns out that diversity and inclusion isn't rocket science and the truth, rather than 'being out there', is contained within the RCSLT itself. This means that very little of this review report and Action Plan came out of the author's head, but rather are the voices of the 19 contributors to the study.

The only exception to this is the author's suggestions of a revised mission, purpose and vision to help sustain the drive to a more diverse board, an improved strategic focus, as well as setting out a set of core Board behavioural values and leadership behaviours against which applicants and trustees can be assessed / appraised.

I have always considered organisational values to be the guiding light or star by which the organisation is guided. Not having explicit values or Board leadership behaviours to sustain those values leaves too much to chance, or to the 'way we have always done things around here' or assumptions such as we've: "always known what we stood for", when in fact, this remains unclear. This review has been an opportunity to correct that, in the author's own time and at her own cost.

I have grouped my findings and the ACTION PLAN (note: no Recommendations) into the 6 components of culture change:

1. Vision, and
2. Values
3. Practices: Governance Opportunities (as they relate to the Board, and Board appointments)
4. People: Board Leadership
5. Workplace
6. Narrative: historical journey and future direction

Diversity is a many-sided and complex phenomenon: thinking we can divide ourselves neatly into this group or that, often overlooks the many-sidedness of human identity. The protected categories of the Equality Act 2010 are not in competition with each other nor should be placed into a hierarchy of importance, however, it does so happen that the RCSLT does have an overwhelming gender and racial bias. This review report seeks to balance that by ensuring that the skills and experiences and indeed the multiple contributions that can be made by including BAME members, LGBTQ+³ members

² By Roger Plant 1987 Fontana; Second edition (November 1, 1989)

³ Abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning) and others, including sexual identity.

and members with a disability, are made more available at Board level both in terms of changing approaches to trustee recruitment as well as developing a diversity and inclusion Board succession plan.

Finally, I thought this might be apt; it’s an extract of the poem ‘The Hill We Climb’ read out at Joe Biden’s Inauguration by US national youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman:

*“The new dawn blooms as we free it.
For there is always light,
if only we’re brave enough to see it.
If only we’re brave enough to be it.”*

Main Heading – BACKGROUND

1. Role of the Board of Trustees⁴

The trustees’ role (who are also the legal directors of the company) is primarily to ensure good governance of the organisation. They also provide appropriate representation of the views of members at a strategic level on the Board and take account of the financial and business implications of any decisions they make. The trustees conduct regular horizon scanning, and have a comprehensive three-year strategic plan containing high-level objectives which is kept under regular review at each Board meeting. The role of the chief executive and staff members is to implement these objectives.

The role of the Board is to:

- Give strategic direction to the RCSLT
- Set the organisation’s values and standards
- Ensure compliance with its governing documents and relevant legislation
- Ensure that the RCSLT pursues its objectives as defined in its governing document
- Ensure that the RCSLT is a responsive and supportive organisation that promotes member and user engagement
- Ensure that the RCSLT applies its resources exclusively in pursuance of its objects
- Ensure that there is an appropriate scheme of delegation to its sub-committees and Senior Management Team
- Be collectively responsible for adding value to the organisation
- Provide active leadership
- Safeguard the RCSLT’s assets
- Promote diversity and equality⁵

The Board of Trustees (the Board) is the highest governing body of the RCSLT. There are three subordinate governing committees: the Finance and Resources Committee (FRC), Professional Practice and Policy Committee (PPPC), and the Honours Committee.

The committees and hub forums report to the Board. The CEO and senior managers attend the Board to provide input as necessary. The Board meets four times per year.

2. The RCSLT Mission and Purpose⁶

“The RCSLT Strategic Plan is a road map that sets out where we are as a profession and where we want to be by 2022.

⁴ Extract from RCSLT documents and website.

⁵ Note that this is listed last.

⁶ Ditto footnote 2.

The RCSLT current strategic plan runs from 2018-22. It breaks into three main areas: the mission, the purpose and the focus areas for how we achieve the mission and vision.

Mission: Enabling better lives for people with communication and swallowing needs.

Purpose: We are the professional body that promotes excellence in speech and language therapy.”

Focus main focus areas of the strategic plan are quality practice, innovative organisation and active influencing.

3. The Initial Review Brief, Evidence Base / Methodology

This is an extract of the brief sent out to the consultants invited to tender for the Review:

“The Board has previously discussed diversity and inclusion and these issues, and the wider application of the Equality Act 2010 to the broader protected characteristics have been given renewed focus as a result of BLM. The trustees now wish to improve their understanding and formulate an action plan, with the aim of developing a diverse Board which can support and enable a more inclusive approach to our work. They wish to engage a consultant to:

- a. Identify research on Board diversity and why it is important
- b. If possible, identify what other similar organisations are doing and examples of good practice
- c. Review the RCSLT trustee skills matrix
- d. Identify what the barriers are to engagement / involvement; e.g. is it the perception of the culture of the Board and what is expected
- e. Understand what the actual barriers are and identify the potential solutions
- f. Advise how the RCSLT Board should go forward”

Once appointed, I established the evidence base for the actions proposed in this review, comprising the following review methods:

Interviews were quickly set up to explore the views and wisdom of three groups of interviewees who participated in the review; staff members of the Senior Management Team (SMT), RCSLT members with insights into areas of diversity, and also trustees, some of whom were coming to the end of their term of office, some not long joined and others well-established.

The full list of interviewees are shown in appendix II to this report. All nineteen interviews specified within the Workplan took place between Monday 23 November and completed on Friday 11 December and lasted around an hour. The fact that so much was achieved at such short notice was an indication of the commitment of all concerned, to move forward with the Board diversity agenda.

All conversations were confidential. I have highlighted the key themes and ideas that emerged. The areas for the interviewees to reflect on beforehand were as follows:

- Your view on any perceptual and ‘actual’ barriers preventing people from BAME and other minority backgrounds, from applying for RCSLT Board positions.
- Your thoughts on the Board leadership values you consider might be particularly appropriate for RCSLT going forward.
- And for Board members only: Your view on the current RCSLT Board skills matrix / requirements for Board membership, and how these might be improved and / or better presented.

The conversations with senior staff tended to be a more about exploring their role and on the values piece, ie their views on what should be the values of the RCSLT Board in order complete the discussions that had commenced last October but had not yet been resolved.

I also included a general conversation around interviewees’ perceptions of the current the culture of RCSLT, and how this could be adapted to support diversity of governance. It is important to state here to ‘qualify’ that perceptions are formed through a combination of all or some of the following (there may be additional conditions that also give rise to ‘perception’). Perception is no less valid than verified ‘actual’ barriers in that perceptions are deeply felt and held and serve both to constrain and to enable, human behaviours:

Finally, I carried out desk research to aid clarity of actions proposed. The list of sources can be seen in appendix II (to follow).

Main heading – INTERVIEW FINDINGS – BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT

I’ve listed the main ‘headline’ barriers in answer to me asking respondents: “Your view on any perceptual and ‘actual’ barriers preventing people from BAME and other minority backgrounds, from applying for RCSLT Board positions.”

1. Lack of diversity in the profession.
2. Lack of access to the right network and support.
3. Lack of confidence.
4. Barriers of difference.
5. Unspoken Board culture and exclusivity.
6. Not knowing what’s involved in trustee roles.
7. Impact of unconscious bias.
8. The Board recruitment process.
9. The election process.
10. Effects and experience of societal and institutional racism, and the multiple pressures SLTs from protected groups face.
11. Lack of ‘likeness’ ie, diversity at Board level, perceived ‘fit’ and issues of psychological safety.
12. Lack of opportunity, no clear route to the Board.
13. Lack of knowledge about the role and impact of the Board, and of the trustees.
14. Poor communications and engagement from the Board.

The more detailed comments are set below:

- That the RCSLT is perceived to be one of the least diverse of all the allied health professions, creates a barrier.
- Culture of the profession partly driven by the fact that it is overwhelmingly white and female (96%) largely from more advantage postcodes, socio-economic backgrounds.
- One would need to be part of a network of established allies across the membership beforehand, to stand a chance.
- You need to be connected to a network to be given the nod and there's a view that the Board is the inner sanctum, a rarefied place.
- Access is via high level networks.
- Many people lack the confidence to present what could be their value to the RCSLT Board, need access to networks and mentoring.
- Other barriers of difference include class status (lifestyle, background and level of education and awards etc).
- There's an unspoken culture that the Board is a pinnacle career role, so age and limited track record become huge barriers.
- Perceived as lacking authenticity, slow to accept change, too traditional and closed in its ways.
- The RCSLT is perceived of as 'nice but distant', a bit removed from the BAME student experience and the membership.
- The exclusivity of the Board appointments.
- The unattractiveness of Board roles through not knowing enough about what's involved.
- Put off by the Board recruitment process, relatively high numbers seeking the advert and application form including skills matrix, but then not pursuing things.
- The skills matrix gives the impression of 'formality, bureaucracy, high status individuals only need apply please'.
- The exclusive weight put on prior experience presents basic entry-level barriers – most young or BAME members won't have had experience of serving on Boards and won't know what's involved.
- The RCSLT trustee search process is too limited and unimaginative, need to access broader networks, maybe social media or search services.
- Put off by the election process, the requirement for members to set aside unconscious perceptions of your suitability, this is a big personal risk.
- Means putting oneself forward to a fairly conservative membership base.
- The voting process means facing into the unconscious biases that people of colour face when being selected alongside their white counterparts.
- The effects and experience of societal and institutional racism means we might hold back from applying.
- Lack of psychological safety, being the only 'other' in the room when being on a Board, would require measures of mentoring and support.
- Never felt that there would be a space for her or had a conversation with anyone about it.
- Perceived lack of likeness with existing Board members in terms of race, class, age, background, and career achievements.
- I don't see people like me on the Board.

- The perception that it's not an opportunity for ordinary members, and that they wouldn't 'fit' or be valued.
- People from diverse groups have a harder time coping with their careers and the 'day job' because of multiple pressures, including attitudes to disability.
- An assumption that members or lay experts from diverse / protected groups aren't interested in applying for trusteeships.
- Lack of opportunity to apply, unaware of any upcoming opportunities but wouldn't rule it out.
- Genuine lack of knowledge of what the Board does. Who's on the Board, their roles, impact and priorities?
- Don't fully understand the role of trustees.
- Routes to the Board are unknown eg, how do I access the right 'network', who can I talk to, what's the commitment required including time etc, eg the impact on the day job as an SLT?
- There's a younger crowd emerging in the membership who feel there's a lack of access or space to access leadership within the SLT profession, and to the Board.
- Lack of knowledge of the process. Not clear about the pathway to the Board.
- Not knowing what's involved in the role might put people off.
- No obvious pathway to the Board or plan as to how to get there.
- Board doesn't communicate in an accessible way eg, very concentrated on clinical developments, excellence and practice but not on community or outreach (or social purpose).
- Not accessible enough to members and students.

Main heading – INTERVIEW FINDINGS – SOLUTIONS TO OVERCOME LACK OF ACCESS AND ENGAGEMENT

For convenience I have grouped the feedback from interviewees, into 6 main areas. It is important to remember that all of the ideas and suggestions originate from the interviewees themselves and as such demonstrate the high degree of commitment to change, but also a range of options open to the RCSLT for increasing and supporting Board diversity:

1. Board Makeup
2. Board Leadership and Culture
3. Access Pathways to Trusteeships, and Succession Planning
4. Board Recruitment
5. Collaboration across the AHPs and 3rd Sector
6. Recognition and Reciprocity for BAME Member Contributions

1. Board Makeup – Interviewees' Suggestions:

- Could consider associate NED positions via something like the Insight Programme for non-traditional applicants.
- Create space for more voices whilst still maintaining the overall Board mix in terms of the clinically engaged and those in lay positions bring specialist functional experience (HR, digital, finance).
- Could have a mini-shadow, or parallel Board at practitioner level for members of protected groups ie, on the basis of race, age and disability BAME and disabled members to engage with and

develop the next level of talent; come together with the main Board on topics to compare thinking and suggestions.

- Make room by adding Board positions for other roles, such as:
 - a student or newly-qualified trustee
 - an advisory trustee
 - maybe even an SLT service user!
- Review the core governance arrangements and think about having shorter Board terms.

2. Board Leadership and Culture – Interviewees’ Suggestions:

- Trustees as role models, being seen and heard and listening and engaging.
- Much stronger cultural lead from the RCSLT Board.
- Less formality at Board meetings, more discussion and debate and exploration to help raise the Board profile and trust within the membership.
- Create the conditions for change and take positive action allowed under the Equality Act 2010.
- The RCSLT Board should be less closeted and actively participate in student / newly qualified SLT networks, and active in supporting any newly appointed associate or student trustees from ‘excluded’ groups of RCSLT members.
- Trustees should be involved in more impassioned debate about these issues and focus on the conditions for change.
- Board be more grounded in what the membership are discussing and experiencing; be willing to step outside their comfort zone and taking a strong lead on EDI, less risk-averse, less formalistic, less controlling of the access process to trustee positions – or at least, stop giving that impression.
- The RCSLT should actively target minority members; really reach out once a process has been formulated and agreed.
- Be great to get the Board closer to the membership, more familiar to the membership (accessible); be less stuffy, dusty and remote.
- Help younger members feel less intimidated and cut-off from the Board.
- Increase contact with members and students, for example 15min digital podcasts or webinars on 15mins on ‘a day in the life of a RCSLT trustee...’ type thing, to inform and inspire.
- Being more open and accessible to members, and especially engaging with students who are the future of the RCSLT.

3. Access Pathways to Trusteeships, and Succession Planning – Interviewees’ Suggestions:

- Help potential candidates to gain confidence to present what could be their value to the RCSLT, and to the Board.
- Reciprocal mentoring so that trustees can not only mentor associate trustees but also be mentored by them too, especially on the barriers they face.
- More could be made of supporting the career development of BAME and other minorities by encouraging them to join one of the clinical excellence networks.
- Could have steppingstone development activities including mentoring, a leader programme and Board observers.
- Clarity around the routes into leadership and ultimately Board appointment, could have x places per year on a rolling programme. This is allowable under the Equality Act 2010.

- There are future leaders already coming up through the membership so some kind of access programme for Board positions is needed so that as they come available, there will already be a cohort of talented applicants who may choose to apply.
 - There are big advantages to having a Board succession / development programme – ‘training to learn to do things in a more structured way, beyond just sort of blowing ideas out... support to channel energy, passion and ideas’.
 - More explicit about the pathways to trusteeship, publish an interview in the bulletin, plus talking heads such as what they get out of being a trustee, what it’s like, what the duties and responsibilities are and how to apply for the pipeline.
 - More development opportunities for keen and committed newly qualified band 5 SLTs who should be in a pipeline of talent.
4. Board Recruitment – Interviewees’ Suggestions:
- Improve knowledge about how to apply for Board positions, including examples on how to complete the application form based on the role specification and skills matrix.
 - Overhaul the Board recruitment process to improve interest; use digital platforms, other networks and communications to get the word out. It’s too simplistic to rely on an advert in the RCSLT Bulletin – we need fresh ideas and energy to increase the response.
 - Less weight put on having to have prior senior professional or expert track record, recognise other skill sets.
 - Skills matrix could be made shorter, less detail, around 12 headings and the personal statement reduced (as elsewhere) to 200 words rather than 400.
 - The RCSLT should perhaps be looking for ‘aptitude’ rather than a long established and senior track record. If that’s all members see from the outside, then that will put lots of people off from applying.
5. Collaboration across the AHPs and 3rd Sector – Interviewees’ Suggestions:
- Could work closely with the other allied health professions and the 3rd sector, to share such trustee development programmes to encourage a broader base or pool of BAME members, LGBTQ+ members and members with a disability, and other minority future NEDs / trustee candidates.
 - Actively review what the other allied health professions are doing to engage protected groups onto their Boards, and in their membership.
6. Recognition and Reciprocity for BAME (and other) Member ED&I Contributions – Interviewees’ Suggestions:
- Review the reliance on members to provide ED&I expertise. This is a big contribution without formal acknowledgement; ‘who’s job is it to do the thinking on culture, diversity and inclusion’ – should be a paid staff role.
 - How could the balance be better struck, and contributions acknowledged? There needs to be some quid pro quo or reciprocity with the small proportion of members that give huge amounts of their time to the RCSLT, when most don’t.

- As a quid pro quo for members giving pro bono expertise to the RCSLT, there should be opportunities to develop leadership skills for CV and career purposes – even if they didn’t want to apply to be a trustee.
- More recognition for minority members’ contributions to the RCSLT.

Main Heading – LEADERSHIP VALUES TO PROMOTE CHANGE

Why values matter: Part of this review is a quick look at a range of VALUES that can help support and sustain culture change. From the diagram below, one can see that culture change also includes the honing of RCSLT Board governance systems, procedures and practices that are being proposed in this paper.

This review and Action Plan also suggests that a revised VISION and sense of PURPOSE is urgently required to help sustain the drive to a more diverse Board, as well as setting a simple template of leadership behaviours against which trustees can be appraised.

During the course of my quick review, it became apparent that there are no explicitly cited values for the RCSLT and after chatting with interviewees on their views, I have suggested that the RCSLT adopt the following:

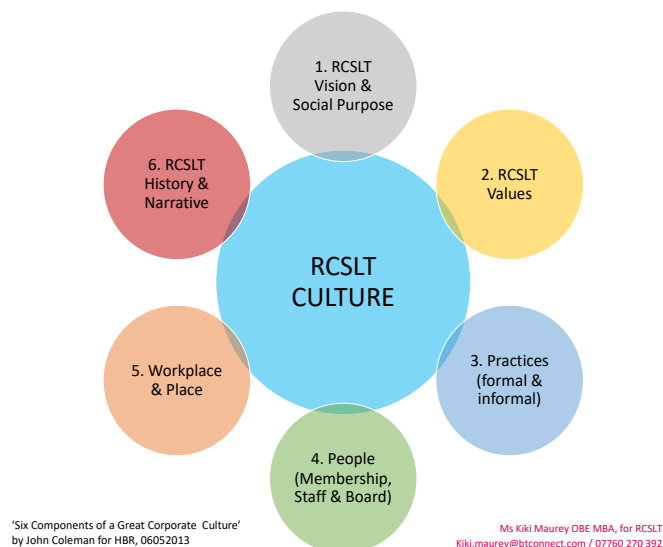
- a) a meaningful Vision and ambition for the RCSLT, and
- b) Values that the Board can both aspire to and be measured against, as an integral part of this review (set in the section, THE WAY FORWARD: ACTIONS below).

John Coleman in an article for Harvard Business Review, suggested that organisational culture is comprised of six main components that, when taken together act to facilitate change, or not as the case may be. These components of organisational life act as ‘golden threads’ of culture and go some way to explaining why often espoused values plonked on company websites, don’t relate to actual leadership values and behaviours as experienced by staff, members and / or customers. This can lead to further erosion in trust and brand value.

The culture change model as a facilitator for sustainable and meaningful progress looks like the following – without which change becomes piecemeal, transitory, reactive and ineffective:

1. VISION describes an organisation’s purpose and mission, bringing an opportunity for re-visioning in light of the new RCSLT chair and vice-chair, the covid-19 pandemic and economic recession, with perhaps a 3-5year recovery window.
2. VALUES offer a set of guidelines or blueprint on the mind-sets, behaviours and actions required to achieve the purpose of vision - stated and otherwise - as experienced by members, staff and key stakeholders.

3. PRACTICES (behaviours both formal and informal) especially as in this review, RCSLT Board governance, etc and how these practices support, or indeed mitigate against, change.
4. PEOPLE including staff, trustees, members in how they commit to and represent change within the organisation.
5. WORKPLACE, communications (and how this has changed in light of the global pandemic), and the concept of how ‘PLACE’ is represented in the nations forming the UK.
6. NARRATIVE, or historical journey as shared and told to others, and how ‘tradition’ can mitigate against change.



Main Heading: THE WAY FORWARD: ACTIONS

Applying the Culture Change Model as a lens for analysis, the author sets out the ACTIONS necessary for a more sustainable approach to tackling Board diversity as well as improved inclusion practices. This is not an exhaustive action plan however it contains very little that hasn’t already been suggested by the nineteen interviewees. This in of itself, is evidence of a commitment to diversity and is commendable.

This section integrates my findings into the 6 components of culture change:

7. Vision, and
8. Values
9. Practices: Governance Opportunities (as they relate to the Board, and Board appointments)
10. People: Board Leadership
11. Workplace
12. Narrative: historical journey and future direction

1. ACTIONS: RCSLT Vision and Values - Toward an Explicit Behavioural Framework

Ms Kiki Maurey OBE MBA (February 2021)

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“Managing the future by managing change”

Rather than being a bland statement of the rather obvious, values should be ‘action verbs’ ie values that form behaviours that cascades from the Board throughout the RCSLT. Values and the behaviours that flow determine the culture of any organisation. Without a stated commitment to values, there can be a failure of leadership. And as management guru Peter Drucker wrote “*Culture eats strategy*” to which was added: “... *for breakfast*”.

A value-less organisation can lack oomph, energy and a meaningful strategy for an effective diverse and inclusive culture of leadership. This requires setting direction with a more forward-looking mission / purpose, vision and set of leadership values.

So here’s my thinking based on the long list of values and feedback from the interviews with staff, members and trustees, from a bit of desk research PLUS a revamped Mission, Purpose and Vision and of course, from my own experience of being a board member, chair and OD consultant over the years:

Mission: Enabling better lives for people with communication and swallowing needs, working together for the greater good of the patients, children and their families, regardless of background.

Purpose: We are the professional body that promotes excellence and innovation in speech and language therapy.

Vision: The RCSLT will be a beacon for those seeking to work with people with communication and swallowing needs, at the same time as actively supporting the profession to grow, and to become more inclusive and representative.

Suggested **Core Behavioural Values** for the RCSLT Board:

1. **Commitment, innovation and ambition:** to deliver on the RCSLT mission, purpose and vision.
2. **Active accountability:** to ensure continual innovation, improvement, and delivery to members and to the profession.
3. **Strong and empathetic leadership:** to actively pursue inclusiveness, diversity and fairness across the profession, within the membership body and within our organisation.
4. **Active engagement:** to promote transparency, integrity, open communications, and to maintain trust and confidence.
5. **Respectful, collegiate yet challenging:** to be curious and open-minded about the views of others and how change can benefit the RCSLT and the profession.

Based on the above VALUES, I’d also like to suggest a list of useful **Trustee / Board behaviours** that could be integrated into the application form, and / or the trustee role descriptions, and the applicant invited to write their 400 words about how they’ve demonstrated these kinds of behaviours in their lives and careers to date.

1. Understands, and is committed to values of the RCSLT Board.
2. Understands, and is committed to the mission, purpose, vision and objectives of the RCSLT.
3. Works collaboratively and establishes good working relationships.
4. Motivated and enthusiastic and able to convey this to others.
5. Takes responsibility for actions agreed.
6. Is able to actively support the diversity and inclusion agenda in a concrete manner.
7. Uses judgement and common sense in making informed decisions.
8. Acts with transparency and integrity and manages personal conflicts of interest.
9. Is able to identify risks and threats to the RCSLT and help seek out a consensus on appropriate action.
10. Questions and challenges when necessary, to further Board understanding and develop problem-solving.
11. Demonstrates consistent attendance at Board meetings.
12. Always prepared for meetings; reads Board papers in advance and is prepared to engage and ask questions.
13. Able to work effectively with other Board members of varying experience, backgrounds and perspectives.
14. Contributes actively and facilitates discussion to develop ideas.
15. Communicates clearly and openly in order to secure understanding.
16. Undertakes learning and development to improve trustee skills and is aware of own strengths and weaknesses.

An additional benefit to having refreshed and more explicit Board behaviours is to also provide a basis for annual Board appraisals. The new core Board behavioural values, when combined with the suggested Board key behaviours, would give the Chair a great basis for the annual trustee review conversation, and also hold trustees to account including on their active contribution to diversity, inclusion and culture change.

2. **ACTIONS: Governance Opportunities and Practices**

Firstly, the upcoming Board vacancies should be targeted at BAME members, LGBTQ+⁷ members and members with a disability.⁸

Positive action is about taking specific steps to improve equality and inclusion, for example to increase the number of disabled people in senior / Board roles in which they are currently under-represented, or indeed non-existent.

Such positive action is allowable under the Equality Act 2010, including:

⁷ Abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning) and others, including sexual identity.

⁸ Note the European Space Agency's very explicit commitment to recruit and train people with disabilities (as well as more women), as astronauts. *“To go further than we ever have before, we need to look wider than we ever have before.”* 16 Feb 2021.

- Designing and circulating trustee vacancies to target particular groups, to increase the number of applicants from that group.
- Including statements in job adverts to encourage applications from under-represented groups, such as ‘we strongly welcome applications from BAME members, LGBTQ+ members and members with a disability’.
- Offering training or shadowing or mentoring to members with particular needs, including information about trusteeships, building their confidence and ability to represent their applications.
- Offering associate trusteeships to help members from protected categories to get a feel for the role, duties and commitments of RCSLT trustees.
- Hosting a series of virtual events specifically for under-represented groups to encourage interest and engagement.
- At the very least, favouring the candidate from an under-represented group, where two candidates are ‘as qualified as’ each other. This choice should NOT go forward for election.

Secondly, it is apparent from the RCSLT Articles of Association / Constitution and Bylaws that there are flexibilities for widening the categories of Board trustees. Options for consideration:

- a limited time board adviser (no voting rights);
- co-optees for a particular input - with or without voting rights – on a year-on-year basis (annualised rather than stuck to AGM September timings);
- mentoring for BAME members, LGBTQ+ members and members with a disability, co-optees on a leadership and or board access programme
- BAME members, LGBTQ+ members and members with a disability, or newly qualified SLTs⁹.

The membership retain firm control on the Board, hence the focus on clinical practice and professional excellence. Some years ago a governance review assisted helpfully by the RCSLT auditors led to the innovation of lay board trustees, and the board went from 12 to 16 strong. This 3/16 of lay trustees changed the balance on the board but not mathematically significant in terms of the weight of influence.

At present less than 20% of the Board are non-RCSLT members who provide technical and / or functional expertise, ie lay trustees for particular specialisms, digital, HR and OD, finance and treasurer. The rest are SLT members (although ‘practising SLTs are in the minority, something that could be changed along with a more diverse representation on the Board.

Clearly the maths could be changed without the SLT members losing their voting majority, even with fewer SLT members and more lay or student trustees. Or as above, create categories within the SLT Board who have oversight and bring specialist expertise, such as youth, equalities etc. There is

⁹ The current Board make-up is in danger of leaving a generation behind in term of the changing demographic of some of the young SLTs from protected groups coming through, potentially increasing the trust and knowledge gap at Board.

leeway for all of these within the constitution, but they’ve largely not been taken up apart from with the governance review some years ago.¹⁰

3. ACTIONS: Recruitment Processes for Trustee Appointments

Skills Matrix: At the moment this looks like overkill and is unanimously perceived as rather off-putting to all but the most experienced of applicants, and therefore exacerbates the perceived culture of exclusivity and the perpetuation of the status quo. One interviewee commented on how male the language and structure of the skills matrix was, as well as being highly age- and expert-biased by default. This in itself would ensure that the Board recruits in its own ‘white expert’ image.

Action: I would strongly suggest scrapping it altogether and instead making improvements to the role descriptions for each category of trustee.

Skills matrix summary: The current skills matrix is 9 pages long and was considered unanimously as overly complicated, male-oriented in presentation and unduly ‘excluding’. The actions set out above will go a long way to reduce the intimidating nature of the skills matrix which in of itself, is not a guarantee of a successful Board appointment. Values, leadership behaviours and skills are as important as specific professional / technical / functional experience. Any Board skills matrix should ideally be used for Board assessments not for recruitment purposes. The Role Description should include the key values, behaviours and then define the level of experience required (eg for Hon. Treasurer, Digital, HR etc), for each of the Board roles.

Trustee role specification: These all look satisfactory but again the point is made that the RCSLT revised mission / purpose, vision and Board values need to be added to the top of each role specification to avoid any form of ‘taken for grantedness’ where understandings (eg about values), are tacit and unspoken and around which there is some apparent confusion. This then adds to an outsider’s perception of the Board being an ‘inner sanctum’ when it is in fact full of people who are creative, supportive and open to new ideas.

In addition, the new Board behaviours should be part of the role description and application form.

Advertising strategy: The current recruitment and interview process although rigorous has historically worked to exclude or put off certain protected group from not only applying, but also from thinking that there are all sorts of cultural and process barriers that would exempt them somehow.

There are flexibilities under the Equality Act 2010 set out above and I reiterate them below, as they relate to the advertising and recruitment strategy for trusteeships:

¹⁰ There remains – as always – the issue of Board numbers / size. However this shouldn’t be used as an excuse to pull back from taking action. A Board can always be made more effective by the ways in which it manages itself, its strategic priorities and the RCSLT operational plan. It’s all to be imagined and then made real!

- Designing and circulating trustee vacancies to target particular groups, to increase the number of applicants from that group.
- Including statements in job adverts to encourage applications from under-represented groups, such as ‘we strongly welcome applications from BAME members, LGBTQ+ members and members with a disability’. Or ‘we are particularly committed to increasing the diversity of our board and are keen to receive applications from BAME members, LGBTQ+ members and members with a disability.’
- Offering training or shadowing or mentoring to members with particular needs, including information about trusteeships, building their confidence and ability to represent their applications, and helping them to navigate their managers’ consent.
- Hosting a series of virtual even specifically for under-represented groups to encourage interest and engagement.
- Favouring the candidate from an under-represented group, where two candidates are ‘as qualified as’ each other.

I’d go so far as to specifically INVITE applications from known committed BAME members, LGBTQ+ members and members with a disability, offering them mentoring and support for their applications. No guarantees; applications must still be of high quality however if one removes the onerous skills matrix and adapts the general trustee role specification, I could imagine the process would be rather less intimidating and formalised. After all, some of the member trustees I interviewed had approached either the previous Board chair or the present chair and been actively encouraged to apply when perhaps they might have ruled themselves out, or when they needed a bit of reassurance. I would suggest that the same informal opportunity be given to BAME members, LGBTQ+ members and members with a disability, especially to those who have already shown a significant commitment to the RCSLT by their involvement and activism.

Application form: A redesign is called for with the RCSLT revised mission / purpose, vision and Board values added to the top of each role application form, plus the positive action statement.

In addition, the new Board behaviours should be part of the and application form and applicants invited to write their 400 words on their experience of meeting these behaviours.

Manner of recommendation to the Board, and electorate: This was an incredibly sensitive subject and had a very impact on some BAME member interviewees’ attitudes to whether or not they would bother to apply, given that they had been encountering at the very least unconscious bias, indirect and direct discrimination for most of their lives. For me the process of election is an interesting one as I understand that in reality the RCSLT has never been inundated with applications: There have only been 3 to 4 member ballots required in the last 15 years. As with the dreaded skills matrix, I question the necessity and benefits of using such a system.

I would hope that this situation will change as the culture change model is applied and more members become interested in serving as trustees – if not soon – then into the future, so the manner in which short-listed / acceptable candidates go through for election by the member body, requires some deep thought.

Action: There is every opportunity for the RCSLT to instead create an electoral college, ie a much smaller sub-group of peers drawn from the membership. This group should be fully representative to reduce the risk of unconscious bias and aim to rebuild trust among minority group members in the trustee selection process.

Trustee induction: The current induction presentation pack should be phased over more than two half days, creating dynamic opportunities for trustees to question the CEO, members of the SLT and the Chair et al, as part of the process of settling in. It could be better designed to balance the needs, views and contributions of the incoming trustee(s), with the needs of senior officers talk about their areas of the RCSLT.

4. **ACTIONS: Succession Planning / Possible Routes into a Trusteeship:**

This is an action to be put in place once the more urgent actions are underway, ie to devise a Board succession plan that overhauls the access routes to the Board – rather than the overly formal and very limited approach currently - alongside an incredibly informal ‘accidental-succession-by-chance chat’. For example:

- Could consider associate NED positions via something like the Insight Programme for non-traditional applicants.
- Could have a mini-shadow, or parallel Board at practitioner level for members of protected groups (race, age (youth) and disability, etc) to facilitate the next level of trustee talent; they could come together with the main Board on topics to compare thinking and suggestions.
- Could have via sub-committee, CPD leadership and governance training programme for interested members from BAME members, LGBTQ+ members and members with a disability, to actively engage with the Board to learn more about what it is to be a trustee, and perhaps to the opportunity to co-mentor a trustee, thus raising diversity and inclusion awareness in the trustee body as a whole.
- A section on the website to improve knowledge about how to apply for Board positions, including examples on how to complete the application form based on the general role specification (with maybe completed fictional examples).
- The website (or knowledge portal) could also provide a basic understanding of the way in which charities are governed, the role and boundaries of trustees, and to understand their legal duties and liabilities. This could be a fun talking-heads chat between the VC and Chair for instance.

5. **ACTIONS: People: Board Leadership**

Unconscious bias training: As well as being far more committed and explicit about culture change and the adoption of Board values and behaviours that support culture change and diversity and inclusion, a suggestion was made by one of the interviewees should receive unconscious bias training. I remain unconvinced that such training is necessary because it oftentimes becomes a tick-box exercise, obviating the need to take real action as in this review report. If the steps in this review are taken swiftly then perhaps UBT could be undertaken. However there remains a very deep concern when it comes to the perceived unconscious bias among members when asked to vote between competing candidates who might be from minority and protected group backgrounds.

Communications with the membership: How the RCSLT and Board communicates with ‘many voices / protected categories’ is an interesting one, and opportunities via digital innovation is a must, including opportunities to open up non-confidential parts of Board meetings to the members.

Communications with SLT service users: A couple of the interviewees thought it was imperative for the Board to regularly talk with SLT service users, as well as visit places that deliver SLT - once the pandemic is over.

Recognition of members’ contributions to D&I: I believe there’s an overdependence on active and knowledgeable BAME members, LGBTQ+ members and members with a disability who contribute pro bono on a range of topics. My view is that there is an element of a lacking quid pro quo that needs attention, something the honours committee could be thinking about. These members should at least be actively approached to be considered as part of the medium-term Board succession plan, should they so choose.

Action: That the Honours Committee criteria for Awards should be revised to include those members who provide significant discretionary effort which impacts upon the strategic ambitions of the RCSLT. This should stand in addition to the current criteria around clinical and academic excellence in their SLT roles.

Collaboration across the AHP: The Board and the SLT could work more closely with the other allied health professions and the 3rd sector, to share such trustee development programmes to encourage BAME members, LGBTQ+ members and members with a disability to be part of a broader pool of future leaders, NEDs / trustee candidates, and to actively review what the other allied health professions are doing to engage protected groups onto their Boards, and in their membership.

Strategic contribution: It remains my view that the Board trustees should be much more involved with setting the future strategic direction and ambitions for the RCSLT – especially given the steady decline in student numbers and in overseas members - making the future pipeline for membership problematic. Other issues of strategic significant and implications for the RCSLT include (but not exclusively):

1. Dropout rates, poor or inadequate student support for BAME, LGBTQ+ and students with a disability;
2. A growing unmet need for speech, language and swallowing services as a result of successive societal shutdowns over the past year, especially among the under-5s in deprived communities where severely hindered child development has arisen from lack of socialisation and vocalisation development due to the increased isolation;
3. The impact of public sector austerity in the years to come as the economy heaves itself out of the severe recessive impacts of the pandemic and of BREXIT;
4. The opportunities for service growth beyond NHS commissioning in the private, corporate and independent sector for SLT provision, and
5. An opportunity to strengthen the RCSLT’s international work and profile.

6. ACTIONS: Workplace

Nothing much to add here except the opportunities that covid-19 and its new variants offer to how work and communications continues to be organised in a more flexible and innovative way, removing any tendency toward London-centrism.

A contributing barrier to entry is the pre-pandemic requirement to travel sometimes long distances to attend Board meetings. This requirement has been modified by the impact of the pandemic and the necessity to find other modes of working and communicating. This development works in the favour of BAME, LGBTQ+ potential trustee applicants as well as those with a disability. To return to the ‘old ways’ of working and meeting would be a mistake and a barrier to Board entry, even after the pandemic has resolved itself. Notwithstanding that, some face-to-face meetings remain very useful, especially ½ day strategy get-togethers that the Board should instigate – when safe to do so.

7. ACTIONS: Narrative

There’s a persistent theme of ‘exclusivity’ that came through the review interviews, that of the RCSLT being a ‘cut above’ the other allied health professions, and that BAME interviewees thought the profession was more difficult to enter, had more barriers to entry and had a much less supportive route through education and training leading to relatively high dropout rates.¹¹

Threads of this exclusivity is evident in the PROCESS FOR APPOINTMENT OF A LAY MEMBER FOR THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES V4 where part of the recruitment process is *“Engage with Sir George for interviews in December”*. This step seems like overkill and smacks of elitism, however on investigation the author found it to be 3 years out of date and therefore part of an historic process.

Balancing a concentration on professional and clinical excellence, with more strategic challenges would provide an opportunity for the RCSLT Board to engage with the RCSLT’s social value and purpose, similar to the leadership routes that so many other membership organisations (and corporates), are now actively pursuing.

Part of the challenge for the RCSLT is not only to be proud of its journey to a respected Royal RCSLT and concomitant history (as seen on the RCSLT website), but to also be explicitly more forward looking. As an example: It could add a section to the website titled The Future of the RCSLT to explore more fully its strategy as informed by its mission, purpose, vision and values and strategic (rather than operational) priorities, and what these mean for the future of the RCSLT and the SLT and swallowing profession.

¹¹ It’s important that the RCSLT establish these dropout rates and compare them with overall dropout rates, or even more impactfully, compare white and non-white dropout rates. This should inform part of the RCSLT strategy going forward.

Main Heading: FINAL THOUGHTS

This is not an exhaustive action plan however very little is written here that hasn't been suggested by one or more of the nineteen interviewees. This in itself is evidence of a commitment to diversity, however it does beg the question of why it's taken so long to take action. That being said, this review proves that the time is right to support a more “21st century” RCSLT leadership style in order to build trust among the emerging membership without compromising its historical roots and its high standards and professional standing.

Many organisations with a more formal 20th century managerialist type of leadership culture that was bit risk-averse, traditional in its ways, rule-bound and formal, and somewhat lacking in imagination and diversity, are beginning to change culturally. As this review has demonstrated, with the right Board leadership, engaged RCSLT members, and the involvement of a skilled and committed senior management team and staff, there is a fantastic opportunity to manage culture change and in ‘making change stick’.

Appendix I: List of interviewees¹²

RCSLT Members:			
Ilyeh Nahdi	Speech and Language Therapist, Woodfield School Compass Learning Partnership Speech and Language Therapist, Woodfield School Compass Learning Partnership	Insights: BAME	
Dharinee Hansjee	SLT member	Insights: BAME	
Lynne Graham	SLT member	Insights: Disability	
Dorett Davis	General Manager Children’s Specialist Services and Head of Children and Young People’s Therapies Kaleidoscope, Lewisham Centre for Children and Young People Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust	Insights: BAME	
RCSLT Board / Trustees			
Della Money	Outgoing Chair		Coming to an end
Ms Mary Heritage	Deputy Chair (incoming chair)		To AGM 2022
Dr Sean Pert	Incoming Deputy Chair	Working on EDI/ anti-racism work	To AGM 2024 (moves to Chair role from 2022)
Mrs Ann Whitehorn	General Trustee and Acting Honorary Treasurer	Acting chair of Finance & Resources Committee FRC	2 nd term To AGM 2022
Mr Richard Cryer	Incoming Honorary Treasurer		1 st term To AGM 2023
Mrs Andrea Robinson	Country Representative for England North	On anti-racism forum	1 st term To AGM 2022
Ms Frances Johnstone	General Trustee	Works in private practice	1 st term

¹² Thanks also to Jo Offen for help with scheduling interviews.

		also on Professional practice and policy committee PPPC	To AGM 2022
Mrs Angela Shimada	General Trustee		1 st term To AGM 2022
Ms Leasil Burrow	Lay Trustee (HR/OD)		1 st term To AGM 2022
Mr John Humphrey	Lay Trustee (Digital)		2 nd term To AGM 2023
RCSLT Staff:			
	Job Title		
Derek Munn	Director of Policy & Public Affairs		
Rachel Purkett	Director of Engagement & Communication		
Judith Broll	Director of Professional Development		
Karen Willis	Director of Finance & Membership		
Brian Gopsill	Director of Performance and Contracts/Company Secretary (retired mid-December 2020)		

Appendix II: The case for RCSLT taking ACTION

England: letter from Sir Simon Stevens, NHS Chief Executive & Amanda Pritchard NHS Chief Operating Officer 31 July 2020 (c/o the RCSLT):

Strengthen leadership and accountability, with a named executive Board member responsible for tackling inequalities in place in September in every NHS organisation.

Action plan showing how over the next five years NHS boards and senior staffing will in percentage terms at least match the overall BAME composition of its workforce or local community.

New, core performance monitoring of service use and outcomes among those from the most deprived neighbourhoods and from Black and Asian communities, by 31 October.

Ensure completeness of patient ethnicity data by 31 December.

The Equalities Act 2010: Passed into law on 8 April 2010, the Act simplifies and has replaced the large number of Acts and Regulations that formed the basis of anti-discrimination law such as the Equal Pay Act 1970, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

The Act defines the various kinds of discrimination by reference to characteristics that are protected under the Act (referred to as “protected characteristics”):

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

Not only is direct discrimination unlawful but importantly so too is indirect discrimination:

“Indirect discrimination occurs where a provision, criterion or practice is applied which is discriminatory in relation to protected characteristic. This includes conduct which is applied or would apply to persons who do not share the characteristic in question and conduct which puts or would put a person possessing a protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage.

Conduct which can be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim is, however, permitted.”

Appendix III: List of Reference Sources including examples of D&I innovation

Desk Research (internal documents):

RCSLT Trustee Recruitment Documents:

- RSCLT Board Succession Planner
- Process for lay member recruitment
- RSCLT Skills Matrix
- Trustee Role Specification(s)
- Trustee Job Advert(s)
- Board Application Form
- Advert for Deputy Chair, General Trustee and Wales Country Rep
- Nomination form
- Trustee Induction Programmes
- Revised Induction Programme, January 2020

RCSLT Memorandum and Articles:

- Relevant Articles 36(1), 36(6), 36(7), 36(8), 36(9) and 37(5)
- Relevant Bylaws – Clauses 22 – 52

RCSLT Strategic Plan 2018-2022

Desk research (external documents)¹³:

A Road Map to Equality, Equality and Human Rights Commission (Oct 2017)
Becoming Wild About Inclusion Roadmap, The Wildlife Trusts
Trustee Application Form, The Medical Research Foundation
The Insight Programme, and the Leadership Academy, NHS
Future Leaders Programme
The Equality Act 2010 (etc, and reports)
A Roadmap to Race Equality, Equality and Human Rights Commission, October 2017
Various examples of Board Skills Matrix from other organisations including The Pensions Regulator
National Equality Standard (NES), EY (Ernst & Young LLP and Arun Batra, NES CEO, 2016
Reflective Appraisal Process & Documentation for Chair & NED, Greater Manchester West Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust
Black Lives Matter, How to be a Corporate Ally. www.diversio.com, 2020
British Standard for diversity and inclusion BS 76005 Valuing people through diversity and inclusion – code of practice for organizations 2017
Inclusive Employer Quality Mark, RICS (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors), 2015 (expected to be relaunched Spring 2021)
Equity, diversity and inclusion at RIBA: putting our house in order, Chief Executive Alan Vallance of RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects), Sept 2020

¹³ Many kindly provided by trustee Richard Cryer.