



LABBS Guide: Chorus Diversity & Inclusion Representative

LABBS is an inclusive association that recognises the importance of everyone having an equal opportunity to enjoy singing. Our commitment is to eliminate discrimination in our association, whether it is by reason of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation and to encourage equal opportunities.

What is Diversity?

Diversity refers to the demographic differences of a group – often referencing protected characteristics as in the Equality Act. It's about understanding and welcoming the wonderful variety of people in barbershop with kindness, without judgement and with acceptance.

What is Inclusion?

Inclusion is often defined as the extent to which everyone, regardless of their background, identity or circumstance, feels valued, accepted and supported to succeed. Inclusion means understanding that each individual is unique and recognizing our individual differences. Working on inclusion means to create a space that is kind and encouraging and doesn't discriminate directly or indirectly against any individual or group, being truly inclusive.

What is Equity?

Equity recognises that treating everyone equally has shortcomings when the playing field is not level. An equitable approach emphasises that everyone should not be treated the same, but according to their own needs.

What is Equality?

Equality means equal rights and opportunities are afforded to all. There are some characteristics that are protected by the 2010 Equality Act in the UK, which protects those with some defined characteristics from direct and indirect discrimination. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

What does this mean for a LABBS Chorus?

It could mean a lot, or it could mean a little – each chorus will have its own diversity in membership and experience of inclusion and how it's played a part in chorus life. Here are a few possible scenarios to give some idea of the sort of issues that may be relevant and how to deal with them.

You may have a member of your chorus with an individual need that effects their singing ability. For example, they may have bad back issues, or they may be hard of hearing on one side, or they may be neurodiverse and need to do things in a set routine or in their own way. What would you do to include them?

A bad back can be truly debilitating, so can you have a chair or even a riser chair put out for them? Not at the side of the chorus where they don't feel included with everyone else – actually in the stack, maybe on the front row in rehearsals.

If someone has hearing loss on one side, work with them – if their right side is not so good, place them in the stack on the right so that they can hear with their left side.

A person who is neurodiverse may have their own routines and ways of going about everyday things. Work with them, allow them to stand in the stack where they feel comfortable, and get them to bring their own particular skills into a rehearsal sometimes.

Even in a small chorus, these examples are relevant (they're all based on real life people and solutions). Show kindness and work with understanding to the extent that the person feels comfortable and you won't go far wrong. Can you have a 'buddy' system so that there's a single point of contact for a new or established member with individual needs? Everything musical should go through the section leaders but for anything else, a 'buddy' system can be useful.

What does it mean to be a D&I Rep for a LABBS Chorus?

We already have a job description that may help answer this question, as below: -

Job title: Diversity and Inclusion Officer

Responsibilities can include but are not limited to the following:

- *Making sure that individual needs of members are supported*
- *Support the Music Team in selecting songs mindfully, that would not offend marginalised groups or members within our community*
- *Liaising with PR and marketing teams to show the chorus as an inclusive and welcoming space*
- *Creating a policy on D&I where needed*
- *Supporting club recruitment in an inclusive manner*
- *Keep up to date with LABBS Diversity and Inclusion updates*
- *Advising on updates to constitutions or rules to be more inclusive*

Every chorus may need something slightly different in its own context, but this gives you a good starting point. If you have a new member who has individual needs and wants/needs some help to settle in, it would be the D&I Rep who would make sure that their needs are met as far as possible, and co-ordinate this for them, work with them, either directly or through a riser 'buddy' or section leader – whichever works best. It may also be helpful to have the D&I Rep a part of a 'meet and greet' team at events or open evenings, so that they can be aware of anyone who may potentially need a little extra assistance.

To enable these things to happen, the D&I Rep could be part of the decision-making fabric of the committee/management team. It may not be necessary for them to be a full member, but to attend when issues arise so that they can make recommendations and be included in the decision making around the issue is helpful to the chorus, as it allows a single co-ordinator to work consistently in an informed way. Or it may be that an existing Committee member (such as membership sec) can take on this role as well as their existing responsibilities.

This Guidance is only guidance, and it's up to all of us to treat everyone with kindness and respect. LABBS is open to additions to this guidance based on experience from clubs, if that would be helpful. The Guidance will be reviewed from time to time. Please contact diversity@labbs.org.uk with any questions or suggestions.

LABBS D&I Director

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