



# Women in FE Governance

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# What does the picture look like now?

Research undertaken by the Women's Leadership Network in 2012.

- ▶ Twice as many men are governors than women
- ▶ Men are three times as likely to chair committees as women
- ▶ Only 17% of boards are chaired by women
- ▶ Only 2.5% of governors are appointed through competitive interview
- ▶ Only 16% of governors apply through an open advertisement
- ▶ Little has changed over the last decade



## Why is this important?

### ► The Davies Report

- “Companies with a strong female representation at board and top management level perform better than those without”
- “Gender-diverse boards have a positive impact on performance”
- “It is clear that boards make better decisions where a range of voices, drawing on different life experience, can be heard. That mix of voices must include women.”



## Why is this important?

- ▶ BIS review of Further Education and Sixth Form Governance
  - ▶ The Foundation Code requires “governing bodies to ensure that they have the mix of skills and experience needed to achieve their evolving strategy effectively.” They are also expected “to publish clear rules for governor appointments.”
  - ▶ “Colleges need to ensure diversity of gender, ethnicity, age and disability and a balance in terms of length of service and background” when constructing their boards.
  - ▶ “Ofsted reports have noted some correlation between failure to refresh governing bodies (or replace long-serving Chairs) and poor quality performance.”
  - ▶ The resulting action plan says that during 2013/14 Colleges need to “assess their board composition and implement the diversity actions”.



## Why is this important?

- ▶ It reflects the real world - your learners are diverse. A diverse board can make your college knowledgeable and sensitive to a wider variety of groups
- ▶ A variety of backgrounds can make the college more adaptable to its ever changing environment
- ▶ Supporting the embedding of equality and diversity in all the college's policies, practices and procedures. Setting an example at the top will hopefully have a trickle-down effect within the organisation. The board should offer role models for staff and students to make them aspirational.
- ▶ “Counsel from a variety of authorities is sensible.” “A board’s purpose is to govern not comply. A good board listens, contributes, challenges, and when necessary pushes back.” Mike Myatt, Forbes
- ▶ Moral and ethical role of public bodies.



## What can you do about it?

- ▶ Join the Search Committee
- ▶ Ensure the recruitment processes to the board are open, honest and fair. Ensure your College uses the expertise of its HR department in appointments to the board
- ▶ Ensure recruitment is targeted to fill skills and diversity gaps
- ▶ Ask the difficult questions when appointments are being discussed - to both board membership and to the chairing of committees
- ▶ Encourage your networks to consider joining a college board especially if they would add to the diversity of the make up of the board.



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