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New to Nature Programme Evaluation

Report 1: Learning from the recruitment phase



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Executive Summary

The New to Nature programme looks to attract young people from diverse backgrounds into the environmental sector.

The New to Nature programme has successfully recruited 95 trainees to 78 Host Organisations across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

New to Nature is focussing on attracting new and diverse talent from communities currently underrepresented in environmental roles, specifically young people (aged 18-25) who are:

- ethnically diverse,
- disabled, and/or
- economically disadvantaged.

New to Nature is being delivered through a partnership of Groundwork, The Youth Environmental Service (YES), The Prince's Trust, Disability Rights UK, and Mission Diverse.

This recruitment guide provides a snapshot of the learning to date from the New to Nature programme evaluation. This includes exploration of the barriers identified within literature, by trainees and Host Organisations, challenges faced by trainees and Host Organisations, good practice recruitment methods and key reflections and tips for the sector.

Barriers to accessing environmental jobs

The majority of surveyed trainees perceive the environmental sector as generally accessible for young people. However, **the sector was perceived as less accessible for disabled individuals and/or individuals with long-term health conditions.**

Over two-thirds of trainees perceived the sector as inaccessible for individuals with disabilities and long-term health conditions. Additionally, over half of all surveyed trainees believe that careers in the environmental sector are not accessible to people from ethnically diverse backgrounds and/or working-class backgrounds.

When asked to explain why they thought the sector was inaccessible to different unrepresented groups, **trainees most commonly reported that this has been their own lived experience.**

Before New to Nature, many trainees were unable to secure work in the sector because they **did not have relevant environmental work experience.** Work experience is frequently unpaid and many trainees said that has meant they do not have the required directly relevant skills for green jobs because they 'cannot afford to work for free.' As a result, trainees commonly had to work in other sectors e.g. Retail and hospitality, where skills were transferrable but not directly applicable.

In cases **where trainees felt qualified, they still raised concerns that this did not feel like enough.** Trainees reported that because of the high level of competition for entry-level jobs in the environmental

sector, they commonly experience being overlooked for jobs because other applicants have more environmental qualifications and/or training that is directly relevant. Trainees also highlighted that it can be difficult to know which kind of training and qualifications would make them look more attractive to prospective environment sector employers.

Common Challenges and Barriers to Organisations

The majority of Host Organisations are taking part in the New to Nature programme because **they would like to see their workforce, and the environmental sector, become more inclusive and more diverse**. Host Organisations also recognised that their workforce is not as diverse as it could be and that they want to be part of positive action that would benefit the sector in the longer term.

The majority of surveyed Host Organisations acknowledged that **their teams lack representation across a wide range of protected characteristics and this may discourage individuals from diverse backgrounds applying for roles**. In most cases, Host Organisations suggested that their teams lack diversity because they are small with limited funds and many staff members have worked at the organisations for considerable lengths of time. This means that they have had limited opportunity to expand their team and limited resource and knowledge of **how** to recruit more inclusively.

Limited funds, Host Organisations suggested, also result in organisations struggling to new staff in cases where they have successfully recruited applicants from more diverse backgrounds. In these cases, Host Organisations reported that they are unable to meet staff requirements around salary and opportunity for career progression.

Host Organisations commonly reported that they receive very few, if any, applications from individuals with protected characteristics. Where this was the case, Host Organisations typically reported that they are unsure how to better reach a diverse audience with their job opportunities. **Host Organisations also suggested that they do not know how to better reach target communities and that they do not have the resource internally to address the issue.**

Whilst organisations reflected a lack of resource that this was a key issue for them, this has changed due to New to Nature. **Host Organisations frequently reported that the additional resource secured through the programme has allowed them to dedicate more time and effort to widening participation in their organisation's workforce.**

The New to Nature Recruitment Process

Based on good practice evidence and consultation with programme partners, Groundwork UK developed recruitment guidance to ensure that the New to Nature approach is proactive, and, where possible,

removed barriers for people in the environmental sector.

Host Organisations used a range of recruitment and outreach methods for their New to Nature role. Most Host Organisations, following New to Nature recruitment guidelines, worked with other local organisations and/or groups to recruit a diverse range of candidates.

All surveyed Host Organisations bar one (39/40) confirmed that the New to Nature recruitment process was different to their organisation's typical approach. **Additionally, all surveyed Host Organisations, bar two, felt the approach was effective.**

Host Organisations commonly reported that previously their roles were promoted in a more limited fashion. For example, solely promoting roles on their organisation website and traditional job site websites such as Indeed.

Anonymising applications and limiting the amount of detail each Host Organisation could see about an individual prior to the interview resulted in some Host **Organisations feeling like New to Nature 'opened up the opportunity' for a wider range of people.**

Host Organisations also praised the process of working with partners who were better placed to reach more diverse audiences. **This was particularly effective for organisations who previously had difficulty attracting a diverse range of applicants.**

Working with other organisations and services, in particular local organisations and networks, also allowed Host Organisations to establish new partnerships. **This was felt to benefit the sector 'as a whole' as it encourages organisations to become better connected in their local area.** A minority of Host Organisations suggested that this will lead to sustainable longer-term partnerships beyond this round of recruitment.

Overall, reflecting on the inclusivity of their organisation's recruitment processes, **Host Organisations commonly reported that the New to Nature programme has had a positive impact.** However, a minority of Host Organisations still reported that adopting the New to Nature recruitment process took more time and resource than they anticipated and that this was a challenge (5/20).

Whilst survey responses suggest that whilst there is more to do to embed new or amended recruitment processes within respective organisations, **New to Nature has aided learning and encouraged organisations to take new approaches which will benefit them in the future.**

Surveyed trainees were also **overwhelmingly positive about the New to Nature recruitment process.** When asked about their experience of applying for their respective roles, trainees commonly said that it was clear, straightforward and a considerable improvement to their previous experiences applying for jobs.

1. Introduction and Context

The New to Nature programme looks to attract young people from diverse backgrounds into the environmental sector. It reflects a desire within the sector to demonstrate that the environment matters to everyone.

The programme has provided 95 work placements in a range of environmental roles, targeting people from diverse backgrounds.

The programme aims to provide life-changing experiences for people who are disadvantaged in the labour market, whilst building capacity in the environmental sector, making it more inclusive and diverse.

New to Nature is focussing on attracting new and diverse talent from communities currently underrepresented in environmental roles, specifically young people (aged 18-25) who are:

- ethnically diverse,
- disabled, and/or
- economically disadvantaged.

New to Nature is being delivered through a partnership of Groundwork, The Youth Environmental Service (YES), The Prince's Trust, Disability Rights UK, and Mission Diverse.

It is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (The Heritage Fund) as part of the celebrations to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the King's Coronation.

Each trainee is hosted by an organisation within the environmental sector for their placement for one year and will be supported by a Youth Employment Coach, employed by Groundwork.

Context within the Environmental Sector

The New to Nature programme was launched on the premise that the environmental sector does not have a diverse workforce and is not currently reflective of the communities it seeks to engage with and serve. This understanding aligns with other research and initiatives undertaken across the sector.

The Policy Exchange's 2017 report, [The Two Sides of Diversity](#), was a key marker of the sector's lack of diversity, bringing it to the forefront of sector-wide concerns. The research highlighted that 'landscape professions' and professions based in the countryside or outdoors were some of the least diverse professions across the UK.

Since 2017, research has continued to identify a lack of diversity within the sector. Notably, Full Colour's 2021 [Changing the World from Within](#) report for Wildlife and Countryside Link and Natural England identified that few not-for-profit organisations were 'ready for change' and actively implementing action plans on ethnic diversity, although most leaders felt that ethnic diversity should be a top or high sector priority.

These assertions are also supported by Students Organising for Sustainability UK (SOS-UK)'s 2022 [Racial Diversity in Environment Professions](#) Report which found that 'environment professionals' are one of the least racially diverse professions across the UK, with only 4.8% of said professionals identifying as Black, Asian or from another minority ethnic group, in comparison to the 12.6% of professionals across all occupations.

The New to Nature programme sits alongside a range of other initiatives and activities looking to encourage diversity and inclusivity across the sector and better understand the barriers to achieving this. This includes:

- SOS-UK's [Race for Nature](#) which supported Kickstart trainees to complete job placements at environmental organisations,
- The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation's mapping review of activity addressing the lack of diversity in the environment sector,
- Wildlife and Countryside Link's [route map](#) details key steps environment organisations should take over the next five years to allow the sector to become more ethnically diverse, and
- SOS-UK and partners' [Racial Action for the Climate Emergency \(RACE\) Report](#) which looks to improve transparency across the sector to create greater impetus to go 'further and faster' on diversity and inclusion.

Why take part in New to Nature?

The majority of Host Organisations are taking part in the New to Nature programme because they would like to see their workforce, and the environmental sector, become more inclusive and more diverse.

In these cases, Host Organisations also commonly recognised that their workforce is not as diverse as it could be and that they wanted to be part of positive action that would benefit the sector in the longer term.

'We are very aware of the lack of diversity in our sector and our own records show that we have never had an application from a candidate that identifies as either having a disability or part of an ethnic minority. Although we are a [small organisation] we are trying to take systemic steps to address this. The New to Nature post is part of the organisation's learning towards greater inclusivity.' Host Organisation

Additionally, whilst Host Organisations reported being supportive of the aims of the New to Nature programme, they also suggested that the programme provided them with the funds to be able to take action. Without funding, Host Organisations suggested that they would be unable to offer new opportunities for individuals looking to get into the sector.

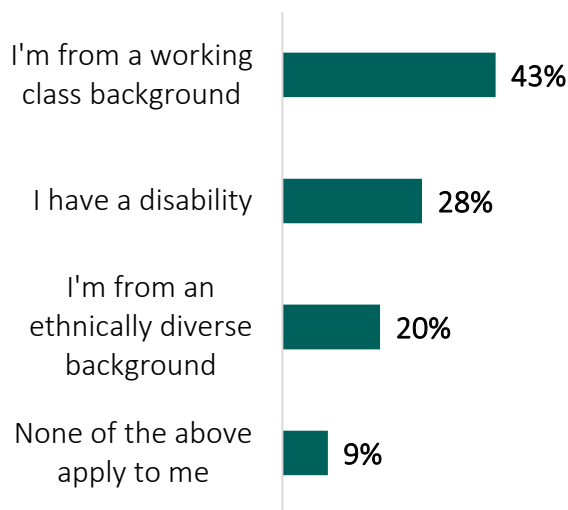
Programme Delivery to Date

The New to Nature programme has successfully recruited 95 trainees¹ to 78 Host Organisations across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

To assess the extent to which the New to Nature recruitment process reached a diverse range of applicants, all prospective recruits were asked to confirm whether they identified as working class, disabled and/or from an ethnically diverse background.

Table 1.1 below illustrates that two-fifths of all successful candidates are from working-class backgrounds, nearly a third are disabled and one in five trainees are from an ethnically diverse background.

Figure 1.1: Trainee demographic categorisation



Base: All successful New to Nature trainees (N=97)

¹ Please note that two trainees left the programme and the roles were then filled, meaning that

This demonstrates that New to Nature's inclusive recruitment approach has successfully recruited a diverse range of individuals.

This recruitment guide provides a snapshot of the learning to date from the New to Nature programme evaluation. This includes:

- Exploration of the barriers identified within literature, by trainees and Host Organisations,
- Challenges faced by Host Organisations at creating at sustaining a diverse workforce, and
- Good practice recruitment methods and how this knowledge was applied to the New to Nature approach,
- Key reflections and tips for the sector.

Monitoring Information contains 97 successful applicants.

2. Barriers to accessing environmental jobs

There are a range of barriers which prevent the environmental sector from being as diverse as it can be.

This section explores the barriers to securing and sustaining employment as identified by trainees and within wider literature.

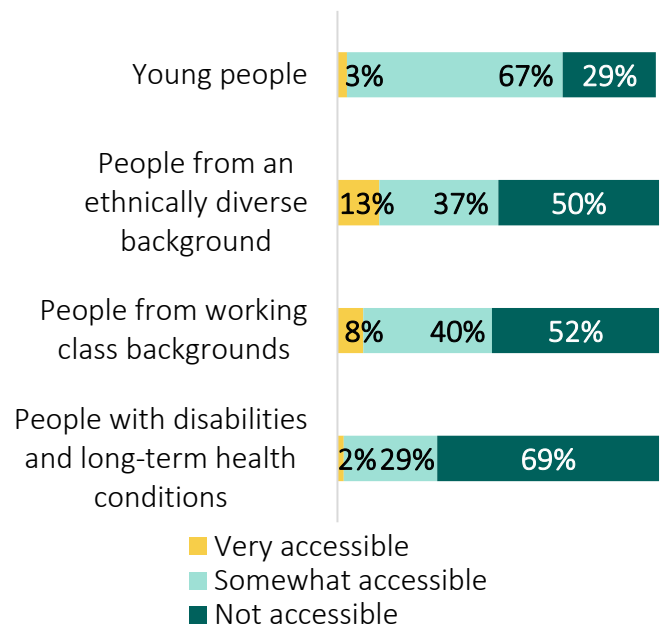
On engaging with the programme, New to Nature trainees were asked to complete a short survey reflecting on their experience of the recruitment process and their wider experience of applying for roles within the environmental sector.

The majority of surveyed trainees perceive the environmental sector as generally accessible for young people. However, the sector was perceived as less accessible for disabled individuals and/or individuals with long-term health conditions.

Over two-thirds of trainees reported that the sector is inaccessible for individuals with disabilities and long-term health conditions.

Half of all surveyed trainees also believe that careers in the environmental sector are not accessible to people from ethnically diverse backgrounds and/or working-class backgrounds.

Figure 2.1: To what extent do you feel that careers in the environmental sector are accessible to...



Base: New to Nature trainee engagement survey (N=59).

When asked to explain why they thought the sector was inaccessible to different unrepresented groups, trainees most commonly reported that this has been their own lived experience.

Moreover, similarly to findings from Groundwork's 2021 research [Youth in a Changing Climate](#), trainees said that they couldn't see that people 'like them' within environmental organisations.

‘Diversity in the environmental sector is known to be poor. I come from a working-class background and have a chronic health condition, and I don't know anyone like me who works in the environmental or charity sector.’
Trainee

Generally, trainees reported that it was ‘hard to find’ appropriate entry-level roles within the sector. For many trainees, this emphasised the need for schemes such as New to Nature.

‘It felt impossible before this [trainee placement] but now it feels truly possible and very exciting!’ Trainee

Common barriers trainees face in securing work in the sector are explored below.

Unpaid Work Experience

Trainees frequently reported that before New to Nature, they were unable to secure work in the sector because they did not have relevant environmental work experience. Work experience is frequently unpaid and many trainees said that has meant they do not have the required directly relevant skills for green jobs because they ‘cannot afford to work for free.’

‘Many opportunities in this sector rely on extensive work experience, volunteering or unpaid internships which are not accessible to young people who have recently graduated as well as people who have grown up in poverty and

currently still live under the poverty line. This also makes it very restrictive to people with disabilities/long-term health conditions.’ Trainee

As a result of this barrier, trainees commonly had to work in other sectors e.g. Retail and hospitality, where skills were transferrable but not directly applicable.

This finding supports research around young people, and the barriers associated with accessing work within the environmental sector. For example, research commissioned by [Our Bright Futures](#) found that most traineeship vacancies are directed towards graduates with work experience, excluding a considerable proportion of young people who are unemployed and looking for work.

As highlighted by the 2017 [McGregor-Smith Review](#), research, work experience can be more difficult to secure for young people from underrepresented groups as they may have fewer network connections. This sentiment was echoed by some trainees who suggested that this type of work experience was ‘harder to secure’ for individuals from ethnically diverse backgrounds, particularly if said individuals were also from working-class backgrounds, especially if they knew no one else who works in the sector.

In a few cases, trainees also suggested that where volunteering or work experience placements were available these were commonly only available during the week and in typical working hours.

This results in individuals who have to work full-time being unable to access opportunities to build their experience.

Qualifications and Training

In cases where trainees felt qualified, they still raised concerns that this did not feel like enough. Trainees reported that because of the high levels of competition for entry-level jobs in the environmental sector, they commonly experience being overlooked for jobs because other applicants have more environmental qualifications and/or training that is directly relevant.

Trainees also highlighted that it can be difficult to know what kind of training and qualifications make them look more attractive to prospective environment sector employers unless they have connections within the sector. This reiterates concerns, identified in the UK Government's 2021 [Green Jobs Taskforce report](#), that careers education commonly does not focus on the 'green skills' as important skills for the future workforce.

The cost of training and qualifications was also identified as a key barrier for individuals looking to enter the environmental sector, particularly considering the high level of environmental qualifications and skills of other prospective recruits. One trainee said,

'As someone from a working-class background, I've absolutely struggled with the costs involved in obtaining environmental qualifications that many sector jobs want. I'm fortunate because I got to attend further education but for someone who's a school leaver, unless you have connections within the sector already, it's basically impossible to get into,' Trainee

Practical qualifications like brush cutter and chainsaw licenses were also perceived as common qualifications which would make applicants look more desirable but were unaffordable for many.

Flexibility of Employer

The environmental sector is, at times, perceived as having limited resource to cover core service delivery.² This is explored further in [Section 3](#). Whilst this is not the case for all environmental organisations, many organisations are finding it difficult to continue delivering services and secure sufficient funding. These challenges within the sector have resulted in some trainees perceiving the sector as unable to flex to the needs of employees. Flexibility is here understood as including flexible hours and work patterns.

² It is important to highlight that this view is commonly identified by smaller organisations within the sector.

‘There’s not a lot of options for people who have unpredictable health, I can’t choose when I can and can’t work. I need a flexible employer.’ Trainee

A few trainees also highlighted that there is little accessible information or support available for individuals with disabilities or long-term health conditions on how to find appropriate work within the environmental sector.

Accessibility of Sites

Whilst environmental organisations cover a wide range of purposes and their activities vary considerably, many are based in remote and/or rural which are difficult to access via public transport.

In some cases, due to the range of sites organisations are working, a driving license is also a key job specification. This, trainees suggested, has resulted in many individuals being unable to meet the requirements necessary to enter employment in the sector as they cannot afford the cost of driving lessons. The unaffordability of driving lessons was perceived by some trainees as getting worse considering the current economic climate,

‘Many of the roles I would enjoy require a driving licence. I grew up in poverty and the current cost of driving lessons is so restrictive. Due to the cost-of-living crisis, this is not something I can afford to do.’

The limited accessibility of some sites can also be an additional barrier for individuals with physical disabilities or long-term health conditions looking for work in the environmental sector. However, as highlighted by trainees, it is important to consider that the limited accessibility of sites can sometimes be perceived as more of a barrier than it is. In these cases, trainees may need soft skill support to ensure they feel confident having conversations with their employer about their accessibility support needs.

3. Common Challenges and Barriers to Organisations

This section explores the challenges faced by organisations in developing and sustaining a diverse and inclusive workforce prior to the New to Nature programme and once they adopted New to Nature processes.

As highlighted in [Section One](#), Host Organisations involved in New to Nature want to be part of a more inclusive and diverse sector. Reflecting on where their organisations were before taking part in the programme, Host Organisations identified a number of key challenges they faced in developing and sustaining a diverse and inclusive workforce.

These challenges are summarised below. Please note that whilst these themes have been categorised as standalone topics, most themes are related and interlinked.

Small Team and Finite resources

The majority of surveyed Host Organisations acknowledged that their teams lack representation across a wide range of protected characteristics and this

may discourage individuals from diverse backgrounds applying for roles.

In most cases, Host Organisations suggested that this lack of diversity is because their teams are small with limited funds and many staff members have worked at the organisations for considerable lengths of time. This means that they have limited opportunities available to expand their team and limited resource and knowledge of **how** to recruit more inclusively.

‘We are a very small organisation with very high retention. The core leadership team have been together for 20 years and other staff have all stayed longer than might normally be expected, usually moving to roles and organisations that they have had contact with in their role with our organisation. Opportunities come up infrequently and the organisation needs to establish how it can open itself to a wider range of skills and perspectives.’
Host Organisation

Host Organisations also suggested that whilst they would like to see their organisations developing a more diverse workforce, funding concerns are a significant barrier.

In some cases, Host Organisations described being reliant on grant funding which does not cover their organisation’s core costs. In these circumstances, Host Organisations felt they were struggling to find any appropriate staff or volunteers. As a result, they felt unable to be more

considered or selective with recruitment practices.

‘We are a small charity and have relied on grant income from Trusts and Foundations for all staff appointments (and volunteers) prior to this scheme. As a result, we struggle to find ANY volunteers who are able to help us on a full-time basis and have had no opportunities to be selective around diversity/inclusiveness.’
Host Organisation

Host Organisations also suggested that limited funds meant that they struggle to retain new staff in cases where they have successfully recruited applicants from more diverse backgrounds. In these cases, Host Organisations reported that they were unable to meet staff requirements around salary and opportunity for career progression. This challenge was perceived as being exacerbated wider economic pressures e.g. the Cost-of-Living crisis.

Limited Knowledge of Inclusive Recruitment Practices

Host Organisations commonly suggest that the key challenge they face in developing and sustaining a diverse and inclusive workforce is that they receive very few, if any, applications from individuals with protected characteristics.

Where this was the case, Host Organisations typically reported that they are unsure how to better reach a diverse audience with their job opportunities. Host

Organisations also suggested that they do not know how to better reach target communities and that they do not have the resource internally to address the issue.

‘Diversity has always been a challenge as our job roles seem not to reach a diverse audience and it's difficult for a small organisation to know how to address this - we don't have an HR department or similar so we have a lack of knowledge in this area’
Host Organisation

Whilst organisations reflected that this was a key issue for them, this has changed due to New to Nature. Host Organisations frequently reported that the additional resource secured through the programme has allowed them to dedicate more time and effort to widening participation in their organisation’s workforce.

‘We were struggling to reach beyond the typical types of candidates who apply for our roles. Through New To Nature, we have found ways to reach more diverse job seekers and remove barriers that prevented certain candidates from applying.’ Host Organisation

Approaches to Positive Action

Host Organisations were positive about being part of a programme which encourages diversity and inclusivity in the sector. However, concerns about

accusations of positive discrimination were reported to the project team.

In these cases, it is understood that across the sector there is limited knowledge on what constitutes unlawful positive discrimination (where a prospective or existing employee from a protected characteristic group is favoured) and what constitutes positive action (the lawful boosting of participation of underrepresented groups or the removal of barriers for those at a disadvantage because they possess a protected characteristic).

Greater detail on the difference between positive discrimination and positive action is detailed in [Section 4](#).

4. Good Practice for Inclusive Recruitment

This section considers recognised good practice in inclusive recruitment in the environmental sector and the approach taken in New to Nature. This section also details trainee and Host Organisation feedback on the strengths of adopting this approach.

As detailed in the National Lottery Heritage Fund's [Racial Equity in Nature toolkit](#)³, key considerations when looking to make recruitment processes more inclusive include:

- **Leveraging social media** to demonstrate an organisation's commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion and to expand methods of outreach when recruiting for roles,
- **Framing organisational requirements and broadening the language used** to avoid inaccessible and specialist jargon,
- **Creating authentic partnerships** with other likeminded organisations and services to extend organisational reach into specific communities and share good practice, and

- **Reassessing internal organisation culture** to ensure it actively champions EDI and transparently measures its progress in this arena.

Other key aspects of inclusive recruitment, as detailed in the professional body for Human Resources and People Development the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) [Inclusive Recruitment Guide](#) include:

- Ensuring that role requirements are clear, specific and behaviour-based rather than focussed on character traits.
- Ensuring that job adverts use inclusive language, avoiding masculine language.
- Offering specific flexible working options where possible.
- Advertising the specific benefits which promote inclusivity e.g. parental leave and pay, annual leave allowance and sick pay.
- Providing clear expectations, timelines and communication about what to expect from the recruitment process.
- Proactively asking applicants if they require any reasonable adjustments to take part in the recruitment process.
- Anonymising applications including removing the name of educational institutions.
- Including multiple decision-makers to jointly review recruitment decisions.

³ Please note that whilst this guide aims to specifically promote racial equity, it can also be applied broadly to support protected characteristics.

The New to Nature approach

Based on good practice evidence and consultation with programme partners, Groundwork UK developed recruitment guidance to ensure that the New to Nature approach is proactive, and, where possible, removed barriers for people in the environmental sector. Please note that whilst all Host Organisations were expected to implement the guidance to the best of their ability, it is acknowledged that Host Organisations also had to utilise this guidance alongside their own organisational processes.

Role Description Development and Application⁴

- Host Organisations complete a role vacancy template which clearly details:
 - The role description focussing on the key attributes or 'soft skills' required for an entry-level role,
 - The process by which applications will be shortlisted, and
 - Where possible, the values of the organisation and any benefits offered e.g. holidays, flexible working and training opportunities.
- The Vacancy template is then submitted to Groundwork UK for approval as part of the due diligence process to ensure that the role is entry-level, that prerequisites are kept to a minimum, and that the language and tone are appropriate to the audience.
- Applicants are then asked to submit an Expression of Interest which consists of three open questions focussing on motivations and career goals and the completion of an equal opportunities form.

Promotion and Outreach

- New to Nature programme partners deploy a national awareness-raising campaign to encourage interest in the New to Nature programme amongst young people from across the target groups.
- The New to Nature Host Organisation partnership mobilise existing national partnerships. E.g. youth and environment sectors and local Jobcentre Plus contacts, and user-led organisations for people with disabilities, encouraging them to share the opportunities with young people and relevant communities.
- Host Organisations proactively promote vacancy through:

⁴ All steps included within Role Description and Application were mandatory for Host Organisations.

- Hosting the Vacancy on their website,
- Generating local interest through partnerships with local organisations – particularly organisations focused on young person engagement and/ or employability support, and organisations working with underrepresented and underserved communities. E.g. colleges, University alumni networks, young carers networks, and local youth employment support providers.

Shortlisting

- Groundwork UK provides Placement Hosts with Expressions of Interest from applicants to be shortlisted.
- When shortlisting applicants, Host Organisations are asked to:
 - Use at least two members of staff to review applications to help highlight and avoid potential unconscious bias,
 - Use the role specification as a basis for shortlisting to demonstrate objectivity,
 - Value experience and qualifications only when they have direct relevance to the specific role,
 - Consider whether lived experience is a relevant criterion in shortlisting selection,
 - Deploy positive action where useful to boost participation but ensure this is not favouring individuals from protected groups.
- Host Organisations then shortlist their preferred candidate(s), providing feedback to Groundwork UK on all candidates.⁵

Interviews and Selection

- The Host Organisation liaises with the New to Nature Employment Coach who can support the recruitment process – either in an advisory capacity or to help facilitate the informal interview process.
- Host Organisations contact shortlisted candidates to invite them to an **informal** interview.
- Within the interview process Host Organisations look to:
 - Offer a range of interview slots over a longer period of time, mirroring flexi-time structures, and relieving time pressure on the panels to select over one day,
 - Offer a choice of online or face-to-face options (considering the payment of travel expenses), with clear instructions on how to join an online interview,

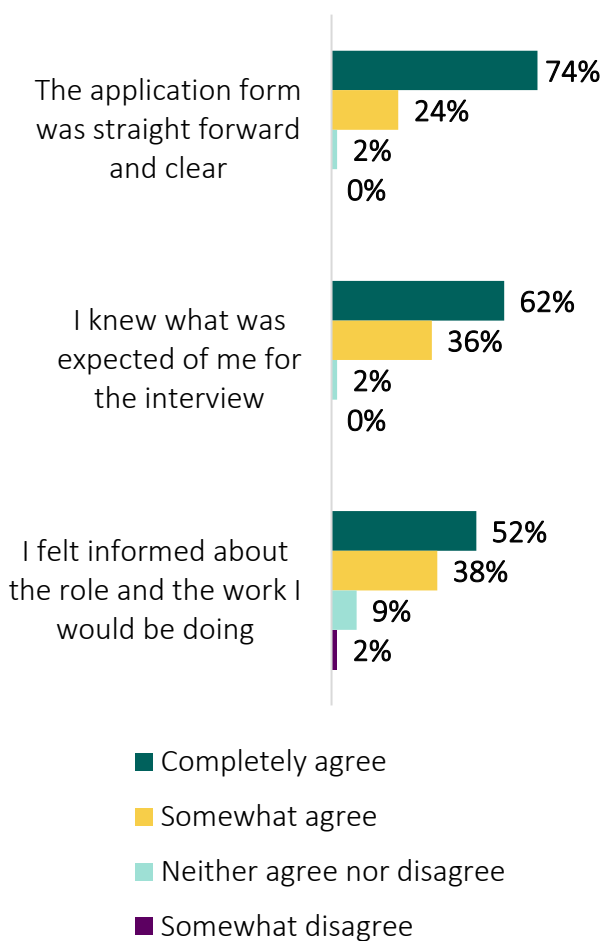
⁵ All Host Organisations were required to submit this information.

- Check whether candidates require additional support for the interview, such as an induction loop or large print,
- Provide candidates with the discussion topics in advance to ensure the environment is conducive to getting 'the best' out of candidates and does not exacerbate existing disparities amongst candidates with protected characteristics,
- Be aware of any bias staff may have in knowing more about an individual's characteristics at interview compared to others.
- Create a welcoming atmosphere, signpost candidates through the process and consider any additional needs.
- Once a Host Organisation has interviewed all shortlisted candidates, they:
 - Undertake a final review and final check of whether all interviews were scored carefully and the decision to award the role made based on these results. If the results are equal between two candidates, is it recommended to apply positive action toward someone who is underrepresented in the workforce or suffers a disadvantage.
 - Ensure all candidates are given the opportunity to receive constructive feedback about their interview on where they could develop the desired skills further.
 - Ensure all candidates are given the opportunity to feedback on their experience of the process.

Trainee Feedback

Figure 3.1 below demonstrates that surveyed trainees were overwhelmingly positive about the New to Nature recruitment process.

Figure 3.1: Thinking about your experience of the recruitment process, to what extent do you agree with the following statements:



Base: New to Nature trainee engagement survey (N=59). Please note that no trainees selected the answer 'Completely disagree'. As a result, it has been excluded from Figure 3.1.

When asked about their experience of applying for their respective roles, trainees commonly said that it was clear, straightforward and a considerable improvement to their previous experiences applying for jobs.

'Honestly, that was the most straightforward, transparent, and responsive job seeking and starting I'd ever experienced.'

Trainee

'The process was really accessible for me, I especially appreciated being given various time and date choices for the interview and being given the questions in advance.' Trainee

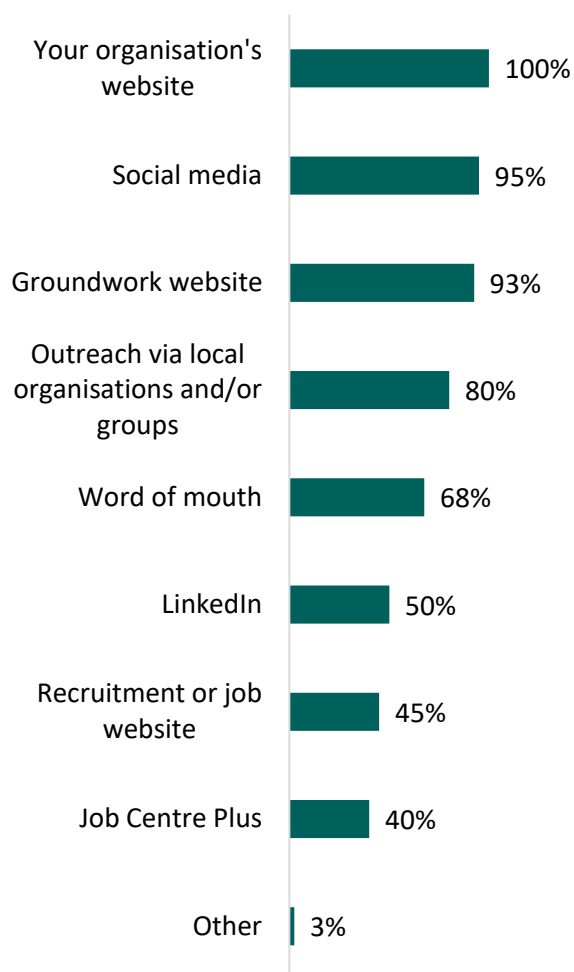
Reflecting on whether there were any challenges they faced in applying for their New to Nature role, the vast majority of trainees said there were no barriers.

In a minority of cases, trainees described the job descriptions as 'vague' and suggested that they would have benefited from more detail on the job role.

Host Organisation Feedback

Figure 3.2. overleaf shows that most surveyed Host Organisations used a range of different recruitment and outreach methods for their New to Nature role. Most Host Organisations, following New to Nature recruitment guidelines, worked with other local organisations and/or groups to recruit a diverse range of candidates.

Figure 3.2: How did you promote your trainee role?



Base: New to Nature Host Organisation engagement survey (N=40). Please note that this question was multiple-choice.

All surveyed Host Organisations bar one (39/40) confirmed that the New to Nature recruitment process was different to their organisation's typical approach.⁶

In particular, Host Organisations commonly reported that previously they promoted roles in a more limited fashion e.g. solely on their organisation website and traditional job site websites such as

⁶One Host Organisation was not sure if the process differed.

Indeed and/or asked for greater personal data through CVs and applications. Host Organisations also frequently suggested that typically they focussed less explicitly on the skills individuals could bring into their organisation.

'[In the previous recruitment process] there was less of a focus on existing technical skills (though these skills are vital to the organisation and to the roles normally offered).' Host Organisation

Reflecting on their experience of using the New to Nature Recruitment process, all surveyed Host Organisations, bar two, felt the approach was effective.⁷ In most cases, the process was seen as effective because Host Organisations received high levels of applications, which led to them interviewing high-level candidates. Many Host Organisations remarked that the number of applications they received through the New to Nature process was considerably higher than they would normally get.

'57 applications for one post is better than our usual rate of applications... recruitment at present can be tough with competition but this is not the case in this particular recruitment' Host Organisation'

⁷ Two Host Organisations reported that they still had difficulty engaging a diverse audience, receiving few or no applications.

We received a number of applications from many well-suited candidates who were from our target audience - which we would not necessarily have received without trying new channels and messaging.’ Host Organisation

Key strengths and key challenges associated with the model, as identified by Host Organisations, are detailed below.

Role Description Development and Application

Anonymising applications and limiting the amount of detail each Host Organisation could see about an individual prior to the interview resulted in some Host Organisations feeling like New to Nature ‘opened up the opportunity’ for a wider range of people.

However, the key challenge articulated by Host Organisations (5/20) in adopting the New to Nature recruitment process was centred on the time it took to implement.

As previously highlighted, a lack of resource and capacity was identified as a key barrier for organisations creating and sustaining a more diverse and inclusive workforce. Host Organisations, whilst generally positive about the recruitment process and what they have learnt from it, suggested that it had taken more time to implement than they had anticipated. This resulted in staff having to take ‘time out’ of delivering core organisation delivery to focus on recruitment.

Additional challenges also arose where Host Organisations were obligated to align

with Local Authority Job Grades and role descriptions.

Whilst Host Organisations were able to overcome this, they suggested that it required considerable internal administration and negotiation.

‘Being a small team, this method took us a lot longer than expected. We spent more than 30 hours on just one of the roles (creating the role, shortlisting, interviewing, etc.). Although for all the right reasons, this diverted us from our core fundraising work.’ Host Organisation

Promotion and Outreach

Host Organisations praised the process of working with partners who were better placed to reach more diverse audiences. This was particularly the case for organisations who cited previously having difficulty attracting a diverse range of applicants.

‘The targeted sharing of the role with key partners that work with [more diverse audiences worked to attract recruits] we were hoping to attract.’ Host Organisation

Working with other organisations and services, in particular local organisations and networks, also allowed Host Organisations to establish new partnerships. This was described as benefitting the sector ‘as a whole’ as it encourages organisations to become better connected in their local area. A minority of Host Organisations suggested

that this will lead to sustainable longer-term partnerships beyond this round of recruitment.

Host Organisations also commonly reported that their applicants commonly came via Groundwork promotion, suggesting that this was a useful mechanism to direct individuals interested in working in the sector towards a particular organisation.

As identified in the role description development stage, limited resource and capacity were cited as key barriers to conducting promotion and outreach activities. However, this appears to have only been a minimal concern, raised by one Host Organisation.

Shortlisting

As outlined above, Host Organisations were commonly positive about the limited amount of information they could see about applicants prior to interview.

‘We liked shortlisting blind (i.e., not seeing the information within the subsequently supplied spreadsheet) as it ensured absolute neutrality. It also meant we interviewed far more people.’
Host Organisation

In these cases, Host Organisations reported that the anonymisation of applications led to them shortlisting individuals with a wider range of skills and backgrounds than was typical for their organisation.

‘[The New to Nature process] opened an opportunity for people with lower levels of technical skills to enter a very technical

niche in the sector.’ Host Organisation

However, in a minority of cases (2/20) Host Organisations suggested that limited detail on candidates at the shortlisting stage could result in the shortlisted candidates being unsuitable for the role. To overcome this, one Host Organisation suggested that they interviewed ‘as many candidates as possible’ to make sure they hired the ‘right’ person.

Interviews and Selection

Providing candidates with substantial detail on what to expect from their interview alongside information on the questions they would be asked and the requirement for all interviews to be ‘informal’ was perceived as a key strength of the New to Nature recruitment model. Host Organisations reported that this helped candidates and interviewers to be at ease during the interview.

After shortlisting, leading up to and during the interview process, there was lots of communication and encouragement [with applicants] e.g. sharing subject areas of questions, choice about interview time and adaptations for any needs. We made the process as informal as possible via meet and greet with younger staff, room layout, and the dress code which was relaxed but professional. [We tried] to give a sense of what our working environment is like. It’s really important to us how people are made to feel on the day. We focus a lot on engaging with people positively. We have

adapted some of our template correspondence [for recruitment interviews] and will be using those moving forward.’ Host Organisation

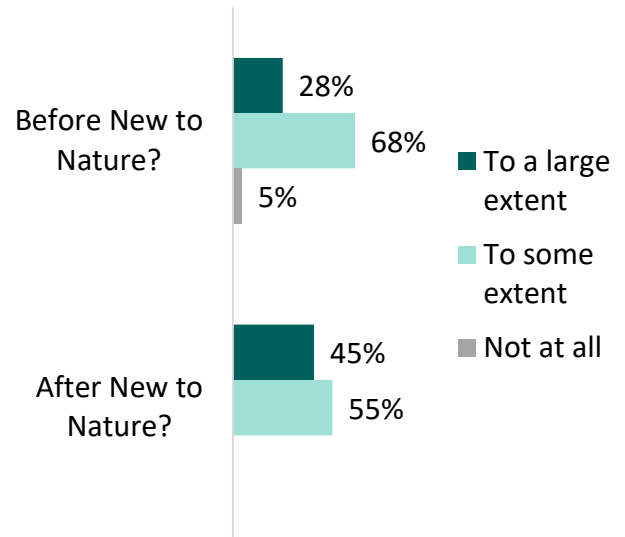
By creating a more supportive and less formal environment, Host Organisations suggested that they were able to remove barriers for applicants which allowed individuals to ‘come as they are.’

Overall, reflecting on the inclusivity of their organisation’s recruitment processes, Host Organisations commonly reported that the New to Nature programme has had a positive impact.

‘We received some absolutely brilliant applications from candidates we wouldn't usually reach. The recommended process allowed us to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for applicants and allowed them to gain confidence and experience, even if ultimately they were unsuccessful in getting the position.’ Host Organisation

Figure 3.4 depicts a positive trend in organisations’ perceptions of their recruitment process pre- and post-recruiting via New to Nature.

Figure 3.4: To what extent was/is your organisation’s recruitment process inclusive and encouraging of a diverse range of applicants...



Base: New to Nature Host Organisation engagement survey (N=40).

Survey responses suggest that whilst there is more to do to embed new or amended recruitment processes within respective organisations, New to Nature has aided learning and encouraged organisations to take new approaches which will benefit them in the future.

Reflections and Top Tips

Utilising new ways of reaching applicants was perceived by Host Organisations as the most successful aspect of the New to Nature recruitment process.

When asked what promotion activities they would recommend to other organisations they said:

- Reaching out to local organisations you may not have worked with before to encourage word of mouth promotion and get to know which local networks may work with groups you are wanting to engage with.
- Work with umbrella organisations or networks that support and/or work with specifically with individuals from underrepresented groups to promote job opportunities,
- Reach out to local universities, colleges and other educational settings to utilise their networks to promote job opportunities.

Host Organisations largely saw an increase in the number of applications they received from underrepresented groups as a result of the New to Nature recruitment process. However, it is important to highlight that, for many organisations, this was a resource and time intensive process.

Key considerations for other organisations looking to undertake a similar recruitment process include:

- Internal processes including pay scales and job descriptions which may be difficult to amend or align with best practice guidance.
- Staff will need to be clear on how to implement positive action and ensure due process demonstrates that this action boosts participation in the recruitment process but does not favour candidates because of their personal characteristics.
- Considerable time will be required by staff to fulfil obligations made by using this approach. This includes time to:
 - Develop new job specifications which use inclusive language and avoid jargon,
 - Reach and engage existing and new partners to utilise new channels through which to engage prospective applicants,
 - Refine interview processes to ensure that the environment feels supportive and applicants are sufficiently guided through the process.
 - Provide feedback to all candidates and offer the opportunity for candidates to feedback on the process.