

# EQUALITY DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

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**Enabling Strategy**

**2024 - 2027**



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# INTRODUCTION

## **Welcome to our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy.**

Being person centred, and recognising, valuing, and meeting individual needs are central to Bridgewater’s mission and values. These commitments are embedded within the Trust’s Communities Matter Strategy and People Strategy, both published in 2023 and detailing the commitments and actions that the Trust will take for its patients, communities, and workforce.

The Trust first published an Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy in 2019. Since that time the NHS has experienced an increased focus on the importance of equality and inclusion, both for patients and communities, and for its workforce. Equality, diversity, and inclusion in 2024 takes its rightful place across the NHS as a golden strand throughout employment, service delivery, patient safety, digital enhancement, and environmental commitments.

In the last three years the NHS has published the NHS People Plan, Our NHS People Promise, the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan, the NHS Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Improvement Plan, Patient Safety Incident Response Framework, the NHS Long Term Plan, and Core20Plus5, amongst others. Equality runs throughout each of these documents.

This Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy 2024 – 2027 provides a brief update on our progress over the last three years; gives a brief overview of the legal, contractual, and voluntary commitments in service delivery and employment; details the equality objective and commitments set out in our Communities Matter Strategy and People Strategy; and provides an overview of the Trust’s planned approach to deliver objective five as set out in Communities Matter Strategy and Priority three of the People Strategy.

**From Colin Scales (Chief Executive Officer) and Paula Woods (Director of People & Organisational Development)**



Colin Scales  
Chief Executive



Paula Woods  
Director of People &  
Organisational Development

## COMMUNITIES MATTER : OUR STRATEGY

**Published in 2023 the Communities Matter Strategy is aligned with objectives and priorities identified at regional level by Cheshire and Merseyside, and Greater Manchester Integrated Care Systems.**

The Strategy recognises that it matters where people live, as community relates to inequalities, and to strength and resilience.

Greater Manchester, and Cheshire and Merseyside are both Marmot regions, committed to partnership working across organisational boundaries to address the social determinants of health. [All Together Fairer](#) in Cheshire and Merseyside focuses on seven recommendations for health equity, including partnerships, community involvement, and strengthening leadership and workforce. In Greater Manchester's [Build Back Fairer](#) the six recommendations include actions on ill health prevention, improved employment opportunities, and universal access to services. As an NHS provider Trust in both these regions we are mindful of these commitments in every area of Trust business.

The Communities Matter Strategy is detailed on page 16. Six strategic objectives have been identified. Number five focuses specifically on equality, diversity, and inclusion.

## PEOPLE STRATEGY

The People Strategy, also published in 2023, is an enabling strategy to support achievement of the aims and objectives of Communities Matter. In its development the People Strategy aligned to both the PEOPLE values of the Trust, and the national NHS Long Term Plan, NHS People Plan, and the NHS Our People Promise.

Priority three of the People Strategy focuses specifically on equality, diversity, and inclusion, with the following pledge:

**We will attract and recruit a diverse workforce who aspire to work within an innovative community healthcare integrated organisation and our recruitment will select those who align to our inclusive culture and our future plans for community services (collaboration and integration).**



## Why is equality, diversity & inclusion important?

**Equality**, or equity, is about fair treatment. As a Trust we believe that quality employment opportunities and health care services should be accessible for all, and that by recognising and meeting individual need we can create fairness of opportunity.

**Diversity** is about recognising, respecting, and valuing difference, whether that is background, experience, identity, or belief. It is also about recognising the value that diversity brings to teams in the delivery of excellent patient care.

**Inclusion** is about belonging; feeling valued, welcomed, supported, and enabled to be your true self as you reach for your personal goals.

**Inequalities** are the preventable, unfair, and unjust differences between individuals, communities, or populations whether in health, employment, housing, education, or economic stability.

Inequalities affect lives, they determine the risk of people getting ill, their ability to prevent sickness and proactively make healthy life choices, and their opportunities to take action and access treatment when ill health occurs.

Within the regions that the Trust serves there is a diverse population, and within this population there is no one contributing factor that leads to inequity in health. The [Marmot Social Determinates of Health](#) outline inequality throughout the life cycle from birth to death, with many factors being out of the direct control of the NHS. But it is well evidenced that having one or more protected characteristic can contribute to inequality in health; with barriers to access, experience of discrimination and harassment, and failings in providing support for individual need all impacting on the life expectancy and healthy life expectancy of some groups.

Employment is a determinate of health equity, with opportunities for quality, stable, and supportive employment impacting positively on health and wellbeing, and on the wider social determinates of health for whole families.

As an employer and provider of public health care services, the Trust believes that equality is central to all it does, and that all staff have a role to play in developing and embedding equality, inclusion, and a value of diversity across the organisation.

# WHERE WE ARE

**Since the publication of our last Strategy there has been positive progress in implementing and embedding programmes and practices that support equality.**

**These include:**

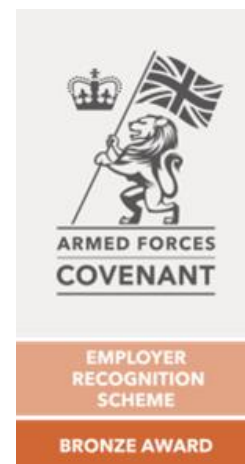
- Board development and staff Leader in Me events in support of the Trust's commitment to the North West NHS Anti-Racist Framework.
- Delivery of equality training to operational managers, first line managers, and learners in practice.
- A reduction in formal disciplinarys following the Trust commitment to a Just and Learning Culture, which has included ambassador training, and updated induction, policies, processes, and communications.
- Development of the Civility and Respect Programme, aligned to equality, diversity and inclusion, and the Violence Prevention and Reduction Standard.
- Development of a Trust Behavioural Framework for all staff - the core behaviours expected of every member of staff, aligned to the Trust's PEOPLE Values.
- Early adoption of the new regional Wellbeing Policy, including support for disabilities, menopause, and carers.
- The establishment of executive sponsored Staff Support Networks for carers, menopause, race inclusion, disability, sexual orientation, and gender diversity.
- Development of gender diversity, carers, menopause, and armed forces policies and toolkits.
- Centralisation of a reasonable adjustments budget for disabled staff.
- Trust leadership of the national Stay or Go research - retention in the NHS post Covid 19 pandemic research.
- A guaranteed interview scheme for any applicant who meets the essential criteria for a role and indicates through NHS Jobs that they are disabled or an armed forces community member.
- A partnership delivery of a six-month pilot Reciprocal Mentoring for Inclusion Programme with Liverpool John Moores University.
- Successful apprenticeship recruitment programmes for 'growing our own workforce' from within our diverse communities. More than 150 staff have so far completed or are undertaking apprenticeships, supported by our commitment to

a substantive role on successful completion, along with salaries paid through the national Agenda for Change pay scheme.

- A campaign to encourage flexible working. There are options open to all staff and applicants.
- Embedding of equality impact assessments within the quality impact assessment decision making process for service changes.
- Community engagement with minoritised groups post pandemic, including care leavers, military veterans, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community organisations, and disability groups.
- Embedding of the regional quality standard for language interpretation.
- Establishment of an Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Working Group, and a Health Equity Group to support the delivery of evidence-based projects for staff and for patients/communities.
- Successful accreditation as:
  - Disability Confident Leaders
  - Veteran Aware
  - Navajo LGBT Charter Mark
  - Defence Employers Recognition Scheme bronze



Merseyside & Cheshire LGBTIQA Chartermark



## Staff Networks

The Trust has active voluntary Staff Networks that support our diverse workforce, providing a safe space for staff to have real, honest conversations on work-life experience, highlighting both areas for improvement and areas of success. Staff Networks are essential for enhancing a culture of inclusivity, ensuring people feel able to bring their whole selves to work and contribute to improving life at work for under-represented groups and individuals.

Our current Networks, which are supported by the Trust and Executive Team, are the Carers Support Network, Enabled Network, LGBTQIA+ Staff Network (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and questioning, with the + recognising the wider diversity of identities), Menopause Support Network, and Race Inclusion Network.



### LGBTQIA+ Network

For staff who identify with the diversity of gender and sexual identities.



### ENABLED Network

For disabled staff, and those with neurodivergent diagnosis, long term conditions, or mental health challenges.



### Carers Support Network

For staff who provide unpaid care for loved ones with additional needs.



### Paths to Parenthood

A family friendly network for staff experiencing fertility challenges, baby loss, or other routes to parenthood.



### Race Inclusion Network

For all staff who identify with Black, Asian, and white UK minority ethnicities.



### Menopause Support Network

For staff experiencing the varying challenges of peri and post menopause.



## Legal and contractual requirements

The Trust works within legal and contractual requirements that guide all equality work within the Trust. Due regard to these requirements underpins all design and delivery of the actions that support achievement of our equality objectives.

In brief these requirements are:

The Equality Act 2010 - Public Sector Equality Duty

- General Equality Duty: Due regard to three aims:
  - Elimination of discrimination, harassment, victimisation
  - Advancing equality of opportunity
  - Fostering good relations
- Specific Duties:
  - Annual Public Sector Equality Duty reporting
  - Equality objectives setting at least every four years.
  - Annual gender pay gap reporting.

The Human Rights Act 1998

The Health and Social Care Acts (2006, 2012, and 2022)

The Armed Forces Act 2022

The NHS Accessible Information Standard (DCB 1605)

The NHS People Plan

The NHS Our People Promise

The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan

The NHS Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Improvement Plan

The NHS Long Term Plan, and Core20Plus5

The Equality Delivery System (EDS)

The Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES). This also includes:

- The Medical Workforce Race Equality Standard (MWRES)
- The Bank Workforce Race Equality Standard (BWRES)

WRES: A Model Employer

The Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES)

The NHS Sexual Orientation Monitoring Information Standard (DCB 2094)

The NHS Standard Contract (Service Conditions Section 13 Equity of Access, Equality and Non-Discrimination)

## Voluntary commitments

In addition to the legal and contractual obligations above, the Trust is also committed to the following voluntary accreditations. These externally assessed accreditations allow for a focused approach in relation to protected characteristic groups and the individual barriers, access needs, and inequalities that are generally associated with a protected characteristic group.

- The **NHS North West Anti-Racist Framework** is a key focus for the Trust. The Trust Board made a commitment to the original Framework in 2022 and reaffirmed this commitment to the refreshed Framework in 2023. The Framework has bronze to gold levels of attainment, with specific priorities and deliverables aligned to each level. Through active and ongoing engagement, and co-creation of actions, the Trust is committed to working alongside ethnically diverse and minoritised staff to deliver meaningful and relevant actions that support Trust progress in the Framework.
- **Disability Confident** is a national framework for equality of opportunity in employment for disabled people. The Trust has for several years been committed to Disability Confident and is working in co-design of action plans with disabled staff to be a Disability Confident Leader.
- The Trust was first awarded **Veteran Aware** accreditation in February 2023, and is committed to continuous improvement in engagement, service delivery, and high quality, responsive employment opportunities for members of the armed forces community. In addition, the Trust was awarded **Defence Employers Recognition Scheme Bronze** in 2022, and action plans align both accreditations to support improvement and progression in these schemes.
- The **Navajo LGBT+ Charter Mark** is a regional accreditation for equitable employment and service delivery for people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, non-binary, and other identities for gender and sexual orientation. Following the first award in 2018 the Trust has been proud to continue to support these diverse communities and is committed to working in partnership to continue to improve over the coming years.
- The **NHS Sexual Safety in Healthcare Charter** was published in 2023. As a signatory the Trust is committed to a zero acceptance of unwanted, inappropriate, and/or harmful sexual behaviours in the workplace and to the implementation of ten core principles to support achievement of this aim.
- Also in 2023, the Trust signed the **Care Leavers Covenant**, a national programme that supports young people leaving care to live independently through five core areas that include health and wellbeing, and employment.

# EQUALITY STRATEGY

The Trust's equality objective is to *'ensure that equality, diversity, and inclusion are at the heart of what we do, and we will create compassionate and inclusive conditions for staff and patients.'*

To achieve this objective there are four deliverables set out in the Communities Matter Strategy, and these are supported by 11 commitments within the People Strategy. These are mapped against the legal, contractual, and voluntary commitments below for information:

<b>Communities Matter - Equality Objective</b>	<b>People Strategy – Equality Commitments</b>	<b>Mapping</b>
<p>1 We will build a culture that champions equality, diversity, and inclusion, supporting and developing our people to provide compassionate and culturally competent care to our patients and each other.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review our recruitment and promotion practices to make sure that staffing levels reflect the diversity of the communities that we serve.</li> <li>• Work to reduce any ethnicity gaps in formal disciplinary and grievances processes.</li> <li>• Become an 'Employer of Choice' across all staff groups, by offering a modern employment culture, harnessing a bespoke approach to local, regional, national, and international labour markets.</li> <li>• Develop a unique and flexible employment package to attract the best talent.</li> <li>• Identify our 'difficult to recruit' posts and create bespoke</li> </ul>	<p>Equality Act 2010 - Public Sector Equality Duty. Human Rights Act 1998. The Armed Forces Act 2022. NHS Long Term Workforce Plan. NHS Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Improvement Plan. Equality Delivery System Domain 2. Workforce Race Equality Standard. Including Medical and Bank Standards. WRES: A Model Employer. The Workforce Disability Equality Standard. The NHS Sexual Orientation Monitoring Information Standard (DCB 2094). Disability Confident. NHS North West Anti-Racist Framework.</p>

		<p>recruitment campaigns to address these.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review best practice and ensure our 'offer' is reflective and responsive to the organisation's needs.</li> <li>• Maximise our workforce intelligence to fully understand our workforce profile to inform workforce planning, utilising Population Centric Workforce Planning approaches.</li> <li>• Develop our on-boarding approach so that we appeal to staff with protected characteristics because we have adopted an inclusive approach to our recruitment, and we enhance the induction and preceptorship and support to all new staff.</li> <li>• Embedding equality, inclusion and diversity as fundamental principles in all activities affecting current and future workforce.</li> </ul>	<p>Navajo LGBT+ Charter.  Defence Employers Recognition Scheme.  Veteran Aware.  NHS Sexual Safety in Healthcare Charter.  Care Leavers Charter.</p>
2	<p>We will be proactive in anticipating the diversity of our patient needs and will respond to them to ensure we achieve the best outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete Quality Impact Assessments (QIA) for any fundamental changes made to our workforce and service delivery, ensuring the quality of</li> </ul>	<p>Equality Act 2010 - Public Sector Equality Duty.  Human Rights Act 1998.  Armed Forces Act 2022.  NHS Long Term Plan.  Core20Plus5.</p>

		care we deliver is not adversely affected.	<p>Equality Delivery System Domain 1.</p> <p>NHS Accessible Information Standard.</p> <p>NHS Sexual Orientation Monitoring Standard.</p> <p>NHS North West Anti-Racist Framework.</p> <p>Navajo LGBT+ Charter.</p> <p>Veteran Aware.</p> <p>Care Leavers Charter.</p>
3	We will become an Anchor Institute in the community and will take our social and environmental responsibility seriously, addressing the socio-economic determinants of health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tackle health inequalities within our communities and strive to improve the quality of their lives and access to employment and services.</li> </ul>	<p>Equality Act 2010 – Public Sector Equality Duty.</p> <p>Armed Forces Act 2022.</p> <p>NHS Long Term Plan.</p> <p>Core20Plus5.</p> <p>NHS Long Term Workforce Plan.</p> <p>NHS Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Improvement Plan.</p> <p>Equality Delivery System Domain 3.</p>
4	We will improve the reach of our organisation and grow our standing in the community through local partnerships.		<p>NHS Long Term Plan.</p> <p>Core20Plus5.</p> <p>Equality Delivery System.</p>

## Delivering our equality objective – our equality strategy

Delivery of equality work in the Trust from 2024 will primarily be through the newly established Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Working Group, a collective of staff from across the organisation with a passion and determination to embed effective and lasting equality actions that support the achievement of Trust objectives.

Governance and oversight is within the well-established structures in place, up to and including the Board.

Engagement in design and delivery of actions is fundamental to the Trust. The Trust's equality strategy is to ensure that in the design and delivery of every action there will be four stages:

- **Research** – developing a robust evidence base to better understand the bias, barriers, and also best practice that impact negatively or positively on equality and inclusion.
- **Collaboration and design** – increase the diversity of voices in planning to support the co-creation of impactful and transformative actions.
- **Implementation and monitoring** – develop ongoing peer review processes to support monitoring of progress and impact, and adjustment where necessary.
- **Evaluation and next steps** – review of final impact through data and engagement, and consideration of next steps, whether closure of an action, refresh of an action, or creation of a new action.

## Measuring and evaluating progress

Collaboration is at the heart of our Equality Strategy, and measuring of progress and evaluation of impact are key to ensuring our actions deliver the intended real and lasting positive impacts on staff, patients, and communities.

The Trust has mandated equality reporting requirements that will support ongoing measurement of impact, and individual work programmes will have their own milestones and evaluation, but collectively the main tools that will be used include (but are not limited to):

- Information reported and monitored against our statutory/mandatory requirements, including Gender Pay Gap, Workforce Race and Disability Equality Standards, and the Equality Delivery System.
- External best practice accreditations - for example, the North West Anti-Racist Framework, Disability Confident, Navajo LGBT+ Charter Mark, and Veteran Aware.
- Staff survey responses (annual and quarterly pulse staff surveys).

- People Performance Indicators such as turnover, sickness absence rates, performance and appraisal rates, and training uptake.
- Patient feedback, including the complaints process.
- Feedback from Staff Networks, safe space discussions, and lunch and learn sessions.
- Feedback from other staff engagement activities, including Time to Talk executive sessions.
- Feedback from exit interviews.
- Monitoring of employee relations cases.
- Community engagement.

Each of these measurement tools and approaches should support monitoring and evaluation of progress, with successes evidenced within the legal and voluntary reporting frameworks detailed previously.

## Contact details

Thank you for reading our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy 2024 – 2027. If you have any questions or comments, or if you require this information in another format please contact:

Ruth Besford (Equality & Inclusion Manager)

[ruth.besford@nhs.net](mailto:ruth.besford@nhs.net)

# Communities Matter

Creating stronger, healthier, happier communities.

## Our Mission

We will improve health, health equity, wellbeing and prosperity across local communities by providing person centred care in collaboration with our partners.

## Our Values



## Our Strategic Objectives

### QUALITY

We will deliver high quality services in a safe, inclusive environment where our patients, families, carers and staff work together to continually improve how they are delivered.

### HEALTH EQUITY

We will collaborate with partners and communities to improve equity in health outcomes and focus on the needs of those who are vulnerable and at-risk.

### STAFF

We will ensure the Trust is a great place to work by creating an environment for our staff to develop, grow and thrive.

### RESOURCES

We will ensure that we use our resources in a sustainable and effective way.

### EDI

We will ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of what we do, and we will create compassionate and inclusive conditions for patients and staff.

### PARTNERSHIPS

We will work in close collaboration with partners and their staff in place, and across the system to deliver the best possible care and positive impact in local communities.

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