



Equality and Diversity: creating an inclusive workplace

**A guide for Managers in Partnership
representatives and members**

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About this guide

MiP has produced a series of guides for MiP members. They are intended for MiP members as managers, representatives, and individuals.

The guides are being produced as a series to make the connections between them and allow space for each to be sufficiently explored.

The guides are intended as an introduction to each topic including an overview of key concepts. They will provide signposts to frameworks, resources, and sources of information and advice.

As well as being of practical use in the workplace, it is hoped they will stimulate conversations – both informal and structured – about the issues involved.

Equality and diversity in the NHS

- Inclusion is one of the NHS's core values and is dependent on equal treatment. The diversity of the NHS workforce underlines the significance of building and sustaining a culture of inclusion.
- In 2015, an independent report commissioned from the King's Fund by NHS England concluded that very little progress had been made over two decades to address discrimination against BME staff in the NHS.
- The report also cited evidence of discrimination experienced by many other groups including women, LGBT staff, disabled people, and religious groups.
- Though efforts in relation to equality and diversity have continued across the NHS, much remains to be done. Data from the 2023 NHS staff survey for England shows that over 9% of staff reported experiencing discrimination at work from managers and colleagues and 8.48% from patients and service users. In the last five years, there has been a gradual increase.
- Racism continues to be a consistent issue. A 2024 report 'Too hot to handle, why concerns about racism are not heard or acted on' (BRAP and KLINE.R) found that staff who have raised concerns about race discrimination, only 5.4% said they were taken seriously and that the problem was dealt with satisfactorily. 41.8% of respondents left their jobs as a result of treatment.
- Research by the Nuffield Trust suggests that the problem begins prior to employment. The trust has examined data on people applying for and being shortlisted and appointed to NHS jobs in England in the two years up to June 2019. It provided 'a clear signal' that those with white ethnicity were more likely than those from ethnic minorities to be shortlisted and appointed.

- Equal treatment matters because discrimination is bad for individuals and for the NHS as a whole. Day to day it can have a detrimental impact on wellbeing, performance, and, if unresolved, may drive talent out of the NHS.
- From an organisational perspective, discrimination can result in failure to utilise valuable skills and experience. Where claims are made, it can result in significant costs in legal fees and settlements. This is why challenging discrimination and removing barriers matters. It can also have a detrimental impact on patient care as demonstrated by research led by Kline (2014).

'There is a clear and compelling need to cultivate a more diverse and effective NHS leadership. The moral arguments against discrimination are clear. The human costs are huge. And the impact on patient care is clearly negative and substantial. West et al, King's Fund, 2015

Equality and diversity across the NHS

- Across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland there are different approaches, strategies and programmes on equality and diversity:
 - > In **England**, the NHS Equality and Diversity Council ‘works to bring people and organisations together to realise a vision for a personal, fair and diverse health and care system, where everyone counts, and the values of the NHS Constitution are brought to life.’ It has a membership made up representatives from across the NHS, partner organisations, as well as from patient, carer, and staff groups, including trade union representatives.
 - > NHS Employers, the employers’ organisation for the NHS in England, has a Diversity and in health and care partners programme which was established to support health and social care organisations to integrate and embed diversity.
 - > The Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) programme was established in 2015. It requires organisations employing the NHS workforce in England to report against nine indicators of race equality; and supports continuous improvement through robust action planning to tackle the root causes of discrimination.
 - > The Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES) is a set of ten specific measures (metrics) which enables NHS organisations in England to compare the workplace and career experiences of Disabled and non-disabled staff.

- > In **Scotland**, NHS Education for Scotland (NES), an education and training body, and a national health board within NHS Scotland, publishes equality outcomes and mainstreaming priorities which set out the improvements it wants to make. It also carries out equalities impact assessments with the aim of eliminating discrimination and promoting equality.
- > In **Wales**, prior to the passage of the Equality Act 2010, the NHS Centre for Equality and Human Rights produced a toolkit for carrying out equality impact assessments. Both the NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership and Public Health Wales have undertaken inclusion initiatives and set equality objectives.
- > In **Northern Ireland**, the Department of Health has an Equality Scheme which sets out how it fulfils its statutory equality duties and is reviewed on a five yearly basis.
- > The NHS Confederation, which has members across **England, Wales** and **Northern Ireland** has an equality, diversity and inclusion programme. The programme has three key aims relating to accountability, leadership and equity, each with measurable outcomes. It is underpinned by three networks for BME, Women and LGBTQ+ leaders.

What do we mean by equality, diversity, and inclusion?

- Equality, diversity, and inclusion are often referred to together but while they go hand in hand, they are different. Understanding the relationship between them is key to organisational strategy and policy.
- The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) offers helpful guidance as to what each term means:
 - > **Equality** means affording everyone in the workforce equal rights and opportunities. In the UK, this must include groups with specific characteristics who are protected from direct and indirect discrimination in the workplace in the 2010 Equality Act.
 - > **Diversity** is about recognising difference with a team or organisation. It involves acknowledging the benefit of having a range of perspectives and experiences in decision making and of having a workforce that reflects an organisation's customers or service users.
 - > **Equity** recognises that treating everyone in a diverse workforce equally has shortcomings when the playing field is not level. An equity approach emphasises that everyone should be treated according to their own needs.
 - > **Inclusion** is often defined as the extent to which everyone at work, regardless of their background, identity, or circumstance, feels valued, accepted, and supported to succeed at work.

- Creating a genuinely inclusive workplace however requires a whole workforce approach. While enabling voice and increasing representation for specific diverse groups is an important element of any inclusion strategy, such actions will not of themselves create inclusion.
- ACAS, the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, defines an inclusive workplace as one where everyone feels valued at work and all employees feel safe to: come up with different ideas; raise issues and suggestions to managers, knowing this is encouraged; try doing things differently to how they have been done before, with management approval.
- The CIPD has argued for a reframing of the diversity and inclusion conversation on the basis that inclusion transcends diversity and must be a core outcome measure of employee experience.

'Inclusion is fundamentally about individual experience and allowing everyone at work to contribute and feel a part of an organisation, not the practice of 'including' diverse groups in the workplace. It's clear that while related, inclusive practices can't be rebranded diversity programmes.'

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2019

Equality legislation

England, Scotland, and Wales

- The Equality Act 2010¹, provides legal protection from discrimination at work and in wider society, including the delivery of public services. It replaced previous ant-discrimination laws in a single Act.
- Under the Act it is against the law to discriminate against someone on the grounds of one of nine 'protected characteristics'
 - **Age** – a person belonging to a particular age group
 - **Disability** – a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities.
 - **Gender reassignment** – the process of transitioning from one sex to another
 - **Marriage and civil partnership** – between opposite sex and same sex couples.
 - **Pregnancy and maternity** – being pregnant or expecting a baby and the period after the birth of a baby during maternity leave.
 - **Race** – a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

¹ *Source:* <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics>

- **Religion and belief** - any religion, including a lack of religion, and any religious or philosophical belief, including a lack of belief.
- **Sex** – a man or a woman.
- **Sexual orientation** – whether a person’s sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.
- The Act includes a ‘public sector equality duty’ which requires public sector employers, including the NHS, to have ‘due regard’ to the need to:
 - Stop unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - Promote equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Northern Ireland

- Unlike in Wales and Scotland, anti-discrimination legislation is devolved in Northern Ireland where historically there has been a strong focus on religious discrimination. The law in Northern Ireland protects people on the same range of grounds as England, Scotland and Wales with the addition of political opinion.
- Like Great Britain, Northern Ireland has a single equality commission, established under the 1998 Northern Ireland Act which also includes duties to encourage public authorities to address inequalities. However, anti-discrimination law is not consolidated into a single act.
- Public authorities must have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group. In practice this entails very strict recruitment practices which are monitored by the Equality Commission.
- Despite the similarity in coverage, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland points out that there are significant gaps in equality law between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. These gaps widened following the introduction of the 2010 Equality Act.
- According to the Commission, individuals in Northern Ireland have less protection against discrimination and harassment than people in other parts of the United Kingdom.

What drives and shapes inclusion?

- Research demonstrates that while policies and practices matter, they cannot create or guarantee inclusion. Values, beliefs, and social norms also contribute significantly to inclusion.
- Pless and Maak (2004) offer four foundational principles for an inclusive diversity culture:
 - > **Recognition** – emotional, legal, and political recognition of difference combined with solidarity enables the ability to be oneself and different but equal.
 - > **Reciprocity** – enabling everyone, including previously marginalised voices, to share their views and ideas, fostering a shared identity.
 - > **Trust** – building closeness and collaboration between groups, and integrity based on self- governance, moral character, and a recognition of diversity.
 - > **Intercultural perspective** – demonstration of the need for shared moral principles across and beyond cultural boundaries – borne out of recognition, reciprocity, and trust.
- Turning specifically to the NHS, West et al. (2015) argue that organisational culture can drive inclusion or discrimination and harassment. They note that respect and kindness, at the core of inclusive culture, are associated with high quality healthcare. They emphasise the importance of making a difference at individual, team and organisational level and identify six elements to building inclusive culture:
 - > Vision and values – an inclusive organisational identity can

foster a sense of belonging but needs to be based on action rather than words alone.

- > Objectives and performance feedback – clarity of roles, responsibilities and goals, and regular feedback within small teams all help to create an atmosphere in which discrimination is minimised.
- > People management, engagement, and positivity – respectful, supportive, and caring relationships between managers, staff and patients/service users, the avoidance of overwork, stress and blame, and a positive emotional environment.
- > Quality improvement and innovation – quality improvement, learning and innovation are enhanced by a strong emphasis on valuing and encouraging the diversity of voices within an organisation.
- > Team and team-based working – working in teams promotes collaboration, support, and inclusion which benefits staff and patients/service users.
- > Collective leadership – shared leadership within teams, collaboration across boundaries, and supportive and enabling leadership styles.

Taking action to build inclusion

- Culture is one of five areas where the CIPD suggests organisation can take action to build inclusion:
 - > **Involve employees**
 - Make inclusion relevant to people in every job role at all levels of the organisation
 - Work with employee group to raise awareness and promote alliances
 - > **Develop line manager capability**
 - Examine recruitment and progression trends to address any bias
 - Embed inclusion in line manager training and development
 - > **Build senior commitment**
 - Be active champions and sponsors of inclusion activities
 - Develop awareness and understand of their own biases
 - Act as role models for inclusive behaviour
 - > **Evaluate policies and practices**
 - Consider ways to improve formal and informal mechanisms
 - Create specific policies and practices to support group and individual needs
 - Embed inclusion in practices, communicate policies and use organisational data to review implementation
 - > **Examine organisational culture, climate, and values**
 - Work with all employees to understand norms and values, perceptions of difference, and their role in inclusion?
 - Evaluate people practices through an inclusion 'lens'
 - Ensure senior leaders support inclusion, role-model inclusive behaviour and value difference

Measuring equality, diversity, and inclusion

Foundational principles of inclusion

Recognition

Reciprocity

Trust

Intercultural
perspective



Inclusive culture in organisations

Vision and
values

Objectives
and
feedback

People
management
and
engagement

Quality and
innovation

Teams and
team based
working

Collective



Taking action to build inclusion

Promote
involvement

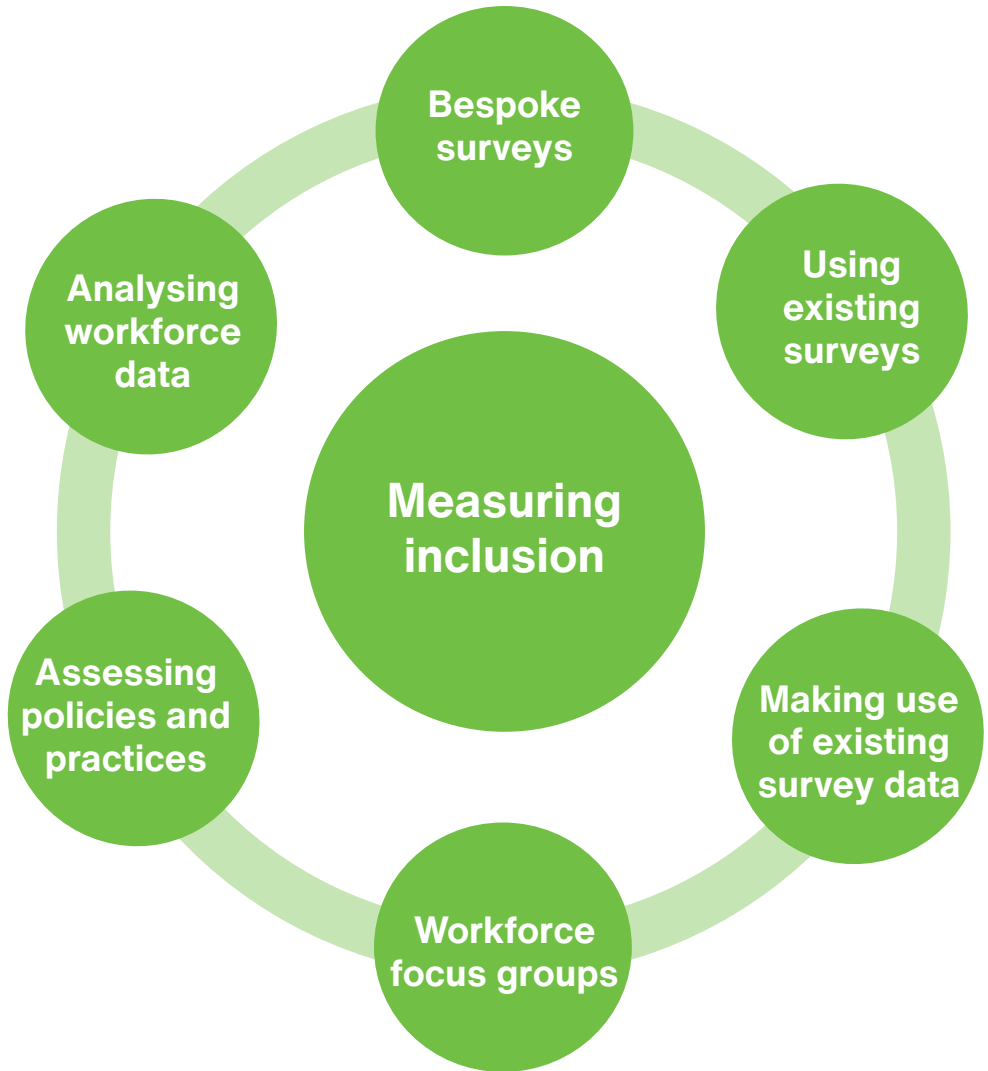
Ensure
management
capability

Build senior
commitment

Evaluate
policy and
practice

Examine
culture and
climate

- The measurement of inclusion is vital, but it is also complex. It requires a multi-faceted approach, including the rigorous collection and analysis of a range of quantitative and qualitative data which must be representative of the whole workforce.
 - The CIPD suggests six key elements to measuring inclusion:
 - > **Bespoke surveys** - measuring individual perceptions of inclusion
 - > **Utilising existing surveys** – adding inclusion questions on issues such as opportunities for voice, feelings of belonging, and organisational values
 - > **Making use of existing survey data** – using diversity metrics to analyse questions which may provide indicators of inclusion
 - > **Convening workforce focus groups** – as a means of exploring and surfacing particular issues
 - > **Assessing people management policies and practices and line management capability** - for example by using appraisal or 360 feedback data
 - > **Analyse existing workforce data** – as a means of uncover barriers to inclusion by, for example looking at trends relating to recruitment, promotion, and retention
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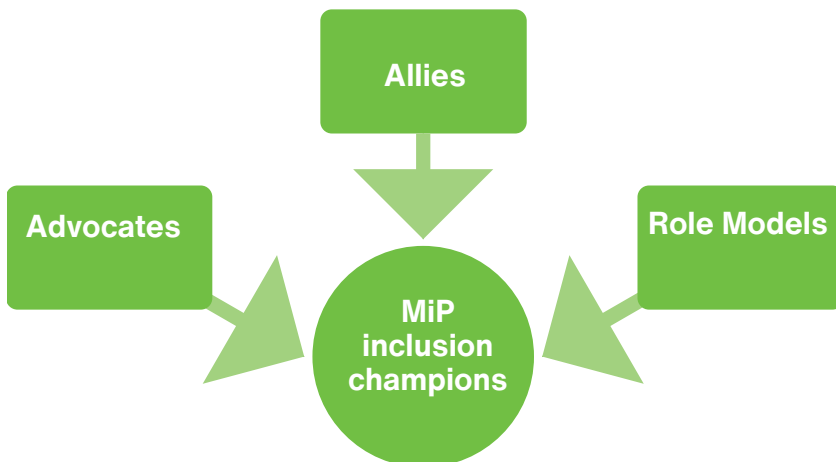


What role can MiP play?

- MiP is in a unique position to challenge discrimination and promote inclusion. As a union which represents managers it has an ear to both the top and bottom of the organisation.
- MiP can play a role through both collective action and individual representation:
 - > Promoting understanding and awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion amongst the workforce
 - > Working with senior leaders across the NHS to ensure inclusion is embedded at all levels
 - > Ensuring that organisational commitments to inclusion are properly implemented and resourced – challenging gaps in implementation
 - > Ensuring that interventions are responsive to local contexts and circumstances, and shaped by people’s lived experiences
 - > Supporting employee groups and networks for women, Black and minority ethnic workers, LGBT+ workers, and disabled workers
 - > Supporting individual members facing discrimination and harassment through advice, support and formal representation

What can MiP members do?

- Whatever capacity you are acting in – as a representatives or link member, as a manager or colleague – you can help to promote inclusion in your workplace.
- In a variety of ways, MiP members can be **champions for inclusion** in the workplace every day:
 - > You can be an **advocate** – by promoting inclusion within the workplace and enabling people to be their authentic selves
 - > You can be an **ally** – by supporting colleagues challenging discrimination and harassment
 - > You can be a **role model** – by demonstrating inclusive behaviours and weaving them into everything you do



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FURTHER RESOURCES: There are a variety of resources relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion available on the MiP, FDA, Unison, TUC and ACAS websites.



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