

EDI

Completion Report 2023-2025

Outward EDI Strategy Completion
report and forward view



- engaging
- enabling
- empowering

Contents

1. Introduction

2. Overview of Progress

3. Key Achievements

- 3.1 Culture, Confidence and Reporting
- 3.2 Representation and Workforce Diversity
- 3.3 Training and Development
- 3.4 Better Systems and Data
- 3.5 Working with People We Support
- 3.6 Visibility, Engagement and Celebration
- 3.7 Governance and Assurance

4. Areas That Required Revision

5. Lessons Learned

6. What We Will Carry Forward into the New EDI Strategy (2026–2029)

- 6.1 Reporting Culture
- 6.2 Leadership and Representation
- 6.3 Equality Impact Assessments
- 6.4 People We Support (PWS) Involvement
- 6.5 External Benchmarking and Transparency
- 6.6 Governance, Ownership and Staff Voice
- 6.7 Culture and Engagement

7. Final Reflections

Appendix 1: EDI Strategy Actions and Measures of Success

- Staff
- People We Support
- Community Engagement, General, C&S, Quality
- Board, Governance, Executives

1. Introduction

The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2023–2025 set out a clear ambition: to make Outward a more equitable, inclusive and representative organisation for staff and for the people we support.

Over the past two years, we've delivered a wide range of actions across people, culture, governance, and service delivery. Much has been achieved, some areas evolved during delivery, and a small number remain ongoing due to external factors or operational dependencies. This paper summarises what has been completed, what difference it has made, lessons learned, and what should be taken forward into the next EDI strategy (2026–2029).

2. Overview of Progress

Outward has made clear, practical progress against the 2023–2025 EDI Strategy. Most actions were completed or moved forward and are now visible in how we recruit, lead, report concerns, use data and involve people we support.

- Foundations and fair recruitment: Joined Inclusive Employers, achieved Inclusive Employers Standard accreditation, and kept our Disability Confident commitment in place. Value based interview questions and Easy Read policy versions were introduced for consistent, fair hiring.
- Reporting culture: Confidence rose, supported by clearer guidance, whistleblowing champions, a myth busting guide, and regular Executive visits to services.
- Representation: SMT diversity improved from 40% (2023) to 53% (2025) through inclusive recruitment to vacant posts and targeted development (Canopy, Sapling, Moving Up).
- Training: EDI and LGBTQ+ training are mandatory for service based staff with high completion rates; senior leaders identified for advanced EDI qualifications.
- Systems and data: EIAs are now part of quarterly performance reviews. We expanded pay transparency with a Diversity Pay Gap report (alongside gender and ethnicity).
- People we support: Pride events, themed activity breaks, cultural and faith based sessions, and workshops on relationships and sexuality increased visibility and inclusion. Easy Read materials have started to improve accessibility.
- Adjusted or deferred: EDI forums were merged into the Staff Engagement Forum for sustainability. Outcomes reporting linked to Nourish and new PWS survey questions were delayed and will carry into the next strategy.

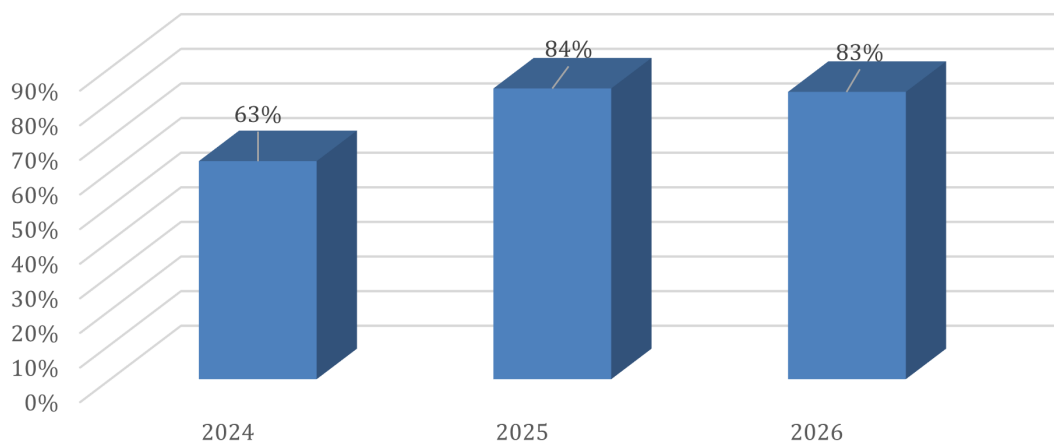
3. Key Achievements

3.1 Culture, confidence and reporting

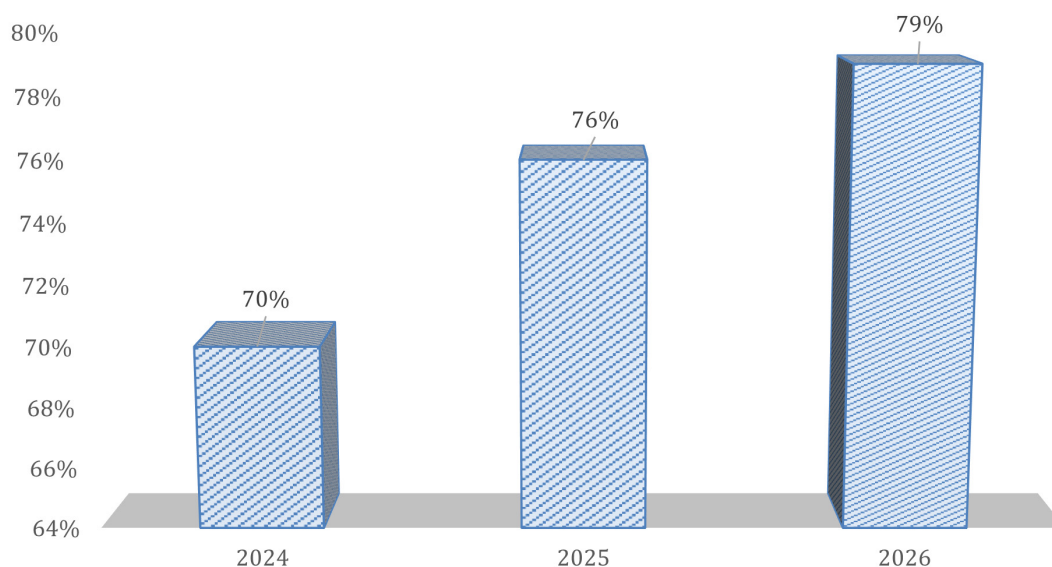
- Staff confidence to raise concerns increased over the period: 62–70% (2024) → 88% (2025) → 82.5% (2026). Perceptions of team inclusivity also improved from 63% (2024) to 78.6% (2026), noting some questions were not like for like across years.
- Key drivers: clearer guidance and posters, a new Freedom to Speak Up policy, a practical myth busting guide, and regular Executive visits to services, building a more open reporting culture.

“Not everything needs a new group; sometimes embedding EDI into existing forums is stronger.”

Comfortable voicing concerns or suggestions
Would report bullying, harassment or discrimination
Believed issues would be handled fairly



**STAFF IS TREATED EQUALLY
TEAM FOSTERED AN INCLUSIVE
ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE**



3.2 Representation and workforce diversity

Representation at senior levels improved beyond the organisation's target. SMT diversity rose from 40% in 2023 to 53% in 2025. This progress was driven by inclusive recruitment to key vacancies and stronger internal talent development.

Leadership programmes supported diverse progression:

- Canopy – 50% of participants have since progressed into new roles.
- Sapling (Aspiring Managers Programme) launched in 2025 and is attracting a diverse cohort.
- Moving Up – participants progressed into senior roles, with the next participant currently in training.

Recruitment practices were strengthened through value based questions, updated guidance, and Easy Read versions of key staff policies.

3.3 Training and Development

Mandatory EDI and LGBTQ+ training for service based staff is now firmly embedded, with high completion rates for induction and refreshers. Senior leaders have been identified to complete CMI Level 7 in EDI, and the organisation has begun shaping a wider approach to building internal capability. Leadership development programmes continue to support fair progression, helping diversify talent pipelines across the organisation.

3.4 Better systems and data

Outward has strengthened how it collects and uses data to monitor fairness across the workforce and services. Equality Impact Assessments are now routinely completed for recruitment, grievances, disciplinary cases and complaints, and are reviewed through the quarterly Outward Performance Review.

Pay transparency has also improved. Outward now publishes a Diversity Pay Gap covering several protected characteristics, going further than statutory requirements.

The gender pay gap remains low, with a mean of -4.6% and a median of 0%. Ethnicity gaps have narrowed. Disability data is less clear due to low disclosure, and variations across other groups mostly reflect differences in job roles rather than unequal pay.

“Our workforce is now more confident, more representative and more clear about what inclusive practice looks like.”

3.5. Working with People We Support

Outward increased visibility and inclusion for people we support through Pride celebrations, themed activity breaks, sexuality and relationships workshops, and cultural and religious events in services. Hate crime monitoring was improved and now sits separate from ASB cases.

Equality Impact Assessments for people we support show consistently strong outcomes across all major characteristics, with most groups having 75-80%. It is particularly strong for Asian British, Black British, Christian, Muslim and Heterosexual groups, and there is no evidence of disadvantage linked to protected characteristics. People with multiple or complex disabilities also achieve strong results.

Lower percentages appear mainly in very small groups such as Lesbian, Bisexual, Buddhist, Jewish and Under 16 cohorts, so results should be interpreted carefully. Younger people aged 16-24 show more fluctuation and may benefit from targeted support. Some gaps remain in data completeness, especially around sexuality, religion and disability.



Equality Impact Assessments for complaints show that overall complaint levels remain very low at 0.72% in 2024–2025. Of the complaints received, 80% were upheld after investigation, indicating strong resolution performance. Complaints are concentrated among younger people aged 16-34 (60%) and men (65%), while rates across major ethnicity groups are broadly similar. High levels of “Not Known/Prefer not to say” in several EDI fields: Religion (54%), Ethnicity (29%), Sexuality (21%) and Immigration Status (22%), limit further analysis and highlight the need to improve the completeness of EDI data. Overall, the findings indicate equitable service delivery with no measurable performance gaps across major groups.

The PWS Survey did not include the planned question on individuality, meaning the 85% target could not be measured. Two related questions showed mixed results, highlighting the need for clearer survey design and better conversations in services.

- “Do staff support you with your culture?” – 50% yes, 50% not sure.
- “Do staff give you information about relationships and sex?” – 50% not sure, 50% no.

Easy Read tools and a PWS newsletter are in development to support more consistent Co-production.

3.6 Visibility, Engagement and Celebration

Visible inclusion has become part of everyday life at Outward. Events such as Pride, Ramadan learning sessions, cultural activities and the People We Support Awards have created opportunities for learning and connection.

Black History Month grew into a major annual event. In 2024, colleagues shared food, stories and discussion, with a guest speaker whose work focuses on systemic racism. In 2025, strong early engagement continued, and a Board Member delivered a personal keynote that encouraged thoughtful discussion. Activities such as bracelet making and shared food helped broaden participation.

3.7 Governance and Assurance

Governance has strengthened, with an EDI Board Lead in place and regular reporting to the Board, Operations Committee and People We Support Committee. EDI actions are now more visible across the organisation’s assurance framework.

Outward also achieved accreditation with the Living Wage Foundation, reinforcing its commitment to fair pay across the workforce.

4. Areas that required revision

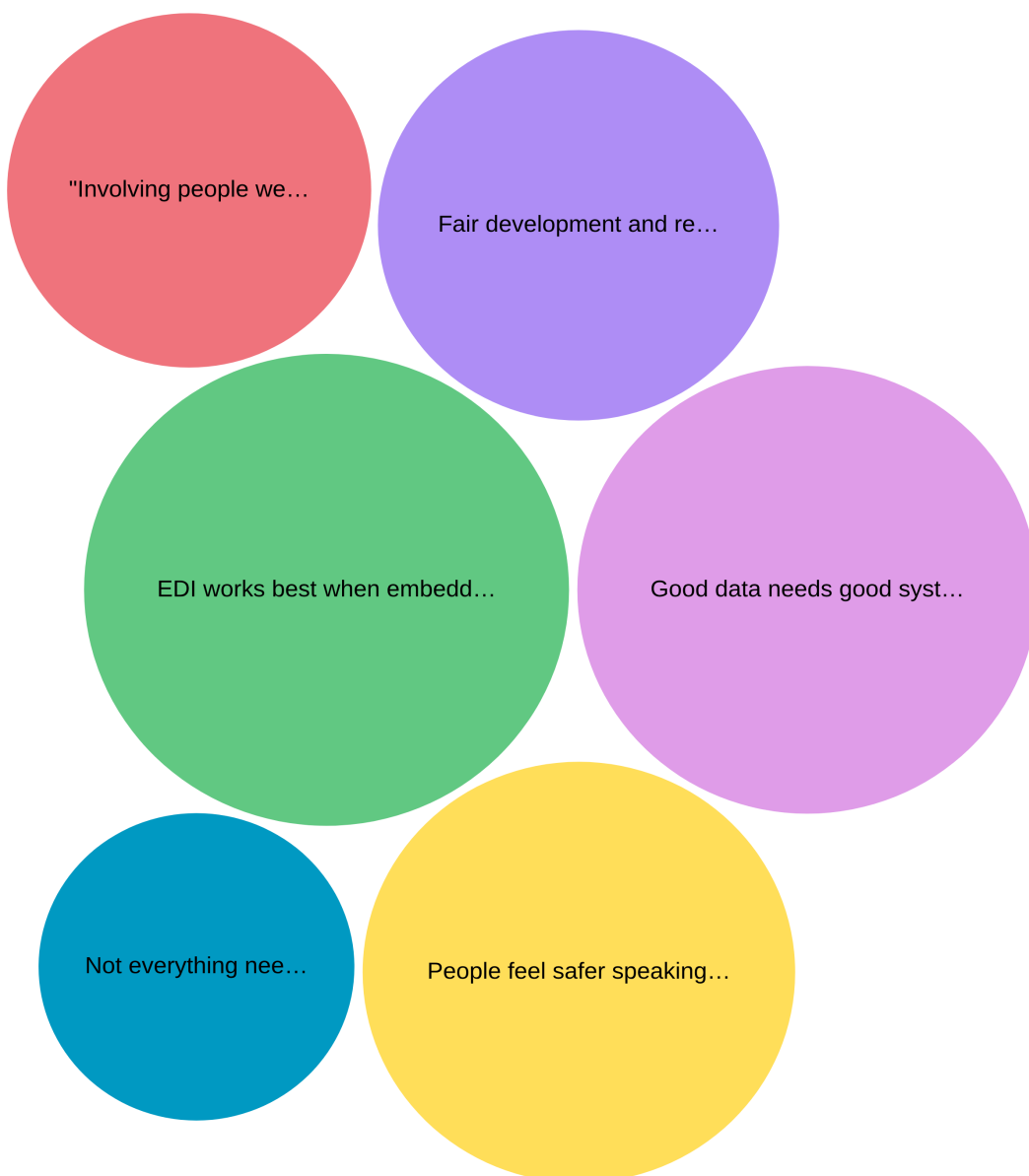
Several actions were sensibly adjusted during the strategy period:

- The EDI-specific forums were replaced by work through wider staff engagement structures to avoid fragmentation and maintain inclusivity.
- The target of training two senior managers in CMI Level 7 was revised and is now moved to 2026, reflecting realistic capacity.
- Some outcomes monitoring remains on hold pending full implementation of the new Nourish system.
- Surveys for people we support will include new questions in 2025/26 once timelines allow.

5. Lessons Learned

Lesson	Outline
<p>EDI works best when embedded, not “added on”.</p>	<p>The biggest progress happened where EDI was built into routine processes, such as recruitment, audits, policies, reporting and training, rather than treated as separate initiatives. Embedding expectations in day-to-day work creates more consistent and sustainable change.</p>
<p>Good data needs good systems behind it.</p>	<p>Reliable data (EIAs, pay gaps, demographic monitoring) enabled quicker identification of inequalities. However, areas relying on outdated or incomplete systems, such as outcomes reporting, could not progress. Future work must align with system improvements like Nourish and consistent survey tools.</p>
<p>People feel safer speaking up when leaders are visible and consistent.</p>	<p>Staff confidence increased when leaders were visible, repeated key messages and followed through on concerns. One-off campaigns were less effective than steady reinforcement. Consistency, rather than intensity, is what builds trust over time.</p>
<p>Fair development and recruitment help diversify leadership.</p>	<p>Increases in SMT diversity were driven not only by structured development programmes such as Canopy, Sapling and Moving Up, but also by more inclusive recruitment practices applied during key senior vacancies. Together, these approaches showed that representation improves meaningfully when transparent progression routes, targeted development, and fair recruitment processes all work hand-in-hand.</p>
<p>Involving people we support improves the quality of our actions.</p>	<p>Working with the People We Support Committee strengthened actions, but progress showed that meaningful involvement depends on accessible tools (Easy Read), better surveys and clearer conversations in services. Missing survey questions highlighted the need for stronger structures and clearer measures.</p>

“Involving people we support doesn’t just ‘tick a box’- it improves the quality of what we do.”



6. What we will carry forward into the new EDI Strategy (2026–2029)

6.1 Reporting culture

Confidence in reporting has risen, supported by videos, policies, managers forums, clearer guidance, and Exec services visits. We did not yet build a consistent “you said, we did” feedback loop after whistleblowing cases are closed.

Carry forward actions (2026–2029):

- Introduce a standard post case feedback step so managers and services see outcomes and learning (with confidentiality protected).
- Build a case learning element into manager induction and refresher training so policy and practice are visibly shaped by real issues.
- Write and implement new policy and protocol for dealing with all incidents of discrimination in services.

6.2 Leadership and representation

Representation improved at SMT level; targeted programmes (Canopy, Sapling, Moving Up) work. The anonymous diversity questionnaire for the Board is pending.

Carry forward actions (2026–2029):

- Run the anonymous Board diversity questionnaire and report data findings.
- Continue Moving Up and increase targeted promotion to drive uptake.
- Two senior leaders to complete CMI Level 7 in 2026, to deepen organisational EDI capability at executive level.
- Maintain value based recruitment and Disability Confident commitments.

6.3 Equality Impact Assessments

Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are now routinely carried out across recruitment, grievance, disciplinary cases, Housing tenancy enforcement actions and complaints, and are reported through the quarterly OPR process. We have also produced a summary that brings together EIAs across services and for People We Support.

6.4 People we support (PWS) involvement

Pride activities, themed breaks and local events increased inclusion; BHM and Ramadan activity strengthened cultural literacy.

New survey questions for PWS slipped; Nourish outcomes data not fully live; Easy Read tools and a newsletter for PWS are still in development.

Carry forward actions (2026–2029):

- Introduce the intended PWS question into the next PWS Survey and track progress annually.
- Launch a PWS EDI involvement plan: co produce a service standards/guidance with the People We Support Committee.
- Use Nourish to report outcomes on inclusion and participation once live; set a baseline in Year 2 and targets in Year 3.
- Produce a bi-annual Easy Read PWS newsletter and expand Easy Read tools (rights, reporting routes, celebrations calendar).

6.5 External benchmarking and transparency

Membership of Inclusive Employers and IES accreditation supported practice improvement; pay reporting transparency has grown.

Carry forward actions (2026–2029):

- Continue the Diversity Pay Gap report annually (gender, ethnicity and other characteristics as data quality allows) with an Easy-read summary.
- Test our progress and share learning.

6.6 Governance, ownership and staff voice

Integrating EDI forums into the Staff Engagement Forum improved sustainability and reduced duplication; reporting to Board and Committees is now regular.

We have not yet embedded individual EDI objectives for all staff in the appraisal process; stakeholder newsletter updates were missed last cycle.

Carry forward actions (2026–2029):#

- Add one EDI objective for every colleague in annual appraisals (role appropriate), with guidance for managers and examples.
- Staff Engagement Forum to retain EDI as a standing item; publish short, accessible highlights after each meeting.
- Continue with the stakeholder newsletter EDI updates twice a year (what changed, what's next, how to get involved).

6.7 Culture and engagement

Participation is strongest when events are simple, well timed and authentic (People We Support Awards, Pride, BHM, Ramadan).

New initiatives (2026–2029):

- Launch “In My Shoes” – short staff and PWS story features (written/audio/video) that share lived experiences, cultural traditions and practical inclusion tips; rotate monthly, collated on the intranet with optional live sessions.
- Keep Pride, BHM, and faith based learning sessions annual, with lightweight toolkits so services can run local versions.

7. Final reflections

The 2023–2025 EDI Strategy has created a stronger, more confident and more inclusive organisation. Staff feel safer raising concerns, leadership is more representative, and the organisation has clearer standards and better systems for assessing and monitoring fairness. Outward is in a far better position than it was in 2023.

“Fair development and fair recruitment work hand-in-hand to diversify our leadership.”

Appendix 1

EDI Strategy actions and measures of success.

Staff

Our measures of success	Progress
Become a member of Inclusive Employers and actively utilise available resources.	Achieved: Outward is a full member of Inclusive Employers and uses the platform's resources to support practice improvement.
Gain accreditation with the Inclusive Employers Standard (IES).	Achieved: Outward gained IES accreditation and is now working towards the next level.
2025 Staff Survey shows increased positivity on EDI (Target: 84%; 2023 baseline: 75%).	Achieved: 88% of staff now feel confident reporting poor practice, bullying or harassment (up from 62–70%).
95% of staff to be up to date with EDI training at all times.	Ongoing: Refresher training compliance typically fluctuates between 90–97%; probation-based EDI training ranges from 86–100%.
Improve diversity at senior levels (Target: 50% of SMT from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds; 2023: 40%).	Achieved: 53% of SMT now identify as from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds.
Establish EDI-specific forums (e.g. LGBTQI+).	Revised: It was originally established, however as there are many groups, these will now be incorporated into the wider Staff Engagement Forum activities to ensure alignment and inclusivity.
Fund at least 5 places on Skills for Care's Moving Up programme (for Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff who want to progress in their career at all levels).	Partially achieved: Despite being promoted and followed up, only 5 staff initially expressed interest. Of those, 3 completed enrolment, with 2 successfully completing the programme. Both have since progressed in their roles.
We recruit staff who are committed to our EDI values.	Ongoing: Value-based interview questions have been developed and published on the intranet. The next priority is embedding their consistent use in recruitment processes by hiring managers.
New campaign to promote whistleblowing policy with new whistleblowing champions and 'safe spaces'.	Achieved (with revised approach): Instead of a full campaign, we published Beyond the Myths: Understanding Whistleblowing, a practical guide to demystify the process and encourage reporting and 'safe spaces'.
All service based staff receive training in supporting people from LGBTQAI+ as mandatory requirement.	Achieved: LGBT Aware for Care is a mandatory training module delivered via Care Skills, supporting inclusive, person-centred care.
All staff to complete improved EDI online training within first 3 months of employment and 2 year refresher.	Achieved: EDI training is embedded as a mandatory requirement for all new starters and included in the refresher cycle for existing staff.
From Q4 2023/24 We will train at least two senior managers/directors in 24/25 to a minimum CMI Level 5 Award in Promoting Equality, Diversity & Inclusion.	Revised: The target has been adjusted to train at least one person. The participant has now been identified, and training options have been researched to ensure they meet our requirements and are cost-effective. Training is provisionally scheduled to begin in October, subject to availability.

<p>Develop aspiring managers programme – ensure candidates represent diverse cohort.</p>	<p>Achieved: The Sapling programme has been developed and will launch in summer 2025. The design explicitly encourages diverse participation, and uptake will be monitored to ensure representation. (The name may be revised.)</p>
<p>Equality Impact Assessments to be conducted throughout the year on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciplinary/ET cases. • Grievances. • Management-level recruitment 	<p>Achieved: EIAs are embedded in quarterly Outward Performance Review reporting. Data is consistently presented to the Executive Team to support analysis, oversight, and action.</p>
<p>Outward will continue to collect and analyse data on gender pay gap and will also analyse ethnicity pay gaps.</p>	<p>Achieved (and expanded): Outward now publishes not only the gender and ethnicity pay gap data, but also reports on other protected characteristics, offering a Diversity Pay Gap overview for improved transparency.</p>
<p>We will review our recruitment policy and process to minimise any potential for unconscious bias and in line with the outcome of our EIA and best practice.</p>	<p>Achieved: The Recruitment Policy has been reviewed and an Easy Read version developed to align with our EDI commitments. A Recruitment Training Programme has also been designed and will be delivered by October 2025.</p>
<p>Review policies and practices to ensure that they are inclusive and equitable. Check that all new policies build on Outward’s EDI strategies and policies.</p>	<p>Ongoing: All policies now include an Equality Impact Assessment statement. Since May 2025, we have begun producing Easy Read versions of key staff policies to ensure they are accessible to all.</p>

People We Support

Our measures of success	Progress
<p>People We Support Survey 2024 – people we support agree they feel empowered and supported to celebrate their individuality at Outward – Target 85%.</p>	<p>Partially achieved / Revised: The specific survey question on celebrating individuality was not included in the PWS Survey. Two related questions were asked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · “Do staff support you with your culture?” – 50% yes, 50% not sure. · “Do staff give you information about relationships and sex?” – 50% not sure, 50% no. <p>A revised survey question will be added for the next survey cycle and reported in the new EDI Strategy.</p>
<p>We receive CQC Rating of ‘Outstanding’ for ‘Caring’ and/or recognised in CQC report for our EDI approaches.</p>	<p>Ongoing: No new CQC inspections ratings have been received yet. EDI has been embedded in the “Plan for Excellence” to ensure visibility in any future inspection.</p>
<p>Outcomes monitoring – increased levels of positive outcomes in ‘Improved social well-being and/or community participation’ from 95 % in 2023 to 97% by 2025.</p>	<p>Deferred / On hold: Outcomes reporting cannot yet be completed until the new Nourish system is fully implemented.</p>
<p>Internal audits outcomes – support plans evidence how people want to be supported around their protected characteristics aim to achieve 90% (measuring from April) 2024.</p>	<p>Ongoing: A new audit question (No. 16) was included for the 2025/26 audit cycle. Data will be available later in the year. Quality to report on progress.</p>
<p>People we Support Committee is actively monitoring progress of EDI action plan, and feeding back to Operations Committee on six monthly basis.</p>	<p>Partially achieved: EDI has been discussed by the People We Support Committee, but EDI is not yet a standing agenda item. A Director/CEO presence is required at each meeting for proper feedback.</p>
<p>Annual programme of diversity celebration and awareness events are organised, promoted and well attended.</p>	<p>Ongoing: Events continue to be delivered and remain well attended across services.</p>

“Good data needs good systems behind it.”

<p>Our measures of success</p>	<p>Progress</p>
<p>Procurement of Services – we require a tangible commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion as a standard requirement of all procured services.</p>	<p>Achieved: EDI expectations were incorporated into the most recent cleaning procurement process for the Housing department. This sets a precedent for embedding EDI requirements into future procurement exercises.</p>
<p>Our quality assurance framework aligns with our EDI strategy and values.</p>	<p>Ongoing: The Quality Manager is reviewing the EDI Strategy to ensure all actions are reflected in the organisational improvement tracker. This work continues to align quality assurance processes with EDI commitments.</p>
<p>Community Engagement team: Run workshops in local services raising awareness of issues relating to sex, sexuality and relationships. Starting Q4 (2023/24) PRIDE celebration to be organised for people we support annually. Annual Pride themed activity break at NE.</p>	<p>Achieved: Workshops completed in 2024/25. First Pride holiday took place July 2025 and will be held annually.</p>
<p>Co-production: Easy read tools developed to assist with raising awareness of discrimination for people with learning disability</p>	<p>Ongoing: Easy Read EDI documents on the intranet remain limited. Tools need to be developed and adapted for PWS. A PWS newsletter and a dedicated EDI page on the website are planned for 2026 under the new EDI Strategy</p>
<p>C&S: Write and implement new policy and protocol for dealing with all incidents of discrimination in services.</p>	<p>To be actioned: Policy/ protocol/ Guidance not yet developed. To be added to the new EDI Strategy</p>
<p>Housing Team: We will monitor and report on ‘Hate Crime’ separate to ASB cases.</p>	<p>Achieved: Hate crime monitoring is in place and reported monthly; no hate crimes recorded to date.</p>
<p>Include in our communication plans and briefings regular updates on respectful language in relation to EDI</p>	<p>Achieved: Updates included in staff briefings; Events section created in Staff Room intranet.</p>
<p>We will mark awareness days in an outlook calendar, on briefings, through Workplace and all relevant communication channels using these as an opportunity to share learning.</p>	<p>Achieved: Awareness days are regularly communicated, and the Events section is updated.</p>

Board, Governance, Executives

<p align="center">Our measures of success</p>	<p align="center">Progress</p>
<p>People with a disability and or lived experience of support and care services are represented on our Board.</p>	<p>Revised: The Board has decided not to specifically recruit people with lived experience at this time. Representation is currently achieved through the People We Support Committee reporting directly to Operations Committee, with a Board member (Kathy Parker) attending. This approach will be reviewed at the next Board away day.</p>
<p>Board lead role for EDI established and promoting EDI at Board level. Our board is representative of the communities we serve – targets to be set for future recruitment in improve diversity.</p>	<p>Achieved / Ongoing: Cleo Woodward is the EDI Lead on the Board. Recent Board recruitment has resulted in a more representative Board. An anonymous diversity questionnaire still needs to be completed to evidence representation formally.</p>
<p>We are regularly reporting good progress against our EDI plan to Board, staff, people we support (quarterly), and stakeholders (annually).</p>	<p>The last update was provided in June 2025. A further update is required for the next stakeholder newsletter.</p>
<p>Staff feel safe to report discrimination or bullying in the workplace. Executive team visits to services promoting reporting culture.</p>	<p>Achieved/ Ongoing: Executive visits took place throughout the year to reinforce a positive reporting culture. Although not all staff survey questions were identical across the three years, the overall feedback shows a clear upward trend in confidence and inclusivity. • In 2024, 62–70% of colleagues said they would report bullying, harassment or discrimination. By 2025, 88% felt confident raising concerns. In 2026, 82.5% reported feeling comfortable raising concerns or suggestions. • In 2026, 78.6% agreed their team fosters an inclusive environment, up from 76% in 2025 and 63% in 2024, indicating continued progress in perceptions of fairness and inclusion.</p>
<p>Report bi-annually demographics of management, senior management and Board.</p>	<p>Ongoing: Data continues to be monitored, with additional use of the NHF EDI tool to compare staff demographics. Findings will be included in the October deep dive report. This has previously been reviewed through the HR deep dive at Executive/ OPR level.</p>
<p>We will plan events and celebrations – co-produced with people we support and our EDI forum and invite Board members</p>	<p>Ongoing: People We Support Awards delivered Staff Awards delivered These continue to run annually and involve Board attendance wherever possible.</p>

