

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

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| Policy consultation with: | Exec team, staff consultation - Workplace | |
| Legal Requirements: | ACAS Guidance, Equality Act 2010 | |
| CQC: | CQC Fundamental Standards: Respecting and Involving People; Equality, Diversity and Human Rights | |
| Other: | | |
| Related Policies: | Data Protection Policy and Procedure | Grievance Policy |
| | Disciplinary Policy and Procedure | Code of Conduct |
| | Appeals Procedure | Family Friendly Policy |
| | Bullying Policy | Recruitment Policy EDI Strategy (outward.org.uk) |
| Scope: | <p>This policy applies to all Outward employees, including permanent, fixed-term, part-time and flexible-hours staff. It applies irrespective of a person's race, sex, gender identity, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, pregnancy or maternity status.</p> <p>This policy is a living document and will be reviewed regularly to reflect changes in legislation and best practice. Outward is committed to continually improving equity, diversity and inclusion across our organisation and services.</p> | |
| Policy Equality Impact Assessed | | |

| Version number | Amendments | Reviewed by | Date |
|----------------|--|--------------|------------|
| 6 | Policy name change, extensive wording change | Shabana Arif | 23/04/2024 |
| 7 | Created the table of content, updated names | HR | 23/04/2025 |
| 8 | The Policy is rewritten, new sections added | HR | 10/04/2026 |
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This information can be made available in alternative formats, such as easy read or large print. Please contact 0208 980 7101 or email info@outward.org.uk.

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1. Policy Statement

Outward is proud to be an organisation built on people. The diversity, experiences and strengths work. We are committed to creating a workplace and service environment where everyone feels respected, valued and able to thrive.

Every person connected to Outward brings something unique. We believe these differences make us stronger. By celebrating diversity and removing barriers to fair access, opportunities and experiences, we create a culture where everyone can reach their full potential.

This policy sets out Outward's principles for equality, equity, diversity and inclusion, and explains how these principles guide our decisions, behaviour and day-to-day practice. Our EDI Strategy provides further detail on the actions, goals and measures that help us turn commitment into meaningful progress.

Oversight of EDI sits with Outward's Executive Team and Outward's Board of Trustees. A dedicated Board member acts as our EDI Champion, ensuring our approach reflects our values, culture and responsibilities as a charity. This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, residents and the people we support.

Fostering an inclusive culture benefits us all. This policy therefore:

- outlines our commitment to equality, equity, diversity and inclusion throughout the employment lifecycle
- explains the behaviours we expect from everyone who works for or with Outward
- sets out the key steps we take to make our culture fair, respectful and inclusive, including how we promote equality of opportunity

This policy does not form part of your employment contract. Outward may amend or withdraw it when necessary to reflect changes in law, best practice or organisational needs.

2. Understanding Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Our ongoing work must align with the legal framework set out in the *Equality Act 2010*. Because of this, our policy uses the broader title Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), while our activities focus on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

2.1. Why our policy uses "Equality" and our practice focuses on "Equity"

Equality means treating people fairly, ensuring everyone has the same rights, opportunities and protection. It is grounded in the Equality Act 2010, which requires organisations to:

- prevent discrimination
- promote equal access
- ensure fair treatment regardless of protected characteristics

Equality is about fairness in principle.

Equity recognises that different people may need different levels of support to achieve fair and equal outcomes. It means:

- understanding individual needs
- removing structural or systemic barriers
- addressing historic disadvantage
- providing support that is tailored rather than identical

Equity is the process that helps us reach the outcomes that equality describes.

Equality is the goal – everyone having fair opportunities, rights and access.

Equity is the journey – the practical steps we take to make fairness a reality.

Our actions, plans, training and organisational culture focus on equity, because equal treatment alone does not remove barriers faced by some colleagues, residents or people we support.

2.2. Diversity

Diversity is about recognising and valuing difference. At Outward, diversity includes the wide range of backgrounds, identities, experiences, perspectives and characteristics of our staff, residents and the people we support.

This includes, but is not limited to, differences in protected characteristics, socio-economic background, life experience, skills and ways of thinking.

2.3. Inclusion

Inclusion is about creating an environment where everyone feels welcomed, respected and able to participate fully.

An inclusive culture ensures that people are not only present, but are listened to, supported and able to contribute and thrive. Inclusion is reflected in how we work together, how decisions are made, and how services are delivered.

2.4. The Equality Act 2010

Our policy includes *Equality* because it reflects our legal responsibilities under the **Equality Act 2010**. The Act requires all employers and service providers to treat people fairly, protect them from discrimination and ensure equal access to employment, services and opportunities.

At Outward, this means we must ensure that every interaction you have with colleagues, the people we support, commissioners, providers, agency workers, contractors and visitors is free from discrimination, harassment, victimisation or bullying.

The law protects people from discrimination based on **nine protected characteristics**:



- 1) disability
- 2) sex
- 3) gender reassignment
- 4) marital or civil partnership status
- 5) race
- 6) religion or belief
- 7) sexual orientation
- 8) age
- 9) pregnancy or maternity

We also consider additional factors that may affect people's experiences, including:

- socio-economic background
- immigration status

Under the Equality Act, discrimination can be intentional or unintentional. It can happen directly, indirectly, by association (because of someone you are connected to) or by perception (because

of who someone thinks you are). Everyone at Outward is personally responsible for ensuring their behaviour aligns with the law and our policy.

2.5. Types of unlawful discrimination

Outward prohibits all forms of unlawful discrimination, including:

- **Direct discrimination:** treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic
- **Indirect discrimination:** rules or practices that appear neutral but disadvantage a particular group
- **Harassment:** unwanted behaviour related to a protected characteristic that violates dignity or creates an intimidating or hostile environment
- **Victimisation:** treating someone badly because they raised or supported a complaint
- **Disability discrimination:** including not making reasonable adjustments where needed

Any breach of the Equality Act or this policy will be taken seriously and may lead to disciplinary action. Individuals can also be personally liable under the law.

This legal framework forms the **equality** part of our approach, the standard we must meet. It sits alongside **equity**, which guides the actions we take to achieve fairness in practice.

3. Purpose and Vision

Our vision is to build a culture that truly reflects and celebrates the diversity of our workforce and the people we support. As a care, support and housing provider, we recognise that inclusion is central to delivering high-quality, person-centred services. Equity, diversity and inclusion strengthen our organisation, improve outcomes for the people we support and help us create services that treat everyone with dignity, respect and fairness.

Outward is committed to:

- ensuring equity across all aspects of our work, from how we support our teams to how we deliver care, support and housing
- embedding equity, diversity and inclusion in every service, policy and decision
- actively challenging discrimination, prejudice and bias wherever it arises
- recruiting, developing and promoting people based on their strengths, skills and potential
- guaranteeing equitable access to our services so every individual and community receives safe, high-quality support and housing
- employing individuals who live our values of engagement, empowerment and enablement
- making sure our EDI Strategy shapes everyday practice, driving positive experiences and outcomes for the people we support

This vision supports our mission: empowering people live the life they choose, in a society that values everyone.

4. Responsibilities

4.1. Employer Responsibility

As an employer and service provider, Outward has a responsibility to create a workplace where everyone feels safe, respected and able to succeed. We will:

- uphold this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy and make sure it is applied consistently across the organisation
- foster a working environment that is free from discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation
- provide opportunities for learning and development relating to EDI so our people feel confident and well-equipped to work inclusively
- take concerns, reports or complaints about discrimination seriously and respond to them promptly and fairly

Managers and Leaders

Managers and leaders play a key role in shaping an inclusive culture at Outward. They are expected to:

- role model inclusive behaviours and lead by example
- apply this policy fairly and consistently in decision-making
- challenge inappropriate behaviour, language or practices promptly and constructively
- support their teams to work inclusively and address barriers where they arise
- engage with EDI training and guide colleagues in applying learning in practice
- set, review and evaluate EDI-related objectives as part of staff appraisals, ensuring inclusion and equity are reflected in performance discussions

Human Resources and Learning & Development

The HR and Learning & Development teams support the effective implementation of this policy. They are responsible for:

- providing advice and guidance on the application of this policy and related procedures
- supporting managers and staff to address EDI concerns appropriately
- monitoring EDI-related data, trends and outcomes to identify areas for improvement
- coordinating and arranging EDI training and development opportunities
- supporting continuous improvement of EDI practice across the organisation

4.2 Our Commitment to You

We believe that a culture rooted in equality, equity, diversity and inclusion strengthens Outward. When people feel they belong, they are more confident, more engaged and better able to do their best work.

We are committed to maintaining a workplace built on dignity, trust and respect. This means:

- everyone can be themselves without fear of discrimination
- everyone is valued for their contribution

- everyone has fair access to opportunities throughout their time at Outward

Our recruitment, progression and retention practices are designed to be fair and inclusive. We do not treat anyone less favourably because of their:

- disability
- gender, gender identity or gender reassignment
- marital or civil partnership status
- race, ethnicity, national origin or nationality
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation
- age
- pregnancy, maternity or paternity
- socio-economic or educational background
- part-time status
- fixed-term contractual status

These commitments apply to all stages of the employment lifecycle and to everyone who works for or with Outward.

4.3. Employee Responsibility

All employees play an essential role in helping Outward maintain a fair, respectful and inclusive culture. Every member of our team is expected to:

- familiarise themselves with this EDI policy and follow it in their day-to-day work
- treat colleagues, residents, volunteers and the people we support with dignity and respect
- challenge discriminatory behaviour, language or attitudes in a constructive and appropriate way
- take part in EDI learning, training and development opportunities
- contribute positively to creating an inclusive, welcoming and supportive workplace

4.4. What we expect from you

Creating an inclusive culture is something we all contribute to. Policies matter, but what truly shapes Outward is how we behave with each other and with the people we support every day.

We expect everyone at Outward to:

- take personal responsibility for following and promoting this policy
- treat people with dignity, respect and kindness
- respect the faith, culture, gender identity, sexuality, and communication needs of people we support and provide the support required to enable people to express their individuality

- speak up or challenge behaviour that is discriminatory or inappropriate
- be open to learning and reflect on your own attitudes and actions
- help create a welcoming and supportive environment for colleagues and the people we support

We recognise that people experience the world differently. Things like gender, ethnicity, disability, age, religion or sexual orientation can affect the barriers people face. Sometimes these factors overlap and create additional challenges.

By being aware of this, and being considerate of people's different experiences, we can help create a fairer and more inclusive Outward for everyone.

5. Procedures

5.1. Recruitment

Outward aims to build a workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve. Our recruitment practices are designed to be fair, inclusive and focused on people's skills, potential and values.

We will:

- use fair and objective recruitment methods that assess skills, experience and potential
- advertise vacancies widely to attract a diverse range of applicants
- ensure interview panels are diverse where possible and trained in recognising and reducing unconscious bias
- monitor recruitment data to understand who is applying, where barriers might exist and what improvements are needed
- carry out Equality Impact Assessments where appropriate
- encourage applications from underrepresented groups and take steps to remove avoidable barriers in our processes

All applicants must provide proof of their right to work in the UK. Assumptions about an applicant's right to work will never be made based on appearance, name, accent or nationality.

5.2. Inclusive and accessible practices

Before starting any recruitment campaign, the recruitment team will consider how to make the process as accessible and inclusive as possible. This includes reviewing:

- job descriptions and person specifications
- wording and accessibility of adverts
- application forms and assessments
- interview formats and locations

We will ask applicants at an early stage whether they require reasonable adjustments. These may include, for example:

- step-free or easy access to the interview venue
- additional time for assessments
- adapted tests

- a suitable chair or seating arrangement

5.3. Responsibilities of Hiring Managers

Anyone involved in shortlisting, interviewing or selecting candidates is expected to:

- follow this policy and apply the principles of fair and inclusive recruitment
- complete the required diversity and inclusion training
- challenge stereotypes, assumptions and unconscious bias in decision-making
- ensure no applicant is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic

Recruitment decisions are expected to be based on merit, evidence and the requirements of the role.

5.4. Training & Promotion

Outward is committed to building a knowledgeable, confident and inclusive workforce. To support this, we provide ongoing training to all staff on equality, equity, diversity and inclusion.

Our training covers:

- understanding protected characteristics and unlawful discrimination
- recognising and challenging unconscious bias
- delivering inclusive, person-centred services
- fostering a respectful and inclusive workplace

We regularly monitor the diversity of our workforce and review progression patterns to ensure equity, diversity and inclusion at all levels of the organisation. Where needed, we take steps to remove unjustified barriers and support colleagues from disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.

Promotion and career development decisions are expected to be based on merit, evidence and the requirements of the role, and must be free from discrimination. We also review our recruitment and promotion processes regularly to ensure they remain fair, transparent and inclusive.

We encourage all our people to take an active role in supporting equality, equity, diversity and inclusion by engaging with events, training and workshops organised by Outward. These opportunities help us learn from one another, understand the barriers some colleagues may face and contribute to a more inclusive workplace for everyone.

5.5. Disability and Reasonable Adjustments

Outward is committed to supporting colleagues who have a disability or long-term health condition.

Telling us about a disability

You do not have to tell us if you have a disability.

However, if you choose to share this information, we can put support in place to help you carry out your role effectively.

If you need adjustments

If your disability affects your work, please speak with your line manager or the HR team. We will work with you to identify reasonable adjustments. These may include:

- changes to your duties
- adjustments to equipment or workspace
- flexible working patterns
- additional time for tasks or training

We may also seek advice from Occupational Health or another medical professional to ensure we fully understand your needs.

How we make decisions

We will consider all requests carefully.

If an adjustment is not reasonable or cannot be made, we will explain why and explore other possible solutions with you.

Returning to work

If you are returning from a long-term disability-related absence, we may offer a return-to-work support plan. Your line manager or HR can provide further information.

6. Breaches of this policy

- We take a strict approach to breaches of this policy, which will be dealt with in accordance with our Disciplinary Procedure. Serious cases of deliberate discrimination may amount to gross misconduct resulting in dismissal.
- If you believe that you have suffered discrimination you can raise the matter through our Grievance Procedure or through our Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy as appropriate. Complaints will be treated in confidence and investigated as appropriate.
- All staff are protected against discrimination and this applies to residents and the people we support, if staff encounter such discrimination we will refer individuals to our EDI policy and state we have a zero tolerance toward discrimination.
- There must be no victimisation or retaliation against staff who complain about discrimination. However, making a false allegation deliberately and in bad faith will be treated as misconduct and dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

References/Further Reading

EDI Strategy (outward.org.uk)

www.acas.org.uk/discrimination-and-the-law

[Equality Act 2010](#)

Outward is committed to compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act 2018. It requires all staff and partners to respect confidentiality and data subjects' rights in line with its policies and procedures.

To ensure compliance with the Regulations staff must ensure that any personal information produced or processed as part of these procedures is appropriately filed on SharePoint, Sona, Nourish, iTrent, Iplanit, the Outward server or other agreed Password-controlled filing system(s) with role-based access control.

Whilst processing paper documents, including those from third parties, these documents must be stored in secure lockable cabinets. Records will be kept for as long as they are needed to meet the operational needs of Outward, together with legal and regulatory requirements. Where there is a deviation from this principle, the reasons for this must be recorded. A detailed breakdown of retention and deletion of records can be found in Outward's Record Management and Retention Policy. When disposing of documents containing personal data this should be done via confidential waste. Please refer to Outward's Data Protection Policy and Procedure for more information.
