Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2026/2029

Belonging for everyone, in everything we do.
Respecting difference, celebrating people.



- engaging
- enabling
- empowering

outward
part of the Newlon Group

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Artwork created by people we support.

1. Introduction

Outward values the diversity of our colleagues, the people we support and residents, and the communities we work within. This diversity is reflected across our workforce and the services we deliver.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is central to how we work and how we treat one another. This strategy should be read alongside the Code of Conduct, which sets out the behaviours expected of everyone at Outward. EDI is a shared responsibility, and each of us has a role to play in creating an organisation where people feel respected, included and treated fairly.

The EDI Strategy 2026-2029 has been developed following a review of progress and learning from the previous strategy period, drawing on workforce and service data, feedback from colleagues and People We Support, organisational assurance reporting, and the findings of our EDI Strategy 2023-2025 Completion Report.

How our EDI priorities have evolved

The EDI Strategy 2026-2029 builds on the progress, learning and achievements of our 2023-2025 strategy. Through our review of the previous strategy, we identified areas where our approach was making a measurable difference and where further work was needed to achieve sustainable change.

The objectives within this strategy reflect that learning. Some priorities have been retained because they remain essential to achieving long-term equity and inclusion, including representation, inclusive recruitment, leadership development, co-production and improving the quality of EDI data. Other priorities have evolved in response to what we learned, with a greater focus on embedding EDI within everyday organisational processes, strengthening accountability and governance, improving outcomes monitoring, and ensuring the voices of people we support continue to shape decision-making.

The strategy also carries forward a small number of actions that were not fully completed during the previous strategy period, particularly where delivery depended on wider organisational developments such as the implementation of Nourish, improved survey tools, and the continued development of accessible information.

The EDI strategy 2023-2025 completion report highlighted the importance of strong leadership visibility, meaningful co-production, and using data to identify and address inequalities more effectively. This strategy builds on firm foundations and focuses on deepening impact, strengthening evidence, embedding learning and sustaining progress over the next three years.

Equality Act 2010



At Outward, we are committed to upholding human rights and promoting dignity for everyone. We want people to feel valued, respected and listened to, whether they work for us, receive our support, or engage with our services as residents, families or carers.

We aim to provide an environment that is inclusive and equitable, where discrimination, exclusion and unfair treatment are not accepted. We recognise that some people face additional barriers, particularly those with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, and we are committed to addressing this.

We know this work is ongoing. Creating a culture that genuinely values difference takes time, honesty and learning. We will continue to challenge discrimination, listen to lived experience and encourage diversity in all its forms.

2. Defining Equality, Equity, Diversity & inclusion

Outward uses the term Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, while placing a strong focus on equity in practice.

Equality- is about fairness and equal rights. In the UK, it is closely linked to the Equality Act 2010 and the legal protection it provides.

Equity- recognises that people do not all start from the same place. It focuses on taking practical steps to remove barriers and provide appropriate support, so that everyone has a fair chance to access opportunities and outcomes.

In simple terms, equality is the outcome we are working towards, and equity is how we get there.

Our policies, training, actions and organisational culture focus on equity, because treating everyone exactly the same does not always lead to fair outcomes.

Diversity- is about recognising and respecting differences. This includes differences in background, experience, culture, identity, beliefs and ways of thinking. Valuing diversity means understanding that these differences matter and should be respected.

Inclusion- is about creating an environment where people feel able to be themselves, are treated with respect, and can take part fully. Inclusion means that access to services, opportunities and resources supports people to thrive in ways that work for them.

"An inclusive world starts with each of us choosing to respect perspectives other than our own, treating everyone with respect and choosing to stand up for others who need our support."

By putting EDI at the centre of what we do, we aim to ensure that everyone who comes into contact with Outward is treated with dignity and respect.

Our strategy sets out our commitment to making improvements in equality, diversity and inclusion. It explains our direction, priorities and principles, and supports a culture where learning and improvement are ongoing. We will continue to listen to our workforce, the people we support, our communities and partner organisations, learning from what works well and from where we need to do better.

We intend for this strategy to be a living document that supports the cultural changes we want to see across Outward. We will continue to involve a wide range of stakeholders and share progress in ways that are clear, accessible and open.

Protected Characteristics. The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society across nine protected characteristics. Outward also recognises that factors such as socio economic background and health conditions can lead to unfair treatment. Menopause is currently being considered for inclusion in law, and we will update our policies in line with any future changes. We also recognise that people we support and staff who are neurodivergent may experience discrimination, and we are committed to responding to this in line with our EDI principles.



An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed for this strategy. The assessment considered the impact on colleagues, people we support, residents and organisational practices across all protected characteristics. It concluded that the strategy is expected to have an overall

positive impact, with particularly strong positive impacts in areas including inclusive leadership, fair progression, accessibility, co-production and workforce representation. The assessment also confirmed strong alignment with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

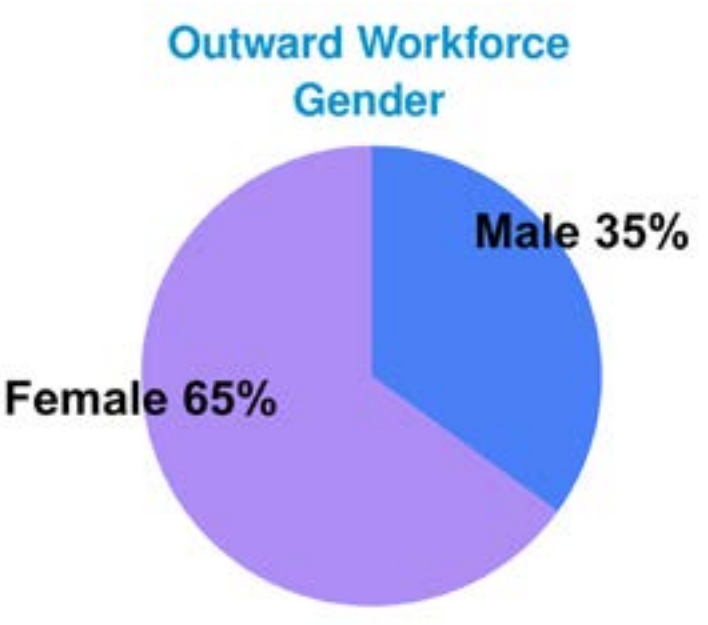
It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

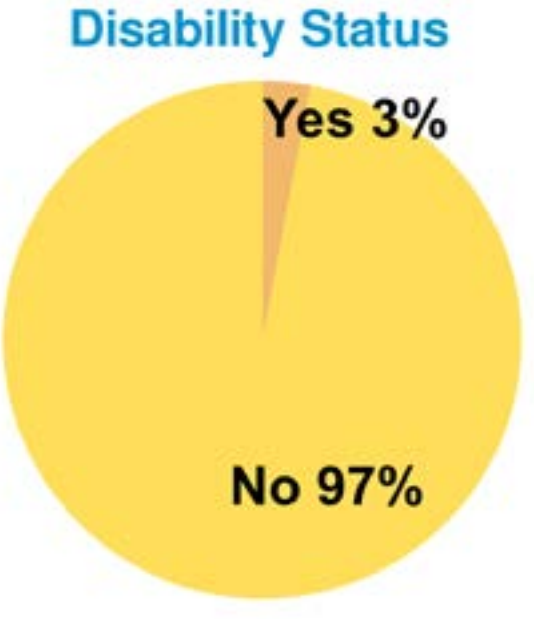
3. Diversity in Outward

Our workforce

Outward within the wider social care context
Our workforce is our greatest strength and enables us to deliver high quality care and support. It also supports our vision – '***To inspire and encourage people with support needs to thrive in every aspect of their lives.'***



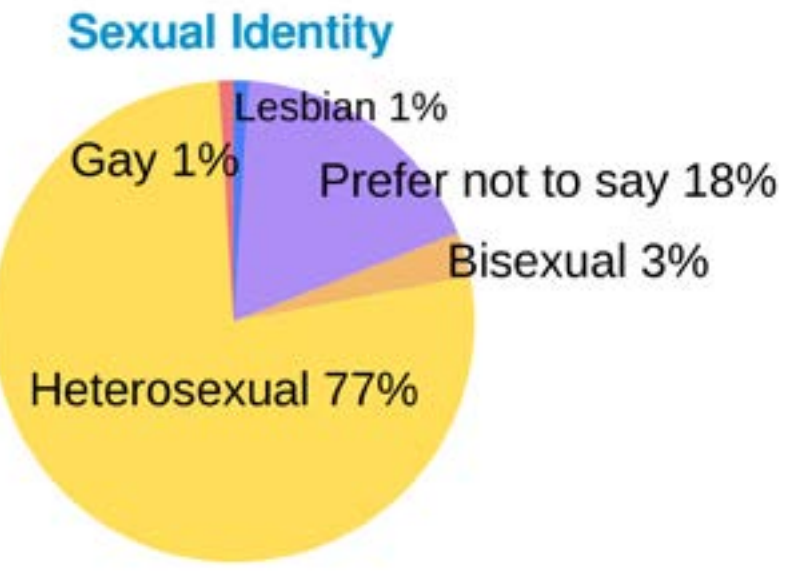
Outward's workforce is predominantly female, with 65% women and 35% men. This broadly reflects the social care sector, where 78% of the workforce is female and 22% male (Skills for Care, 2025). Outward therefore remains more gender-balanced than the sector overall. We are committed to ensuring equity for all genders and monitor recruitment, progression, pay and employee relations data to identify and address any disparities. Equality Impact Assessments and Diversity Pay Gap reporting provide additional assurance that opportunities and outcomes remain fair across the workforce



Outward operates within the London social care sector, one of the most ethnically diverse workforces in the country. Across London, around 22% of staff are White, 22% Asian or Asian British, and 50% Black African, Caribbean or Black British.

At Outward, diversity is even greater, with 17% of colleagues identifying as White and 83% from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

The number of colleagues who have declared a disability is currently low, which limits how confidently we can draw conclusions from the data. Disabled colleagues represent a much smaller group than non-disabled colleagues, and this imbalance can affect results. We also recognise that disability is not always disclosed, meaning the data may not fully reflect colleagues lived experience.





Our approach

We believe that EDI is everyone's responsibility and should be reflected in everyday interactions across Outward. While leaders play an important role in setting direction and expectations, real change depends on the actions and behaviours of individuals and teams.

Many of the activities within this EDI Strategy naturally align with, and are delivered through, other organisational strategies, including the People Strategy, Co-Production Strategy, and ultimately our Business Strategy. This reflects our approach to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion across everything we do, rather than treating EDI as a standalone programme.

Where actions appear in more than one strategy, this does not mean the same work is being done twice. Instead, it recognises that a single activity can contribute to multiple strategic objectives and have impact across different areas of the organisation.

Delivering meaningful and lasting improvement requires both practical changes to systems and processes, and continued attention to culture and behaviour. This strategy recognises that progress will come through learning, listening and making changes where needed.

Our aim

Our aim is to create an environment where everyone, including our workforce and the communities we serve, feels a genuine sense of belonging. We want diversity to be recognised and valued, and opportunities to thrive to be accessible to all.

We are committed to building a culture based on respect, inclusion and continuous improvement, and to making positive change at every level of the organisation.

This strategy reflects Outward's commitment to creating an inclusive and equitable organisation, aligned with our Business Strategy and People Strategy. It supports our wider goal of enabling people to thrive and contribute to our shared success.



Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives for the EDI Strategy 2026-2029

This strategy is built around five objectives. Together, they set out how we will continue to improve equality, diversity and inclusion across Outward, for our workforce and for the people we support (PWS).

Each objective reflects what we have learned from the previous strategy, where we have made progress, and where further change is needed. They are supported by a detailed three year action plan and will be monitored through our governance and reporting arrangements at all organisation-al levels, including regular oversight by the Staff Engagement Forum, Executive team and the Board, ensuring accountability and organisational learning.



“We build an inclusive future by acting with intention today.”

1. A Culture of trust, respect and accountability

We want Outward to be a place where people feel safe, treated fairly and confident to speak up. This means continuing to strengthen our reporting culture, improving how we learn from concerns, and addressing discrimination consistently when it occurs, including in services.

We will focus on making EDI part of everyday behaviour and management practice, not something separate or occasional.
Visible leadership, clear processes and honest conversations are essential to building trust. A strong sense of belonging and team connection supports wellbeing and helps people feel valued and respected.

4. Strong Data and evidence for fair decisions

Good decisions depend on good information. We will continue to improve the quality, consistency and use of EDI data to understand where inequalities exist and where action is needed.

This includes completing Equality Impact Assessments as standard, publishing clear summaries, improving disclosure rates, and continuing to publish our Diversity Pay Gap report. Staff survey results and service data will be used to shape improvement plans, with progress shared openly to support transparency and accountability.

2. Inclusive Leadership and Fair Progression

We are committed to ensuring that leadership at Outward reflects the diversity of our workforce and the communities we serve. The Board holds overall responsibility for EDI, with the Chief People Officer overseeing delivery. Our Chief Executive and Executive Directors will continue to lead by example, with clear EDI objectives included in appraisal processes and cascaded across teams.

We will continue to build fair and transparent pathways for development at all levels.
This includes targeted programmes such as Moving Up, internal development through Canopy and Sapling, senior leadership learning, and value-based, inclusive recruitment. We will also increase transparency around how decisions are made and continue to share lived experiences across the organisation to support learning and understanding.

5. Everyday Inclusion and Visible Celebration

Inclusion should be part of everyday life at Outward, not limited to formal events or awareness days. We will continue to recognise and celebrate difference in ways that feel genuine, relevant and accessible.

This includes Pride, Black History Month, Ramadan learning sessions, the People We Support Awards, and initiatives such as In My Shoes, which shares lived experiences from across the organisation. Local services will be supported to celebrate cultural and religious events in ways that reflect the people they support, helping inclusion feel real and shared.

3. Services shaped with, not just for, the People We Support and residents

People we support should have a meaningful voice in shaping the services they receive. We will continue to strengthen coproduction so that it is part of everyday practice, not a one-off activity.

This includes improving how we gather and act on feedback, using clearer survey questions, developing Easy Read communication, and supporting staff to have confident, respectful conversations about identity, culture, health, relationships and rights. We will strengthen how learning from the People We Support

Committee and Residents Engagement Panel is shared and acted on through governance arrangements, including regular reporting to the Operations Committee.



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We will focus on making EDI part of everyday behaviour and management practice, not something separate or occasional. Visible leadership, clear processes and honest conversations are essential to building trust. A strong sense of belonging and team connection supports wellbeing and helps people feel valued and respected.

Measures of Success:
• Staff survey results show sustained improvement in:
o confidence to raise concerns,
o feeling treated fairly,
o belief that concerns are handled appropriately.
• Learning from whistleblowing, conduct and discrimination cases is shared appropriately and leads to improvements in practice, deci sion-making and organisational learning.
• Embedding EDI objectives into appraisals increases accountability and drives consistent progress against organisational EDI priorities across teams.
• Insights gathered through leadership and trustee visits influence service improvements and strengthen staff and People We Support experience.
• The Staff Engagement Forum strengthens staff voice, with colleagues having meaningful opportunities to share their views, influence decision-making and contribute ideas.
• Colleagues understand how to raise concerns through Freedom to Speak Up routes and feel confident doing so when needed.
• EDI policies and guidance support consistent, fair and inclusive decision-making across the organisation.
The Disability Confident commitment contributes to accessible recruitment practices and increases confidence that candidates and col-leagues with disabilities are supported fairly.

“The adult social care workforce is one of the most diverse workforces in the UK, bringing together people from a wide range of cultures, faiths, identi-ties and life experiences”.



2. Inclusive leadership and fair progression

We are committed to ensuring that leadership at Outward reflects the diversity of our workforce and the communities we serve. The Board holds overall responsibility for EDI, with the Chief People Officer overseeing delivery. Our Chief Executive and Executive Directors will continue to lead by example, with clear EDI objectives included in appraisal processes and cascaded across teams.

We will continue to build fair and transparent pathways for development at all levels. This includes targeted programmes such as Moving Up, internal development through Canopy and Sapling, senior leadership learning, and value-based, inclusive recruitment. We will also increase transparency around how decisions are made, preserving confidentiality, and continue to share lived experiences across the organisation to support learning and understanding.

Measures of Success:
• Management and senior leadership representation continues to become more reflective of the diversity of our workforce and the communities we serve, supporting more inclusive decision-making and role modelling.
• Participants in development programmes such as Moving Up increase their confidence, skills and readiness for career progression opportunities, with at least one employee completing the programme each year.
• Canopy and Sapling continue to support career progression, with 45% or more of participants progressing into new or expanded responsibilities and leadership opportunities within 12–18 months.
• Colleagues understand the opportunities available to them and feel supported to progress through clear and accessible career pathways, which are regularly referenced in development conversations.
• Senior leaders demonstrate increased confidence and capability in leading and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion across the organisation, supported by two senior leaders successfully completing CMI Level 7 in Promoting EDI.
• Recruitment processes support fair and inclusive access to opportunities, attracting and selecting candidates from diverse backgrounds evidenced through audits and feedback.
• Workforce survey results show increased confidence in fair access to progression and development opportunities.

Diversity is one of Outward's greatest strengths, with colleagues from a wide range of cultures, backgrounds and experiences working together to support people to thrive.



3. Services shaped with, not just for, the People We Support and residents

People we support should have a meaningful voice in shaping the services they receive. We will continue to strengthen co production so that it is part of everyday practice, not a one-off activity.

This includes improving how we gather and act on feedback, using clearer survey questions, developing Easy Read communication, and supporting staff to have confident, respectful conversations about identity, culture, health, relationships and rights. We will strengthen how learning from the People We Support Committee and Residents Engagement Panel is shared and acted on through governance arrangements, including regular reporting to the Operations Committee.

Measures of Success:

- Through the People We Support Survey, People We Support express a better understanding of their individuality, rights, identity and choices.
- Easy Read information and communications help people we support access information in ways that work for them and participate more fully in decision-making.
- Co-production activities lead to visible improvements in services; with People We Support able to see how their feedback has influenced change.
- People We Support are actively involved in forums, panels and engagement activities, with participation reflecting a range of voices and experiences.
- Staff feel confident supporting conversations about identity, culture, relationships and individual preferences
- Feedback from People We Support informs service improvements and contributes to organisational decision-making and governance.



“Inclusion is not an event or awareness day. It is reflected in the everyday decisions, conversations and behaviours of our teams.”

4. Strong data and evidence for fair decisions

Good decisions depend on good information. We will continue to improve the quality, consistency and use of EDI data to understand where inequalities exist and where action is needed.

This includes completing Equality Impact Assessments as standard, publishing clear summaries, improving disclosure rates, and continuing to publish our Diversity Pay Gap report. Staff survey results and service data will be used to shape improvement plans, with progress shared openly to support transparency and accountability.

Measures of Success:

- Diversity Pay Gap reporting improves organisational understanding of workforce equality and informs targeted actions to address any identified disparities.
- Pay outcomes remain equitable across genders, with the gender pay gap remaining close to 0%
- Annual EDI and culture reporting supports Board oversight, accountability and continuous improvement.
- At least 80% of staff report feeling safe to raise concerns and confident that concerns will be handled appropriately.
- Annual workforce and leadership data reviews identify trends, inform decision making and support actions to improve representation and equity where needed.
- Equality Impact Assessments inform policy development and organisational decision-making, helping to identify and mitigate potential inequalities.
- Improved disclosure rates for disability, sexual orientation, and other characteristics where data is less complete provide a more accurate understanding of workforce diversity and enable more effective monitoring of equity across protected characteristics.
- Staff demonstrate knowledge and understanding of relevant EDI and LGBTQ+ practices, supported by training completion rates maintained above 95%.

“83% of Outward colleagues identify as being from ethnically diverse backgrounds. Outward’s workforce is 65% women and 35% men, making us more gender-balanced than the wider social care sector.”



5. Everyday inclusion and visible celebration

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This includes Pride, Black History Month, Ramadan learning sessions, the People We Support Awards, and initiatives such as In My Shoes, which shares lived experiences from across the organisation. Local services will be supported to celebrate cultural and religious events in ways that reflect the people they support, helping inclusion feel real and shared.

Measures of Success:

• Staff and People We Support share that inclusion events and activities increase understanding, belonging and appreciation of different backgrounds, cultures and experiences.
• Awareness events and celebrations attract broad participation from colleagues and people we support, reflecting an inclusive and engaged organisational culture.
•"In My Shoes" provides opportunities for colleagues and people we support to share lived experiences, learn from different perspectives and promote inclusion across the organisation.
• People we support have meaningful opportunities to participate in events such as the Nutley Edge Pride Weekend and celebrate their identity in ways that are important to them.
• Accessibility audits are completed and resulting actions are monitored and implemented through quality assurance processes.
• Events, celebrations and engagement activities continue to evolve in response to feedback from staff and people we support.

Links:

EDI Strategy 2023-2025 Completion Report and Outward EDI Policy

engaging · enabling 50 years empowering

BRITISH SAFETY COUNCIL Member

ISO 45001

We completed the Inclusive Employers Standard Foundation

Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR