



Public Sector Equality Duty Assurance Report

2024-25

Caring Expert Quality



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Purpose

The Equality Act 2010 sets out the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which requires NHS Blood and Transplant to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other unlawful conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share and people who do not share a relevant protected characteristic
- Foster good relations between people who share and people who do not share a relevant protected characteristic

The purpose of this report is to outline how NHS Blood and Transplant continues to meet its responsibilities.





Background

NHS Blood and Transplant strives to create a culture of inclusivity through delivery of its annual Business Plan, People Plan and local Directorate Plans.

Progress is monitored through the organisation's governance framework, including the Executive Board, Directorate Boards and the EDI Council, which oversees progress made towards Inclusive Culture goals.

In line with the Specific Equality Duties, NHSBT publishes Equality Objectives at least every four years.

This report sets out the progress made against those organisational priorities during the reporting period.

Background

It is important to note that, during the period covered by this report, the organisation undertook a review of its EDI structure, objectives and ways of working.

Updated equality objectives were developed for inclusion in the next reporting cycle to address identified areas of underperformance.

Together, this work aimed to renew and strengthen NHSBT's approach to inclusive culture and enable more focused progress.

The following sections summarise the progress made during the reporting period, aligned to each aspect of the duty.





Background Equality Objectives

Equality Objective	Focus	Key Targets
Anti-Racist and Non-Discriminatory Organisation	Reduce bullying, harassment and discrimination, with a focus on racial inequity. Improve diversity at all levels, especially senior leadership.	-Increase representation of under-represented groups towards 19.4%. -Track and reduce racial discrimination, bullying and harassment through annual workforce data.
	Internal Workforce	-Set aspirational diversity targets using 2021 Census benchmarks (ethnic minority, disability, LGBTQ+). -Achieve 75% declaration rates for under-represented groups. Implement revised recruitment and career development processes.
Capability	Strengthen colleague capability to understand equality duties and make inclusive, evidence-based decisions. Improve organisational equality literacy.	-Deliver an internal awareness campaign on equality obligations with leadership accountability. -Promote the D&I training, mentoring and digital toolkit offer.

These equality objectives originated in the 2021–2022 reporting cycle and were subsequently refreshed and re-published in 2023–24



Duty 1. Eliminating Unlawful Discrimination, Harassment, Victimisation and other Prohibited Conduct

During the reporting period, NHSBT strengthened its approach to preventing and addressing discrimination through updated policies, clearer processes and improved capability building. New and refreshed policies - including Resolution, Agile Working and Flexible Working - were developed by the expanded Policy team, with awareness plans co-designed alongside the Disability and Wellbeing, Neurodiversity, GRacE, LGBTQ+ and Women's networks.

Mandatory inclusion training was refreshed to reflect the evolving inclusion landscape, with strong completion rates (98.9%). As part of the Forward Together Cultural Transformation Programme, the Inclusion Learning and Development workstream was strengthened further by onboarding an external partner in August 2024, completing a Training Needs Analysis with around 700 colleagues, and agreeing recommendations in March 2025 to shape future inclusion training delivery.

Duty 1. Eliminating Unlawful Discrimination, Harassment, Victimisation and Other Prohibited Conduct



NHSBT continued to strengthen responses to concerns related to discrimination. Eight discrimination concerns were raised through Freedom to Speak Up during the period, which was lower than the previous year. Formal case outcomes are awaited from HR Services. Development of a new case-management system progressed to support more consistent oversight, reporting and assurance.

Governance mechanisms also supported greater visibility of issues linked to discrimination. Directorate Inclusive Culture Action Plans were monitored through Senior Management Teams and reviewed twice yearly by the EDI Council. Work progressed on a new bullying and harassment e-learning module to reinforce behavioural expectations and signpost routes for support.

Duty 1. Eliminating Unlawful Discrimination, Harassment, Victimisation and Other Prohibited Conduct

Additional activity through Forward Together directly supported this aim, including the development and launch of the Anti-Racism Framework (ARF), strengthened recruitment and assessment processes to reduce bias, and the introduction of practical tools such as allyship resources, active-bystander guidance and inclusion diagnostics.

2024-5 indicators showed some reductions in bullying and discrimination, though outcomes required continued monitoring over subsequent reporting cycles.



Duty 2. Advancing Equality of Opportunity Between People Who Share a Protected Characteristic and Those Who Do Not



NHSBT continued to take steps to advance equality of opportunity by improving workforce diversity data, strengthening access to development pathways and identifying disparities in recruitment and progression. Improvements in data quality led to increased disclosure rates among disabled colleagues (from 9.6% to 11.1%) and LGBTQ+ colleagues (from 5.2% to 15.8%). Overall representation of ethnic minority colleagues rose from 23.9% to 25.1%, supporting more accurate analysis and targeted action.

The Our Voice survey showed reductions in overall harm, with bullying, harassment and abuse decreasing from 13% in 2023 to 9.2% in 2025, including improvements for disabled and neurodiverse colleagues. While this indicates progress, results varied across groups, highlighting the need for continued focus on removing barriers and strengthening psychological safety.

Duty 2. Advancing Equality of Opportunity Between People Who Share a Protected Characteristic and Those Who Do Not

Recruitment and progression data identified areas requiring targeted improvement. Appointment rates were higher for LGBTQ+, disabled, women and white applicants, while ethnic minority applicants were less likely to be appointed from the shortlisting stage. An end-to-end recruitment review was completed, generating Forward Together recommendations aimed at reducing bias, improving transparency of career pathways and supporting fairer outcomes.

NHSBT continued to provide tailored support through active staff networks and partnership programmes. The Disability & Wellbeing, GRacE, LGBTQ+, Neurodiversity and Women's Networks contributed to policy development and provided peer support and lived-experience insight. NHSBT also continued its partnership with DFN Project Search in Filton, offering supported employment opportunities for young people with learning disabilities, helping to reduce barriers to accessing work.



Duty 3. Fostering Good Relations Between People Who Share and Do Not Share a Protected Characteristic

NHSBT continued to strengthen positive relationships between diverse communities through engagement, awareness-raising and collaborative activity. The Donor Experience team hosted community engagement events throughout the year to ensure services remained culturally sensitive and responsive to the needs of different groups.

The Anchor Events programme provided a consistent platform for celebrating diversity and amplifying staff voice. Key moments- including Black History Month, Disability History Month, LGBTQ+ History Month and International Women's Day-were co-designed with staff networks and Inclusive Culture Leads. Executive and Non-Executive Directors actively participated, modelling inclusive behaviours and reinforcing the importance of shared understanding across the organisation.



Duty 3. Fostering Good Relations Between People Who Share and Do Not Share a Protected Characteristic



NHSBT also co-created and launched its Anti-Racism Framework, shaped by staff voice, data and best practice. A targeted pilot enabled colleagues to refine tools and resources ahead of wider roll-out.

This work helped build a shared organisational understanding and language around anti-racism and contributed to stronger relationships between teams and communities.

Partnerships with external charities and advocacy groups further supported this aim, strengthening connections between NHSBT and the communities it serves and helping build trust and understanding across diverse groups.

Maintaining our Focus on Reducing Health Inequalities

Following health inequalities being recognised as a strategic priority, the Chief Medical Officer sponsored a discovery and mapping phase to identify five clinical priority areas.

An organisation-wide mapping exercise was carried out across the donor, staff and processes & capabilities lenses. This was completed alongside a policy and best-practice review to identify drivers and enablers of inequality.

The Research Governance Office facilitated a Patient and Public Advisory Group workshop in October 2024 to gather public insight on NHSBT's approach to reducing health inequalities.

In late 2024, the working group presented its findings and recommendations, confirming the five clinical priorities:

- Reducing red cell antibody formation in multi-transfused patients
- Reducing kidney transplant waiting times for minority groups
- Reducing liver transplant waiting times for young people
- Increasing access to automated exchange for sickle cell patients
- Reducing differential access to optimally match stem cell transplants

The Board agreed that KPIs for these priorities would be reported quarterly to the Executive Team from April 2025.



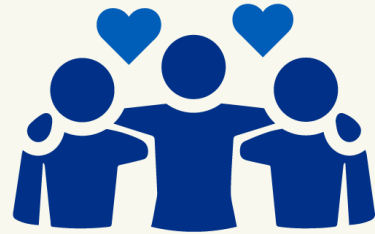
Building an Inclusive Culture at NHS Blood and Transplant

NHSBT continued to strengthen data collection and monitoring through comprehensive workforce reporting and analysis, supported by the managers' toolkit, which enabled managers to better understand and use their inclusion data. Organisational performance against equality objectives was reviewed regularly, including at Executive Board, the EDI Council and Directorate Boards.



Workforce Data and Representation

NHSBT strengthened data collection to track progress on diversity. Sharing rates increased for disabled colleagues (9.6% to 11.1%), LGBTQ+ colleagues (5.2% to 15.8%), and ethnic minority colleagues (23.9% to 25.1%). The Managers' Toolkit enables better understanding of inclusion metrics across the organisation.



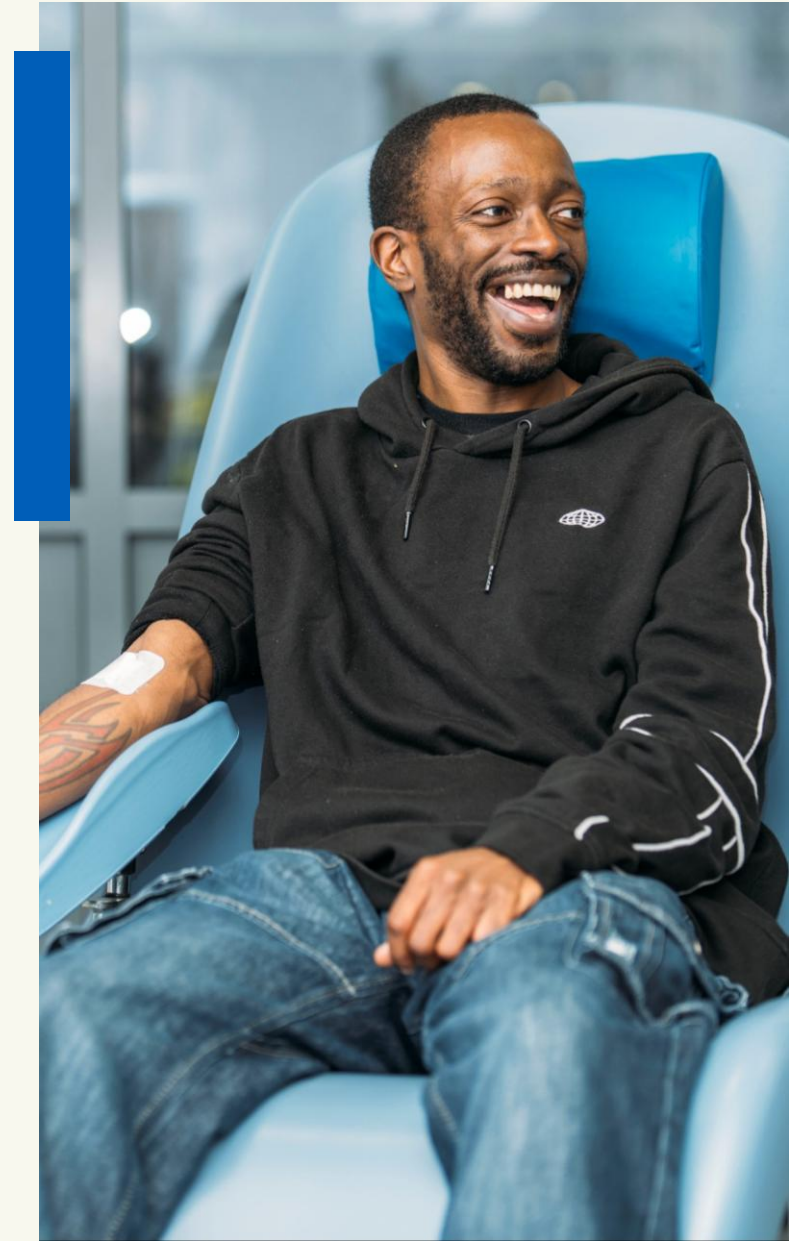
Staff Networks and Support

NHSBT provides tailored support through five active staff networks: Disability & Wellbeing, GRacE, LGBTQ+, Neurodiversity, and Women's Networks. These networks contribute to policy development, provide peer support, and help shape the organisation's inclusive culture. Union representatives receive facility time to support colleagues.



Forward Together Programme

NHSBT's Forward Together programme drives inclusion improvements across recruitment, learning and development, and culture. An end-to-end recruitment review was completed to reduce bias and improve transparency. Mandatory EDI training achieved 98.9% compliance, with refreshed content reflecting the evolving inclusion landscape.



A photograph of a large NHS Blood and Transplant sign. The sign is white with blue and red sections. The text 'Blood and Transplant' is in black, and the NHS logo is in blue. Below it, the words 'Blood Donor' are partially visible in white on a red background. The sign is supported by blue poles against a clear blue sky.

Blood and Transplant



Blood Donor

Conclusion

During the period covered by this report, NHS Blood and Transplant continued to take sustained steps to meet its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Alongside delivery through the Forward Together programme, the organisation reviewed its Inclusive Culture structures, objectives and ways of working to ensure they remain effective and aligned to organisational needs.

This work required coordination and highlighted areas where greater clarity, consistency and follow-through are needed. It has also strengthened the foundations for future improvement by providing a clearer understanding of what needs to change, where progress has been uneven and where deeper action will be required in the next phase.



Conclusion

Progress continued on refreshing NHSBT's equality objectives, supported by improved insight into workforce and experience data, areas of underperformance and systemic issues highlighted through local and national indicators.

These updated objectives will form part of the next reporting cycle and are intended to sharpen organisational focus, strengthen accountability and guide targeted action where disparities persist.

Collectively, this work positions NHSBT to deliver deeper and more sustained impact in the years ahead, with clearer priorities, stronger insight and a more coherent framework for tackling entrenched inequalities at scale.

Appendix: Progress made towards meeting Objectives



Activity Summary

Equality Objective	Success Measure	Progress Highlights
7.1 Equality Objective 1: Anti-Racist and Non-Discriminatory Organisation <i>NHSBT strives to achieve equity by addressing bullying, harassment and discrimination, with a particular focus on tackling racial inequities. This includes improving diversity at all levels — especially senior leadership — and addressing unfair treatment in disciplinary, recruitment, patient and donor interactions.</i>	- Achieve 19.4% representation of under-represented groups. - Track and reduce racial discrimination through annual workforce data.	- Increase in workforce sharing rates: - Disabled: 11% - Ethnic minority: 25% - LGBTQ+: 16% - Anti-Racism Framework piloted and launched through Forward Together. - Mandatory EDI training and inclusive leadership modules updated with compliance tracked. - Team-level issues addressed through monitoring and staff survey insights. -Annual PDPR template updated to include explicit focus on inclusive cultures and individual inclusion objectives for all staff. -The Our Voice Survey reported that 53% of ethnic minority colleagues responding reported having good opportunities to learn and develop, compared with 52% across the whole workforce, while 62% of ethnic minority colleagues felt they had opportunities for career growth compared with 60% of the overall workforce.
7.2 Equality Objective 2: Internal Workforce <i>This objective focuses on improving recruitment, retention and career development to position NHSBT as an inclusive employer of choice for diverse candidates.</i>	- Set aspirational representation goals for disability, ethnic minority and LGBTQ+ groups using 2021 Census benchmarks. - Achieve 75% sharing rates for under-represented groups. - Revise recruitment and development processes to reflect NHSBT's inclusion commitments.	- Ethnic minority representation has continued to rise, increasing from 20% in 2023 to 24% in 2024 and reaching 25% as at 31 March 2025. - Disability sharing rates increased to 11% (from 10%) and LGBTQ+ sharing rates to 16% (from 5%). - Awarded LGBTQ+ Inclusive Employer Gold and ranked in Stonewall Top 50. - End-to-end inclusive recruitment review completed. - Relative likelihood of recruitment for ethnic minority applicants is 2.1, highlighting s a key organisational priority area for action. - Participation in DFN Project Search continued to provide employment opportunities for young people with learning disabilities. - Targeted campaigns increasing visibility and attracting diverse applicants.
7.3 Equality Objective 3: Capability <i>This objective aims to enhance staff capability to understand and meet PSED obligations, improving equality-informed decision-making and reducing health inequalities among staff.</i>	- Launch an internal awareness campaign on equality obligations (with leadership accountability). - Promote D&I training, mentoring programmes and digital toolkits.	-EDI Mandatory Training: updates made throughout the year to reflect changing inclusion landscape; compliance as of end of March 2025: 99% of workforce. -Anti-Racism Framework: launch and pilot of ARF led to the creation of the first ARF Toolkit -Forward Together: L&D: external partner on-boarded; full Training Needs Analysis completed with recommendations made. - Year-round D&I Anchor Events highlighting lived experience and inclusion expectations.

All data rounded to the nearest percentage point