



# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

2024–2027

# Contents

<b>Foreword</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Our Values</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Our Vision</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Purpose</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Context</b> .....	<b>8</b>

<b>Strategic Priorities</b> .....	<b>9</b>
Transforming Leadership and Governance .....	10
Culture and Belonging.....	10
Equitable Opportunities and Workforce Development.....	11
Inclusive Decision-Making and Service Delivery.....	11
<b>Equality Mainstreaming Outcomes</b> .....	<b>12</b>

# Foreword

At Children’s Hearings Scotland (CHS), we are committed to fostering a culture where equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are central to everything we do.

Our strength as an organisation comes from the diverse experiences, perspectives and contributions of our colleagues and volunteers, and we recognise that true inclusion goes beyond words: it requires meaningful action and lasting change.

This EDI strategy is an integral part of our People and Culture Strategy, ensuring that CHS is a place where everyone feels valued, supported and empowered to thrive. It sets out our ambition to break down barriers, challenge discrimination and create a working and volunteering environment that is welcoming, fair and representative of the communities we serve.

By embedding EDI into our policies, leadership and ways of working, we will:

- build a culture of inclusion where diversity is celebrated, and everyone has a voice
- ensure equality in opportunities, enabling people from all backgrounds to participate fully in our work
- tackle systemic barriers that prevent fair representation and access to our organisation
- develop our people by equipping colleagues and volunteers with the skills and awareness to lead inclusively

At CHS, EDI is not a separate initiative; it is fundamental to how we operate. Through this strategy, we reaffirm our commitment to making CHS a truly inclusive organisation, where everyone – children, young people, colleagues and volunteers – feel heard, valued and able to contribute to positive change.





## Introduction

This EDI Strategy builds on the EDI Strategy 2021–2023. An EDI Working Group was relaunched in late 2024, and this draft aims to serve as a starting point for a refreshed EDI Strategy that will be informed by feedback and input from the Panel Community, National Team and CHS Board.

This strategy is a ‘live’ document that provides a framework for how EDI will be embedded across CHS. This strategy will align with our values and should be read alongside the People and Culture Strategy.

# Our Values

Our CHS values underpin our organisation and represent who we are. They inform our decision-making and serve as a guide for our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.



## CHALLENGING

Not being complacent, but questioning ourselves and others to help us improve.



## CREATIVE

Considering innovative and imaginative ways of approaching the issues we face in the work we do.



## CHILD CENTRED

Making sure everything we do is in the best interests of children and young people.



## RESPECTFUL

Treating children, young people, their families, partners and each other with care and consideration.



## FAIR

Making sure that everyone is treated with dignity and according to their individual needs; that our information and services are accessible to all; that we provide a consistent level of service to all.



## OPEN

Listening to, responding to and learning from feedback; acting honestly; ensuring processes are transparent; sharing information and being accountable for our actions and decisions.

## Our Vision

CHS will be a leading example of an inclusive, equitable and diverse organisation where everyone – children, volunteers, colleagues and stakeholders – feels empowered, valued and represented.

This strategy serves as a blueprint to achieve this vision and support all EDI work within CHS, and we are committed that EDI should be clearly visible in all that we do.

CHS is made up of a diverse community of over 2,000 volunteers, supported by a dedicated National Team of over 90 colleagues, and as an organisation we are committed to promoting an open and inclusive culture for the infants, children, young people and families we serve based on fairness and respect.





## Purpose

The purpose of our EDI Strategy and wider agenda is to:

- ensure EDI is embedded into every aspect of the organisation, from governance to frontline practice
- address systemic barriers and create inclusive decision-making structures
- foster a culture of belonging and inclusion

# Context

As a Public Body, CHS is committed to adhering to the **Equality Act 2010** and the general equality duty contained within it:

1. Elimination of discrimination, harassment and victimisation
2. Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
3. Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

We are guided by the protected characteristics within the Act:

**Age**

**Disability**

**Gender reassignment**

**Marriage and civil partnership**

**Pregnancy and maternity**

**Race**

**Religion or belief**

**Sex**

**Sexual orientation**

Since 2020, CHS has recognised care experience as a 10th protected characteristic, and we will continue to review our practice, policies and procedures to incorporate this.

However, if our end goal is to ensure that we fully reflect the community that we serve – the infants, children, young people and their families who attend children’s hearings – we must also consider other significant characteristics such as neurodiversity, socio-economic background, education level, employment status and, crucially, lived experience of both the Children’s Hearings System and care overall.

## Individual Needs

In our work around equality, diversity and inclusion, it is important that we remain mindful that people are individuals with their own backgrounds, experiences and needs. People who share a protected characteristic are not a homogenous group. People may also often have more than one protected characteristic meaning that their experiences of intersectionality will be very different to others with one of the same characteristics. While we strive for a diverse community, we must continue to treat everyone as individuals, providing the support that they need when they require it, as identified by them.





## Strategic Priorities

- 1 Transforming Leadership and Governance**
- 2 Culture and Belonging**
- 3 Equitable Opportunities and Workforce**
- 4 Inclusive Decision-Making and Service Delivery**

## PRIORITY 1

# Transforming Leadership and Governance

- Our leadership will work to create structures that ensure our people can, regardless of their background or protected characteristics, have equal access to opportunities and resources
- We will have leadership accountability ensuring leaders at the Board, National Team and volunteer levels undergo advanced EDI training
- We will establish EDI networks to co-design inclusion efforts and empower these networks of volunteers and National Team colleagues to educate and inform people of barriers faced by marginalised groups
- We will ensure that our internal practices, policies and processes are accessible and inclusive by design

## PRIORITY 2

# Culture and Belonging

- We will foster an inclusive culture where all our people can thrive regardless of their background
- National Team colleagues and volunteers will be trained to be both trauma-informed and trauma-skilled to support children and young people effectively
- We will champion flexible, hybrid and accessible ways of working to support the diverse needs of our National Team

### PRIORITY 3

## Equitable Opportunities and Workforce Development

- We will take into account unique circumstance to ensure fair recruitment and progression opportunities by implementing anonymous hiring processes and inclusive job descriptions
- To build skills for the future, we will invest in inclusive leadership training and mentoring and support career pathways for under-represented groups
- To ensure a shared understanding of unconscious bias and discrimination, online EDI training modules will be provided to volunteers and National Team colleagues
- Equalities monitoring data will be utilised to inform our recruitment processes

### PRIORITY 4

## Inclusive Decision-Making and Service Delivery

- Children and young people will be empowered to shape policies and inform decision-making through advisory groups such as the Experts by Experience group.
- We will work with partners and stakeholder groups to improve service delivery within hearing rooms for volunteers and the children and families attending hearings
- Real-time demographic and qualitative data will be used to identify disparities and help amend policies and processes to remove any detrimental impact on people with protected characteristics

# Equality Mainstreaming Outcomes

Our equality mainstreaming outcomes are an action plan to address the points highlighted within this strategy. The outcomes will enable us to measure our success and help us drive forward our EDI agenda and keep it at the heart of all that we do. A modern strategy requires innovative approaches to ensure future readiness. Therefore, where possible, we will seek to use real-time data in monitoring these outcomes.

## OUTCOME 1

**We will implement appropriate training and development for our people in line with their responsibilities to ensure they are able to conduct their duties to a high standard in supporting children, families and our people.**

We want to ensure that everyone who

engages with CHS, especially children and young people, can fully engage and participate in the children's hearings process. Recognising that accessibility challenges exist for marginalised groups, we will promote inclusive language and provide accessible communication to meet the needs of people with protected characteristics.

## OUTCOME 2

**We will build an inclusive culture based on respect by increasing awareness of EDI across our community through engagement with youth-led advisory groups and the establishment of EDI networks.**

We will continue to review internal policies and practices with the input of young people and volunteers to assess the impact on protected characteristics and ensure EDI is considered in all our work.

We will invite feedback from children, volunteers and National Team colleagues to monitor our drive towards an inclusive culture in line with the CHS values.

## OUTCOME 3

**We will review our recruitment and selection processes for volunteers and National Team colleagues, aligning these processes with best practice in order to tackle barriers and promote inclusivity.**

We will seek to understand the barriers and challenges that are faced by people with protected characteristics from volunteering in our Panel Community and take steps to address these. We will be data-driven in analysing under-representation within our Panel Community.

We aspire to be an employer of choice and recognise that in doing so we seek to attract a diverse range of candidates for employment roles with our National Team.





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