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01/04/2023	01/04/2026	AB/TN	CEO	New Policy
20/03/26	20/03/29	AB/TN	CEO	Updated for legislative changes, strengthened harassment duties, PSED guidance updates and best-practice improvements.

# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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## 1. Purpose

Manchester Settlement is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) throughout our organisation and in all services we deliver. This policy outlines our approach to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations. It integrates current legislative requirements, including strengthened employer harassment duties, updated Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) guidance, and evolving best practice.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all Manchester Settlement staff, Trustees, volunteers, temporary workers, contractors, partners and anyone engaged in delivering services on our behalf.

## 3. Legislative Framework

This policy reflects and complies with the following legislation and guidance:

Equality Act 2010 (updated to January 2026).

Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149) and updated Government guidance (2023–2024).

Employment Rights Act 2025 (phased implementation 2026–2027), including strengthened harassment protections and equality action plan requirements.

Sexual harassment prevention duties (employers must take all reasonable steps from October 2026).

Worker Protection Act-related changes (2024 onwards) including extended harassment protections covering contractors, volunteers and third parties.

Human Rights Act 1998, Data Protection Act 2018, Mental Capacity Act 2005.

## 4. Definitions

### Equality

Ensuring fair treatment, equal access and removing barriers so all individuals can achieve their potential.

### Diversity

Recognising and valuing differences, perspectives and lived experiences.

### Inclusion

Creating an environment where everyone feels respected, empowered and able to contribute fully.

## Protected Characteristics

We adopt the statutory categories under the Equality Act 2010: Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation.

## Vulnerability

A person may be vulnerable temporarily or permanently due to health needs, disability, social or economic circumstances, safeguarding concerns or other factors affecting capacity or resilience.

## 5. Policy Statement

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Taking all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment and protect workers from third-party harassment (as required from October 2026).
- Advancing equality of opportunity and ensuring all individuals can thrive.
- Fostering good relations between people who share and do not share protected characteristics.
- Ensuring compliance with the updated PSED guidance, including proportional due regard and robust decision-making.

We embed equality into all organisational functions, governance, service design, recruitment, leadership and culture.

## 6. Our Commitments

### Leadership & Governance

- Ensure the Board and Executive Team champion equality and inclusion at all levels.
- Publish equality objectives and, where required, equality action plans in line with new employer expectations under the Employment Rights Act.

### Decision-Making & Policy Development

- Ensure all policies undergo equality impact consideration aligned with updated PSED guidance.
- Keep records demonstrating due regard in line with best practice expectations.

### Workforce & Culture

- Ensure fair and inclusive recruitment, progression and development.
- Provide mandatory EDI training at induction and every three years.
- Maintain a workplace free from harassment, bullying and victimisation, including third-party harassment obligations from 2026.
- Make reasonable adjustments proactively for disabled workers.

## **Service Delivery**

- Ensure services are accessible, culturally competent and responsive to community diversity.
- Use equality data appropriately and lawfully to inform service improvements.

## **Engagement & Representation**

- Seek broad participation from staff, customers, volunteers and stakeholders to shape inclusive services.

## **7. Supporting Vulnerable Individuals**

We recognise vulnerability may be temporary or situational. Staff must respond sensitively, respecting dignity while ensuring safeguarding and support needs are met. Mental capacity must always be presumed unless assessed otherwise consistent with the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

## **8. Responsibilities**

- Chief Executive: Overall accountability for EDI.
- Managers: Ensure compliance, support staff, model inclusive behaviour.
- All Staff and Volunteers: Uphold this policy and report concerns.
- Contractors / Partners: Must adhere to this policy as a contractual requirement.

## **9. Risk Management**

Failure to comply may breach the Equality Act, PSED or sexual harassment duties. Non-compliance may lead to legal challenge, reputational damage or regulatory action. Updated PSED guidance emphasises the need for proportionate evidence of compliance.

## **10. Data Protection**

Any personal data collected for equality monitoring will be processed lawfully under the Data Protection Act 2018.

## **11. Communication**

This policy will be accessible to staff via the intranet and to clients via our website.

## **12. Learning & Development**

Mandatory EDI training is required at induction and every three years. Additional training will be provided to reflect legislative changes, including new harassment prevention obligations.

### **13. Review**

This policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier if legislation, regulatory guidance or best practice changes.