

# BRC/CRF Research Inclusion, Workforce and Equity Impact Training Session

Fozia Ahmed, Smeeta Sinha, Angela Kelsall and Rachel Cowen  
BRC CRF EDI Team



# The 'Why' of EDI?

- Inequalities affect people's career progression
- Inequalities limit research and innovation excellence and impact
- NIHR Research Inclusion/EDI Strategy

## Research Inclusion Strategy: an update on our action and forward look

Published: 31 January 2024 | Version: 1.0 | 5 min read

### Engaging the talents and energy of diverse people in all areas of our work

[Fostering an inclusive environment](#)

[Improving the relevance and quality of our research](#)

[Developing the evidence base for our diversity and inclusion approaches](#)

[The future – 2024 and beyond](#)

In 2022 we launched the NIHR's first [Research Inclusion Strategy](#), followed by our [action plan](#). This update shows the progress we've made on those actions as well as a forward look at our journey to embed equality, diversity and inclusion in everything we do.

### Engaging the talents and energy of diverse people in all areas of our work



We launched aspirational [targets for the diversity of our professional committee and panel members](#) in 2022. Since then, we've been working on improving the quality and quantity of data we collect. We've also developed resources to support inclusion on committees and panels. We've launched the resources across our funding programmes. We'll continue to develop resources, test

**Diversity** is being invited to the party;  
**inclusion** is being asked to dance.

Vernã Myers

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/who-we-are/research-inclusion>

# The NIHR Manchester BRC CRF EDI strategy

**Aims to create fair processes and an inclusive environment to tackle inherited, acquired and structural inequalities for the BRC CRF workforce.**



## **KPIs:**

- *Diverse team structures – at all levels of seniority*
- *More equitable access to resources and opportunities*
- *Fostering an inclusive research environment at all levels of research and academia*
- *Address disparities in funding and career advancement*
- *Ensure transparent and inclusive communication*
- *Provide support for all especially under-represented groups*

## EDI Strategic Themes

- The primary focus of the Manchester NIHR BRC-CRF EDI strategy is to **develop a diverse and inclusive workforce**, which will be delivered by focussing on the following four areas:



People



Process



Education &  
Training



Legacy

**People:** Foster a culture that prides itself on its commitment to proactive inclusion

**Process:** Create processes and practice that enable the workforce and student population to thrive

**Education & Training:** Ensure training and development opportunities are accessible and attractive to all

**Legacy:** Bring evidence-led EDI into the spotlight; to leave a footprint of positive and impactful change for our workforce, research participants and communities

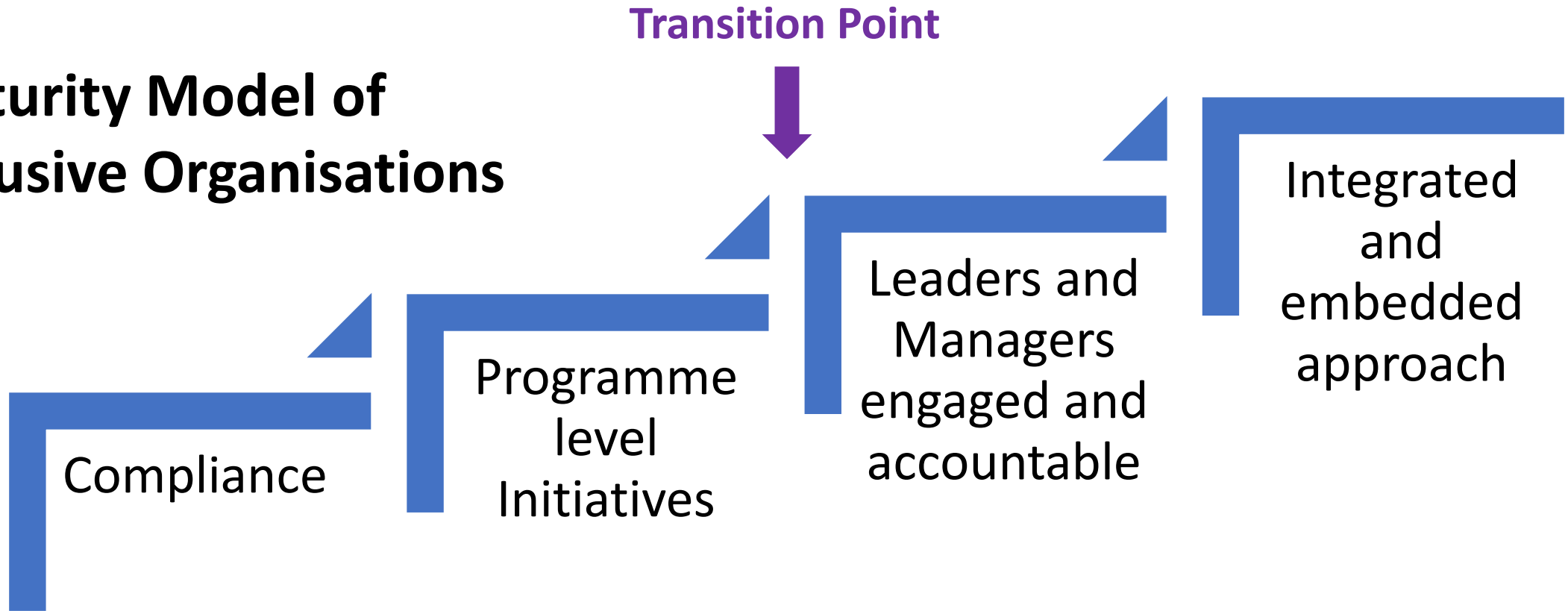
# NIHR Research inclusion strategy and objectives

- The NIHR Research Inclusion (EDI) Strategy includes a commitment to:
  1. Become a more inclusive funder of research
  2. Widen access and participation for greater inclusion
  3. Improve and invest in the NIHR talent pipeline
  4. Embed evidence-led diversity and inclusion approaches
  5. Collaborate with partners for impact and sustainability



Aim to increase reflection, understanding of our current picture and support collective action:

## Maturity Model of Inclusive Organisations

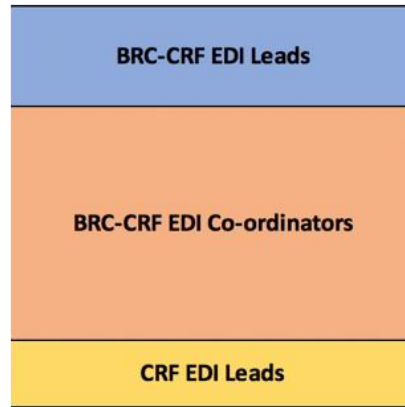


Collective education, commitment, action, accountability and reward

# Advancing Effective EDI Practice

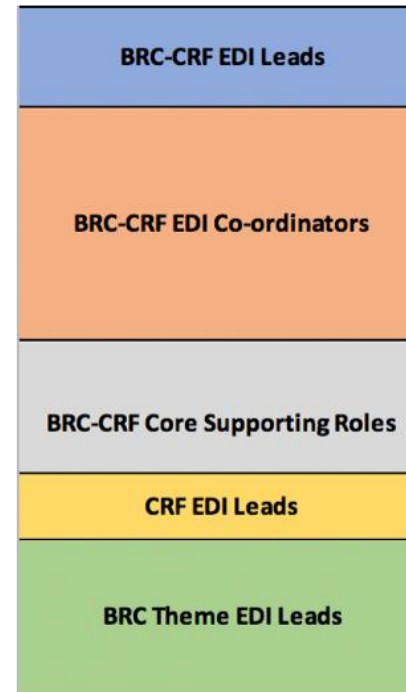
- EDI Team and Working Group est. 2024

## Core EDI Team



Create an action plan +/- toolkit for advancing and delivering each strategic objective

## EDI Working Group



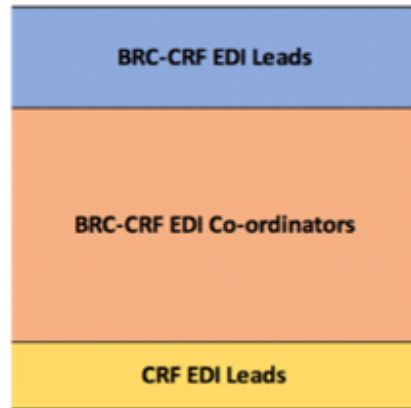
Co-deliver the EDI objectives

**x 13 Theme EDI leads representing each of the BRC theme**

# Advancing Effective EDI Practice

- EDI Team and Working Group est. 2024

## Core EDI Team



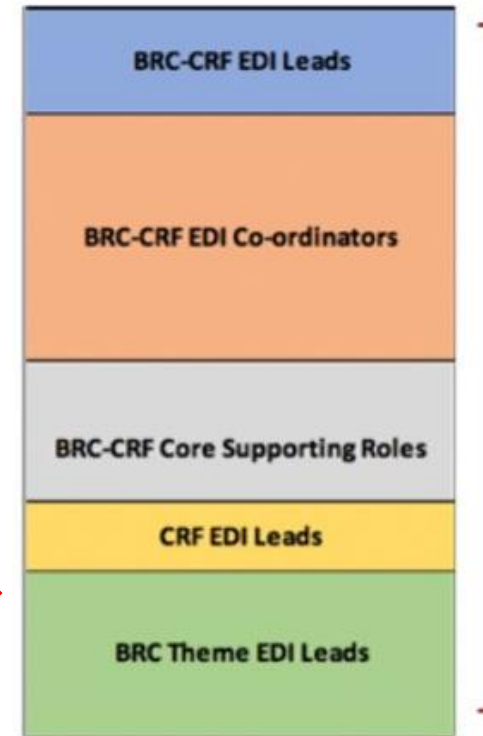
Create an action plan +/- toolkit for advancing and delivering each strategic objective

**6: Develop and maintain an evidence-led EDI case study library**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design case-study template and identify accessible platform for case-study library (end of Year 2).</li> <li>• Create communications plan for launch and use of case study library.</li> <li>• Identify case studies with the addition of at least one case study per year from each partner.</li> <li>• At least one case study to be submitted to NIHR as an impact case, promoted across BRC and CRF.</li> <li>• At least one case study submitted as an abstract to the UKCRF Network conference in year 3 (<i>CRF only</i>) and any BRC-relevant conferences.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit at least one case study to a peer-reviewed journal.</li> <li>• Commitment of resource to ensure library remains up-to-date, relevant and accessible.</li> <li>• Share library with other NIHR infrastructure within GM.</li> <li>• Share with other partners such as the NWCRF Alliance (<i>CRF only</i>) and Northern BRCs (<i>BRC only</i>).</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

*Lead: BRC & CRF SLT EDI Teams*

## EDI Working Group



Strategic objectives operationalised

operationalised



# Reflect on current practice and set EDI Objective(s) at the individual, team, project and programme level

---

Authorship and  
Contribution to  
Publications

Recruiting,  
Reviewing and  
Career  
Progression

Promoting EDI  
Education and  
Training

Promoting EDI  
in teams, events  
and culture

# Embedding and advancing effective EDI practice in Themes



|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Case Title</b>     | Advancing effective EDI practices and capacity building for inclusive research within the RMD theme.<br>(Content based on RMD Baseline EDI survey for 2025) |
| <b>BRC Cluster(s)</b> | Inflammation  |

**Rationale for case study**

This case study evidences the RMD Theme's commitment to advancing effective EDI practices and building capacity for inclusive research. Drawing on the 2025 baseline EDI survey, it highlights strategic actions taken to embed inclusivity across leadership, training, and patient engagement—demonstrating meaningful change and alignment with NIHR's goal of reducing health inequalities and improving outcomes.

**What the outcome(s) is/are**

Achieved a more diverse leadership team (45% female, 40% non-clinical). Delivered mandatory EDI training across University and NHS staff. Supported five successful fellowship applications from diverse candidates. Strengthened community engagement with Indian and African groups. Rolled out anonymised EDI data collection across studies. Shared inclusive tools and practices across the wider BRC.

**Conclusions**

The RMD Theme has made significant strides in embedding EDI across its research and workforce practices. Through strategic leadership, inclusive training, community engagement, and data-driven approaches, the theme is fostering a more equitable research environment. These efforts not only benefit researchers and participants but also contribute to broader NIHR goals of reducing health inequalities and improving outcomes.

**Recommendations**

We will:  
Continue to improve inclusive practices and share resources between the theme and EDI team.  
Develop strategies to address challenges faced by underrepresented groups at different career stages.  
Work with the UoM School of Biological Sciences' EDI committee to implement solutions for early career researchers.

**Future work**

We will:

- write a case report for our inclusive PPIE work diversifying participants in research studies.
- We will review the Rising Star Selection and author guidance toolkits to make these processes more transparent.
- We will continue to offer support for grant applications and ensuring EDI is included as part of applications. This could perhaps include ambassadors for grant applications

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR)  
 Manchester Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) and NIHR  
 Manchester Clinical Research Facility (CRF):  
 Inclusive Research examples

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Case Title</b>                 | Advancing effective EDI practices and capacity building for inclusive research within the Respiratory theme.<br>(Content based on Respiratory Baseline EDI survey for 2025) |
| <b>BRC Cluster(s)</b>             | Inflammation  |
| <b>BRC Theme(s)</b>               | Respiratory   |
| <b>Inclusive Research Element</b> | The integration of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) into research design, recruitment, and public engagement.  |

**Rationale for case study**  
 This case study aims to demonstrate how the Respiratory Theme at Manchester BRC and CRF is actively embedding equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) into its research culture and practices. By showing how the theme has supported development, diverse workforce engagement, and equitable research environment, the case study provides evidence of areas for improvement, and contributes to NIHR's broader mission. The funded research infrastructure reflects and serves diverse communities.

**Background**  
 The Respiratory Theme undertook a baseline EDI survey in 2025 to assess how well equality, diversity, and inclusion were being implemented in its research environment. The findings revealed good gender representation and inclusive practices at junior levels, but also highlighted gaps at senior leadership levels, inconsistent EDI training, and limited progression pathways. In response, the theme initiated actions to improve leadership diversity, support early career researchers, and embed inclusive research design. This case study captures a snapshot of progress and outlining future steps to the theme.

**What we did**  
 To address gaps identified in the 2025 Respiratory Baseline EDI survey, the Respiratory Theme implemented a series of targeted actions to embed inclusive practices across its research environment. These included enhanced by nominating individuals from underrepresented groups into the Rising Stars programme and supporting the leadership roles. Workforce inclusion was promoted by encouraging diverse doctoral students and by encouraging staff in academic roles to participate in research presentations and public engagement. Inclusive research design was adopted for research studies such as the asthma diagnostics project to ensure representation of diverse populations. Collaborations with VOCAL and public engagement initiatives like **Let's Talk About Cough** and **Hiptox** ensured broader reach. Additionally, the theme supported early career researchers through groups and strategic planning, while also making improvements to multi-faith prayer spaces to foster a welcoming environment.

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>What the outcome(s) is/are</b> | As a result of the initiatives undertaken, the Respiratory Theme has seen improved gender balance at senior leadership levels and increased representation of individuals from diverse backgrounds in doctoral and early career roles. Inclusive research design has become standard practice, with studies actively recruiting from diverse populations and engaging under-served communities through public initiatives like <b>Let's Talk About Cough</b> and <b>Hiptox</b> . Staff from varied clinical and academic backgrounds are now more involved in research presentations and stakeholder engagements, contributing to a more inclusive and collaborative environment. These changes have fostered a stronger culture of inclusion, enhanced visibility of underrepresented groups, and laid the groundwork for more equitable career progression pathways.   |
| <b>Conclusions</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Respiratory Theme has made demonstrable progress in embedding EDI principles across its leadership, workforce, and research practices.</li> <li>Initiatives informed by the 2025 Baseline EDI survey have led to improved gender balance at senior levels and increased representation of diverse backgrounds among doctoral and early career researchers.</li> <li>Inclusive research design has become standard, with active recruitment from under-served populations and meaningful public engagement.</li> <li>A more collaborative and equitable research culture has emerged, supported by mentoring structures and inclusive provisions.</li> <li>Despite these advances, challenges remain in formalising career progression pathways and ensuring consistent, role-specific EDI training across institutions. Continued alignment with central NIHR EDI objectives and sustained strategic investment will be critical to achieving long-term impact and institutional transformation.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Recommendations</b>            | Develop structured career pathways for Clinical PhD students, Non-clinical early career researchers (ECRs), Administrative and support staff. Introduce PI mentorship training. Prioritise broader EDI training  |
| <b>Future work</b>                | We will continue to embed inclusive practices and strengthen collaboration between the Respiratory theme and the central EDI team. Our immediate goals include:<br>Developing a pathway to support career progression to address challenges faced by underrepresented groups at different career stages, both in research and for core staff.<br>We will continue to improve inclusive practices and share resources between the theme and EDI team.   |

# Improve EDI data by counting yourself in

- Complete demographic surveys:
  - UoM MyView
  - BRC CRF surveys using NIHR diversity set (age, disability, ethnicity, religion, sex and gender, sexual orientation, parental and caring responsibilities, socioeconomic status)
- Share qualitative experiences through local representatives, EDI leads, focus groups and through conversations with supervisors/line managers > reciprocal mentoring

- Female NIHR grant applications decline with higher career stage -71% pre-PhD > 37% senior investigator
- Ethnic minority NIHR applicants less likely to be successful than white applicants (also underrepresented on NIHR committees)
- Disabled NIHR applicants, award holders and professional committee members under-represented

## UK NATIONAL PROFESSORS BY SEX AND BLACK, ASIAN AND MINORITY ETHNIC/WHITE IDENTITY



National professors by sex and Black, Asian and minority ethnic/White identity, 2021/22

AdvanceHE

Advance HE (2021) Equality in higher education statistical reports - weighted by full person equivalent #AdvanceHEstats

# Workforce Diversity Survey – Methodology



Responses encouraged but not mandated at individual question level – voluntary completion

BRC Survey was emailed to BRC workforce directly, with email reminder sent

CRF Survey was emailed to CRF workforce via Operational Leads/Managers & open for 4 weeks, with single email reminder sent

# Workforce Diversity Survey – Manchester CRF



131 staff members invited to take part  
64 responses received (49%)

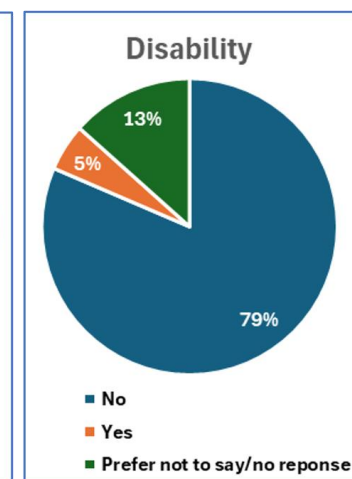
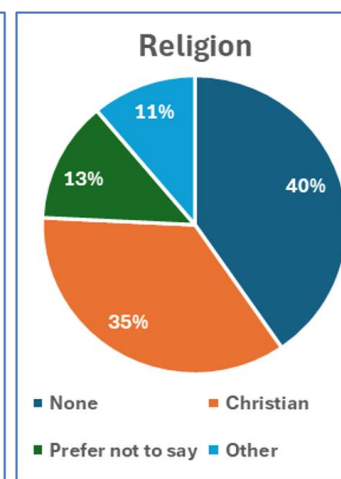
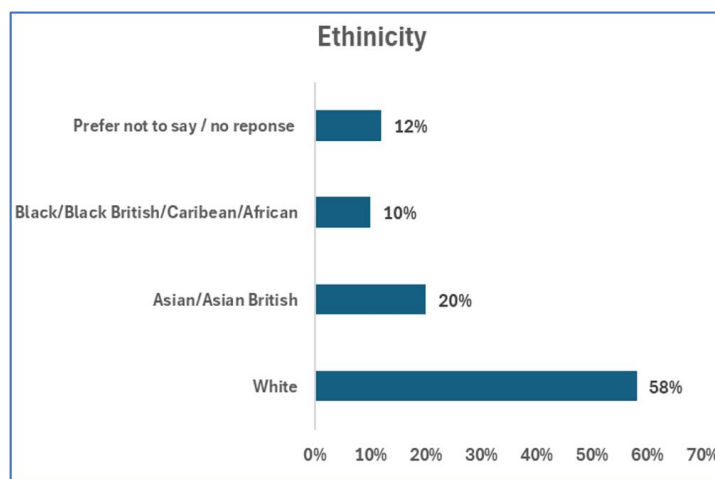
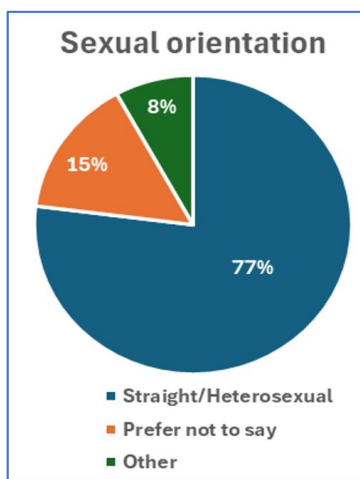
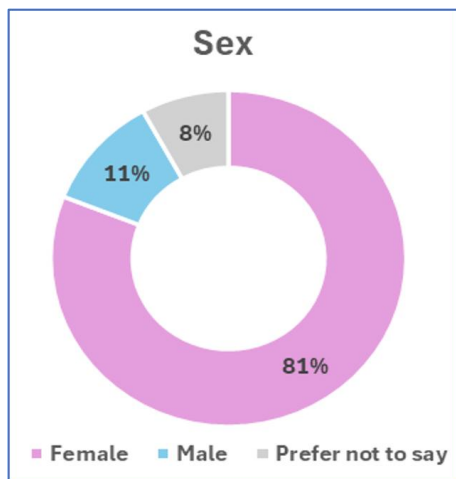
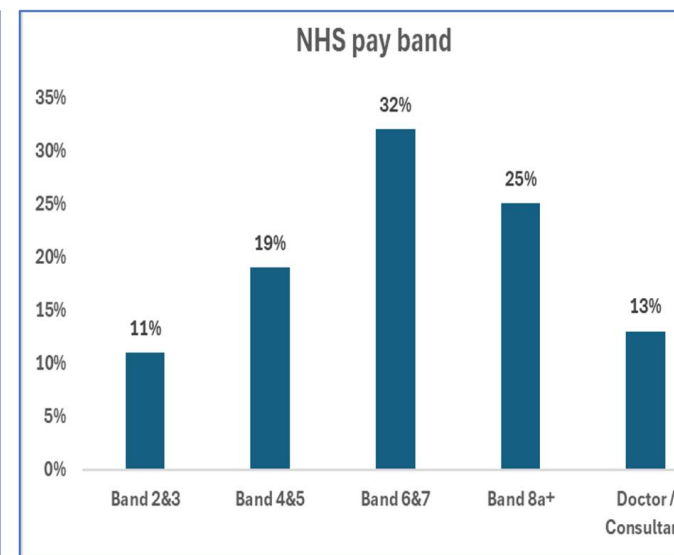
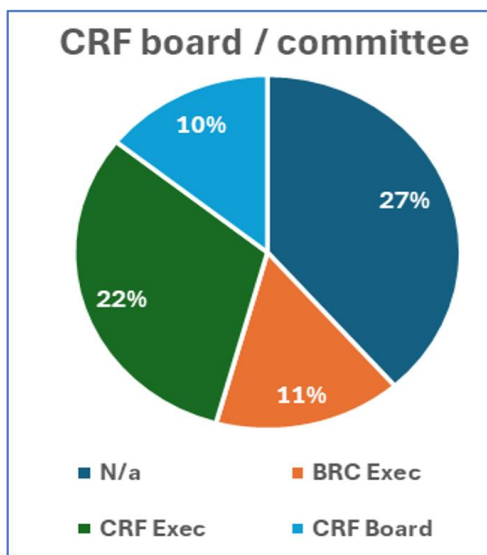
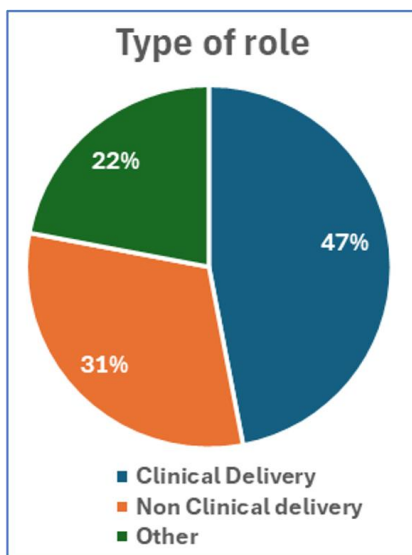
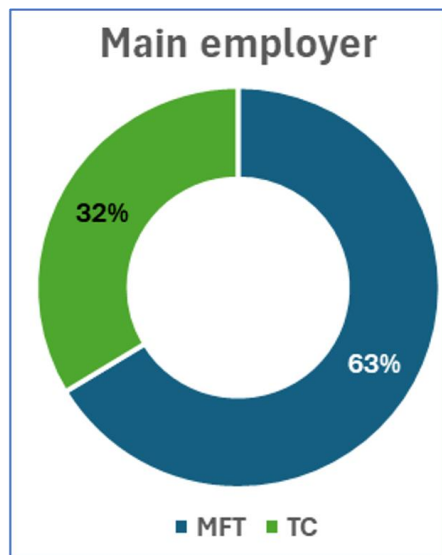


Two forms were blank so excluded;  
62 responses analysed.



Summary analysis used censorship rules for responses <5.  
Prefer not to respond and blank responses grouped together

# Workforce Diversity Survey – Manchester CRF



# Workforce Diversity Survey – Challenges



Located across  
multiple stakeholders



Survey Communications /  
accessibility



Censorship rules



Duplication & anonymity



Socialising & transparency



Personal identification

# Workforce Diversity Survey – next steps



Analysis of BRC & CRF data

Compare with other data sets



Applications & success for award schemes



Recruitment & retention



Inform inclusive career development strategies



Engagement with CPD / training



Guide design and development of future staff surveys

# Cultural ambassadors (CA) case study



## **Addressing Systemic Bias**

The CA Programme tackles bias and inequity in healthcare recruitment and disciplinary processes to build trust and fairness.

## **Role of Cultural Ambassadors**

Trained Cultural Ambassadors participate in senior recruitment and disciplinary panels to ensure equitable and transparent decisions.

## **Inclusive Research Environment**

The programme fosters diversity and retention in research teams, supporting innovative, patient-centered research delivery.

## **Organisational Impact**

By promoting fairness and accountability, the CA Programme strengthens healthcare system integrity and staff confidence.

[EDI Case Study\\_Cultural Ambassadors \(CAs\) Programme Promoting Fairness in Recruitment and Disciplinary Panels.pptx](#)

# CA Pilot at Northern Care Alliance

- Structured cultural ambassador training - 46 CAs trained
- CA to attend all senior recruitment panels
- CA present on 47 panels (63%)
- 100% positive feedback from panels and interviewees
- Staff members and candidates describe equitable experiences which support the Trust's dedication to fairness
- 4 times a CA was assigned but did not attend, 7 times a CA was assigned but was cancelled by requestor, 17 times no CA available. Twenty-six different CAs sat on at least one recruitment panel



# Cultural ambassadors (CA) case study

## Key Conclusions and Strategic Recommendations

### **Programme Effectiveness**

Structured interventions promote fairness and inclusion in recruitment and disciplinary processes effectively.

### **Training and Support Importance**

High quality training and ongoing support are crucial to Ambassador engagement and role clarity.

### **Recommendations for Growth**

Refining training, expanding programme, and promoting awareness ensure sustained and effective participation.

### **Future Challenges and Collaboration**

Addressing barriers through collaboration and funding will strengthen programme impact and cultural change.

# Embedding EDI in appraisals

## Challenges and opportunities

### Challenges in EDI Implementation

EDI is often seen as complex or burdensome, causing inconsistent adoption across teams and unequal support for staff.

### Impact of Inconsistent Practices

Inconsistent EDI processes create gaps in inclusion, affecting career progression and workplace culture negatively.

### Opportunities

Small, simple EDI changes in [induction and appraisal](#) can drive fairness and inclusion without extra resources.

### Benefits

Embedding EDI into induction and appraisal creates a shared vision early - boosts team cohesion, innovation, compliance, and creates a fair, inclusive culture sustainably.

## Where to embed?

### Structured Induction

Provides consistent messaging about organisational values, expectations, and resources to new starters.

### Inclusive Research Training

Mandatory, accessible training tracked centrally, using established inclusion toolkits and resources.

### EDI Integration in Appraisals

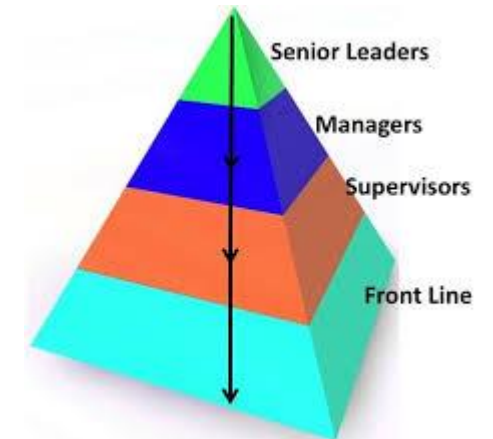
Embedding EDI objectives in staff appraisals normalises inclusion as part of professional development.

### Leadership Support

Senior managers model EDI engagement by including objectives in their own appraisals.

# Embedding EDI in appraisals: objective examples

- Check balance for conferences, panels etc. you are invited to
- Do working conditions (working hours, tasks) allow all members of staff to combine work and other responsibilities in a satisfactory manner
- Ensure job adverts are inclusively-worded (e.g. remove gender bias, racial bias, include EDI statement) and advertise job adverts beyond traditionally narrow academic networks
- Ensure job requirements minimise unnecessary "essential criteria" that are likely to select against certain groups (e.g. costly MScs, requirements for trainees to have moved institute/country) and maximise flexibility (e.g. offering part-time / flexible hours)
- Draft a selection panel that consists of at least two people where at least one being a woman, and where possible at least one individual who identifies as coming from a racialised minority background. Briefing of panel on unconscious bias.



[SBS EDI Committee - EDI Statements for Research - Google Sheets](#)

# EDI Toolkit – Embedding EDI in appraisals

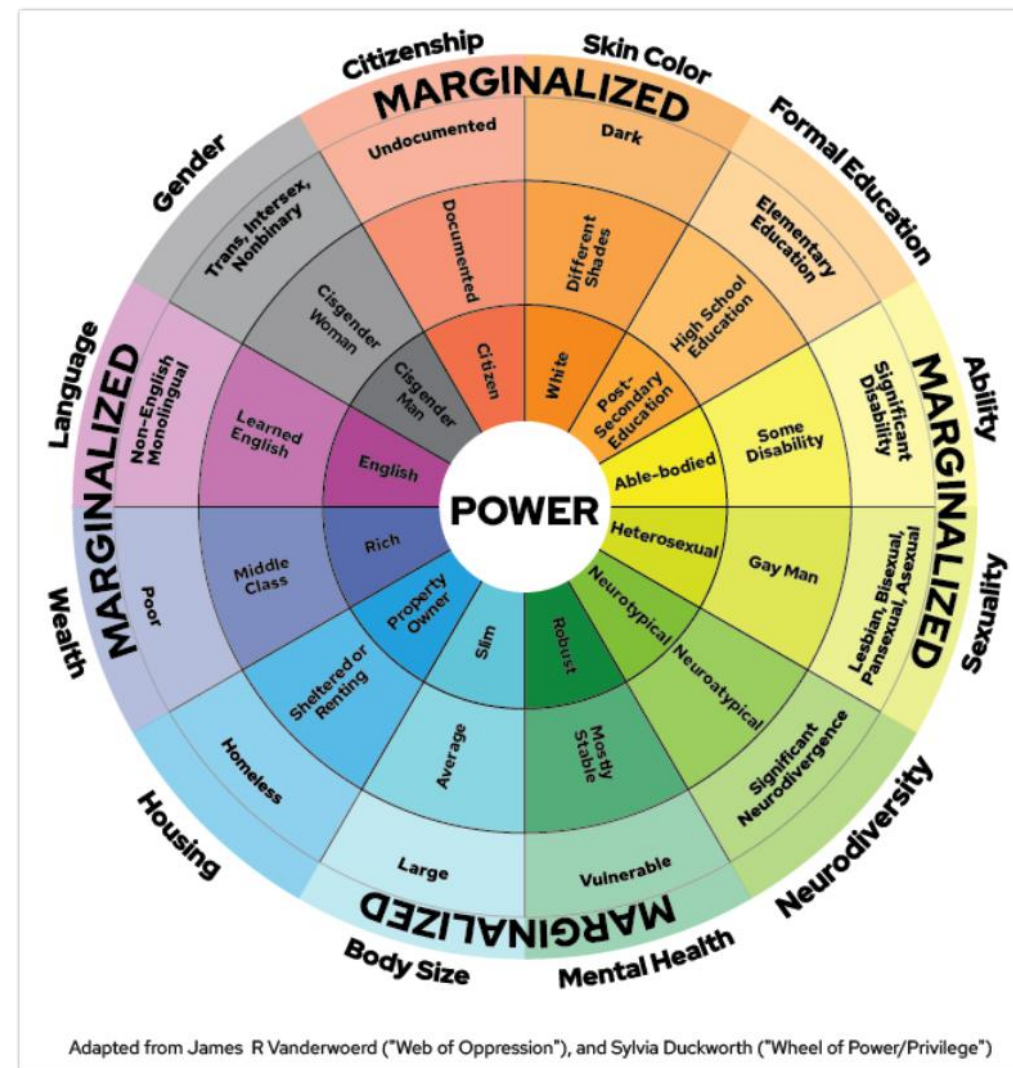
| SMART objectives for induction and appraisal  |
|---|
| <b>Objective 1: Number of new starters that undertake inclusive research training</b>   |
| <b>Objective 2a: Proportion of senior leadership team that have incorporated and EDI objective into their annual appraisal</b>  |
| <b>Objective 2b: Inclusion of EDI objective(s) in overall theme annual plan</b>   |
| <b>Objective 2c: There is an expectation that an EDI objective(s) will be included in the Personal Development Plan of all staff, including PGRs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>As an example, you could consider completing the inclusive researcher toolkit as an annual EDI objective for all staff</i></li><li>• <i>Review BRC EDI Induction</i></li></ul>  |
| <b>Objective 3: Ensure all BRC staff have access to career progression discussions by December 31, 2025, ensuring 100% of core staff and researchers (both UoM and non-UoM) have documented academic appraisals and/or career progression plans considered; via own institution or BRC</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>As an example, where there is not an existing mentor, consider signposting and consider development and targetted mentoring schemes outlined in Education and Training section.</i></li></ul> |

# Toolkit to increase EDI Education and Training

- Essential Training (Diversity in the Workplace, Unconscious bias, Disability Equity, Sexual Harassment)
- Equality Impact Assessment training
- Research Integrity Training
- Code of practice and process to report research concerns and misconduct

Use tools to reflect on your own experiences, consider power and privilege, your networks and access to support.

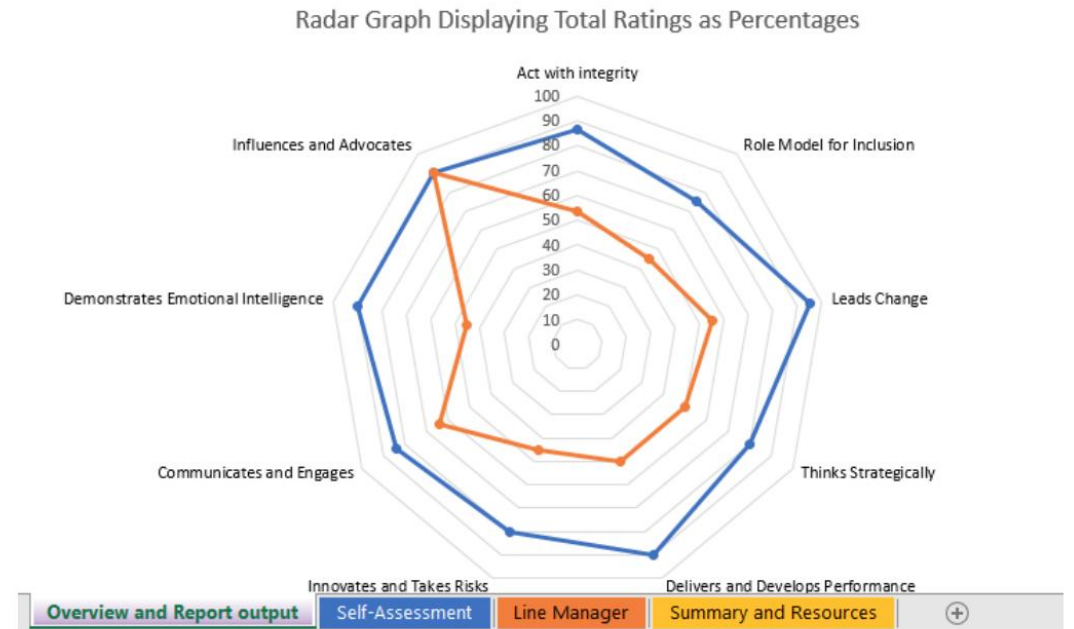
- How has this helped or hindered your education and research career so far?
- Have you considered how your position in relation to power and privilege can influence your research area and projects?
- Become an advocate or reciprocal mentor



# UoM Training

## Increase your self awareness and inclusive leadership capacity

University of Manchester Leadership Framework, capability self assessment tool >



# NHS Training

## MFT

**Inclusive and Compassionate Leadership (All NMAHPs)**

**Inclusive Behaviours as a Manager** [Inclusive Behaviours as a Manager | People Place \[peopleplace.mft.nhs.uk\]](#)

- The Diverse Recruitment Panels Scheme
- The E3 Ring-Fenced Secondment Scheme
- The Reciprocal Mentoring Scheme

## NCA

**'Accelerated leader Development'** 2 day course ([Northern Care Alliance | Princess Royal Training Award \[princessroyaltrainingawards.com\]](#))

## For All

**NIHR learn**

**Research Inclusion Modules** <https://learn.nihr.ac.uk/>

**Leadership eLearning modules and Leadership Development Resources** [Leadership Lab Modules | NIHR Learn](#)

[\[learn.nihr.ac.uk\]](#) [Leadership e-learning module descriptions | NIHR \[nihr.ac.uk\]](#)

[Unconscious bias | NIHR Learn \[learn.nihr.ac.uk\]](#)

**NHS leadership academy**

[Programmes – Leadership Academy \[leadershipacademy.nhs.uk\]](#)

# Promote EDI in teams, events and culture

- Consider the demographic and culture within your team and wider collaborators
- Take part and/or organise diversity celebration events individually or as a team?
- Make EDI/research inclusion an agenda item for team meetings and share learning from EDI education and events with your team
- Use inclusive meeting and events guides, respect people's pronouns and use the inclusive language guide
- Promote and engage with the diversity calendar and join network groups to share experiences, support each other and advocate for positive change
- Reflect on team working conditions and expectations (hours, tasks etc). Do they allow all members to combine work and life and fully participate?
- Reflect on equity of opportunity and hierarchical patterns in your team
  - Prioritise 10 days professional development and use and promote targeted support
  - Prioritise mentorship for yourself and others
- **Create a team EDI/research culture charter**



# Use Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)

For all projects including your research projects

- What are the key aims and benefits of the research, study, review or proposal?
- Identify any previous equalities related research or consultation relevant to your research, study, review or proposal
- Describe how the research, study, review or proposal will (or may) affect or impact upon equality
- Identify who – from the Protected Characteristic groupings or other relevant underserved or disadvantaged communities – will (or may) be affected, how and any necessary action(s)
- How will you monitor and evaluate the equality impact of your study?



[Equality Impact Assessments](#) [Equality Impact Assessments | Equality, Diversity and Inclusion | StaffNet | The University of Manchester](#)

**Reach out for support through the EDI team(s)**

# Cumulative small actions by all will make the biggest difference

Reflect on the impact of my decisions on others and challenge decisions that may disadvantage people

Help someone new to the settle into the organisation and share your networks with them

**Share my equality data and experiences**

**Listen to others to fully understand their perspective**

# Share your inclusive practices (large or small) and EDI objectives you may set for the future



- What do you currently do to create a more inclusive culture and/or environment?
- What changes would you like to see in your environment and what actions could you take?



Join at [menti.com](https://menti.com)  
Use code 49693571