

Equality and Diversity Council: Narrative and Terms of Reference

Our Vision

The vision of the Council is to promote equality, diversity and inclusion for all patients, service users, carers and the workforce.

Our Purpose

The Council provides visible leadership on equality issues across the NHS. Its purpose is to help shape the future of the health system from an equality, diversity and inclusion perspective, and to improve the access, experiences, health outcomes and quality of care for all patients, service users, carers and the workforce.

The Council will support the NHS to deliver improved outcomes for patients and service users, as well as holding firm on the ambition to ensure healthcare services and workplaces are fair, free from discrimination and diverse.

To achieve the above, the Council will provide strategic direction on key elements of the equality, diversity and inclusion agenda. However, the responsibility for the promotion of equality, and for addressing the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 in the NHS, rests with individual NHS organisations.

Our Governance

- The Council is jointly chaired by the Chief Executive of NHS England and an elected member of the Council.
- The Council is a *partnership forum* supported by the national healthcare Arm's Length Bodies.
- The secretariat for the Council is shared across a number of the national healthcare Arm's Length Bodies.
- The Council works through NHS England and other partner organisations and stakeholders, to facilitate influence and to empower.

Our Role

The Council will drive whole system equality improvement with national strategic oversight with regard to the following key areas:

- Improved access and experience
- Better health outcomes
- Inclusive leadership
- A representative and supported workforce.

The Council will aim to operationalise the strategic approach by undertaking the following roles:

- **Commission** strategic pieces of work that support NHS organisations in fulfilling their responsibilities on promoting equality, diversity and inclusion.
- **Seek** to raise ambition at every level of the health system by inspiring strong leadership, removing barriers to change, celebrating success, and bringing the NHS Constitution to life.
- **Empower** health care providers, commissioners, regulators, the NHS workforce, patients and the public to achieve an NHS where “everyone counts”, by supporting continuously improving performance.
- **Describe** what success looks like, and will advise on evidence-based priorities for promoting equality, diversity and inclusion.
- **Influence** to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded within key health care policy, strategy, and in the delivery of services.
- **Ensure** that as individual organisations, we will continuously improve our own performance on equality, diversity and inclusion, and support the wider health system in this respect.

Our membership

Membership on the Council and its operational subgroups is for two-year tenure, at which point membership will be subject to full review. Membership of the subgroups will be agreed by the Council.

Representatives from the key national healthcare Arm’s Length Bodies will be accompanied by a subject matter expert from their respective organisation, which will support the operational expression of the Council’s strategic workstreams.

Council members will represent the following:

- Key national healthcare Arm’s Length Bodies
- Staff side organisations
- NHS provider trusts
- Clinical commissioning groups
- Voluntary and community sector
- Lived experience / patient perspective

Role of members

The strength of the Council comes from its members, whether through their position or influence within the NHS and key partner organisations, their representation of the workforce and the wider community, or through their delivery of change within the service.

Members will work towards supporting the Council to:

- Positively position itself as a body of influence in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion within the NHS and beyond.
- Champion change to raise ambitions on the equality, diversity and inclusion agendas for all service users, communities and the workforce.
- Contribute to the delivery of a responsive and equitable health service, built on the values of the NHS Constitution.
- Represent their organisation and peers on the Council and feeding back the key emerging messages to them as appropriate.

All members contribute to the work of the Council by:

- Attending the full Council meetings – showing commitment and leadership by attending, in person, at least three of the four meetings per year, as appropriate.
- Providing clear strategic direction, challenge and innovation to the work of the Council; providing ongoing insight and a broad range of perspectives.
- Providing ongoing involvement, support and strategic direction to the work carried out by the Council.
- Championing the equality, diversity and inclusion agenda; engaging the whole system in delivering positive and sustained change.

Frequency of meetings

The Council will meet at least quarterly.

Review

These Terms of Reference are to be kept under regular review.