Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan
2025-2028

Rethink
Mental
Illness

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Foreword

This Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategic Plan is a testament to our unwavering commitment to encouraging an environment where our staff and beneficiaries feel valued and respected. It outlines how we will shape and embed EDI in our workplace practices and mental health services.

This strategic plan is not merely a document to meet legislative requirements or comply with the Equality Act 2010 and other equalities legislation. It is an expression of our dedication to enacting our core values and vision for EDI, both now and in the future. We recognise that this commitment is even more crucial in the face of internal and external pressures and challenges. These pressures threaten the progress we have made in creating equity, fairness, and levelling the playing field for marginalised and underrepresented communities and individuals.

We remain steadfast in our belief that diversity in all its forms - whether race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, or socio-economic background – enriches our organisation, society and enhances our collective potential. As we continue this journey, we are acutely aware that embedding EDI, as an employer and mental health service provider, presents its challenges, but this journey is immensely rewarding, beneficial and necessary to ensure we can serve the needs of our diverse workforce and communities.

This EDI Strategic Plan will complement and be delivered alongside our Advancing Mental Health Equalities Plan. For both plans, we are committed to measuring progress and impact, celebrating our successes, proactively addressing lessons learned, and ensuring that EDI is ingrained within our organisational culture.

Thank you for your support.

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Introduction

We are delighted to present our Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategic Plan, developed in consultation with our staff networks, staff support groups, .Equity and Inclusion Board, Lived Experience Advisory Board, Carers Advisory Board, Equity and Inclusion Practice Forum and staff across Rethink Mental Illness and Mental Health UK.

The EDI Strategic Plan is a key commitment in the charity's Race Equality Action Plan, which states that we will "develop, publish, and implement an equity, diversity, and inclusion strategy that is clear and accessible to our people, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders."

This EDI Strategic Plan is not a tick-box exercise or merely a means to an end. It is about ensuring we are taking the right steps to make a meaningful difference in areas where we know we must improve, such as:

- Increasing the diversity of our workforce at all levels to reflect the diversity of modern England and the communities we serve as a national mental health charity.

- Establishing an inclusive culture where we embrace and celebrate differences, create psychological safety, and ensure that wellbeing is prioritised so that our diverse workforce can thrive, contribute, and progress.

- Improving access, experience, and outcomes in our mental health services for ethnically diverse and other underserved communities through our Advancing Mental Health Equalities Programme, which is a core component of our commitment to becoming a truly anti-racist organisation.

- Supporting our race, gender, disability, neurodiversity, and LGBTQIA+ staff networks, menopause support group, and lived experience groups to create safe spaces for members to share ideas and help drive meaningful cultural change across the organisation.

- Taking an evidence-led approach by using a range of insight data and research to monitor and measure EDI outcomes, inform priorities and decisions, and actively encourage feedback loops to guide initiatives.

- Complying with the Supreme Court's ruling on the legal definition of a woman in the Equality Act 2010, while being clear that the court's ruling does not in any way alter our commitment to recognising, valuing, and supporting our colleagues and beneficiaries who identify as transgender, intersex, or non-binary.

The delivery of the EDI Strategic Plan will be underpinned by the Staff Networks Action Plan, which will support us in meeting our EDI ambitions over the next four years.

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Who we are

Rethink Mental Illness is a leading charity provider of mental health services in England for people who are severely affected by mental illness. They are at the heart of everything we do.

Whether online, over the phone, or face-to-face, we offer services that empower people to live independently. Daily, we assist people in understanding mental health, their rights, and accessing support for broader needs like physical health, finances, housing, work, and volunteering.

We provide local peer support groups across the country to help people living with mental illness and their carers support each other, grow in confidence, and take greater control of their lives.

We campaign on a local and national level to ensure people severely affected by mental illness are listened to, treated fairly, and have easy access to the health and social care services they need.

We partner with a wide range of organisations, including other charities, private businesses, the NHS, and local authorities, to create communities that genuinely care.

"We'll never stop fighting, for a society that truly cares for people living with mental illness."

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Our values

We believe that everyone should be treated with respect and dignity, and we strive to embed equity, diversity, and inclusion in everything we do for the benefit of our staff, service users, and their carers. That is why equity is one of our seven core values:

Commitment:

We work tirelessly to provide support for everyone severely affected by mental illness.

Equity:

We believe that in a world where discrimination and disadvantage exist, treating people with equity is critical to ensuring justice and fairness for all.

Expertise:

We constantly use our expertise to provide practical and personal support for people who are severely affected by mental illness.

Hope:

We offer hope for a better quality of life for all those severely affected by mental illness.

Openness:

We are open and transparent in all our work with beneficiaries, supporters, partners, and the public to achieve change for people severely affected by mental illness.

Passion:

We are passionate about leading the way to a better quality of life for everyone severely affected by mental illness.

Understanding:

People who are severely affected by mental illness are at the heart of everything we do in our organisation - our membership, our governance, and our workforce.

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Our vision

This EDI Strategic Plan has been developed with a clear focus on delivering equity and inclusion, which is one of the five principles underpinning the four strategic objectives in our *Communities that Care Strategy 2023-2028*:

> **We are committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion, and to becoming a truly anti-racist organisation, ensuring justice and fairness for all people severely affected by mental illness.** Our services will continually work to understand their users and their specific needs, including service users from racialised or minoritised communities, so we can provide them with the support they need when they need it. As a campaigning organisation, we will use our platform to speak out on the inequalities in mental health suffered by racialised and other diverse communities, amplifying the voices and experiences of people from these communities who are severely affected by mental illness. We are committed to creating a welcoming and inclusive workplace environment that appreciates and celebrates differences, where everyone is treated with respect and dignity. As an employer, our leadership and governance structures will be accountable for embedding equitable, diverse, and inclusive workplace practices that enable and empower all colleagues to thrive and progress as valued employees.

The EDI Strategic Plan reinforces our commitment to creating an equitable, diverse, and inclusive organisation for the benefit of our workforce and people affected by mental illness.

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1   Anti-_____g____eport, 2021
2   Oxytocin-Learning report
3   Anti-racism statement
4   Race Equality Matters Bronze Trailblazer Award

Advancing Mental Health Equalities *Plan*

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Advancing mental health equalities

In November 2023, NHS England launched the Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework (PCREF)[5], an anti-racism framework for mental health trusts and service providers. The PCREF is part of the Advancing Mental Health Equalities Strategy, which aims to improve access, experience, and outcomes for people from racialised, marginalised, and neurodiverse communities in mental health services.

The PCREF aims to ensure equitable workplace practices with diverse representation at all levels to reflect the communities we serve. All mental health trusts and service providers must have their PCREF plans in place by March 2025, and the PCREF will be included in Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspections.

We will implement the PCREF through our "Rethink Mental Illness: Advancing Mental Health Equalities Plan," which reflects the language we use in relation to EDI, anti-racism, and involvement work. This plan has been co-designed through engagement with internal and external stakeholders, partners, and people with lived and caring experience of mental illness. It will build on the anti-racist advancements we have made over the past two years.

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5   NHS England » Patient and carer race equality framework

Our achievements

While we recognise that our EDI journey is just beginning, compared to other organisations in the public and private sectors, we can be proud of the progress we've made. Our staff networks, internal support groups, and the Equity and Inclusion Practice Forum have been instrumental in supporting the charity to deliver tangible EDI outcomes over the past two years. These include:

- Launching **four staff networks on race, LGBTQIA+, women and disabled staff and internal support groups** to provide a safe space for conversations around menopause and mental health and wellbeing.

- Launching our flagship **Mutual Mentoring 'Discovery' Programme**, involving the Executive Team, Directors, Associate Directors, and members of our Race Equality Action Leaders Network, which fostered powerful and mutually beneficial conversations on EDI, race equality, and career development.

- Improving the diverse representation of our **Lived Experience Advisory Board** and **Carers Advisory Board** across protected characteristics to ensure more diverse and intersectional insights in our campaigning, policy influencing, and service delivery.

- Publishing our **'Transitioning at Work' guidance**, created in collaboration with our Pride and Progress Network, to assist managers and transgender colleagues with workplace support.

- Publishing our **Race Equality Action Plan**[6] and **Anti-Racist Statement**, reinforcing our commitment to becoming a truly anti-racist organisation.

- Publishing an annual **EDI Calendar** to raise awareness of and celebrate key events, religious observances, and heritage months throughout the year with a range of internal and external activities.

- Rolling out training on **inclusive leadership behaviours** and **privilege** to Associate Directors and other staff, focusing on psychological safety and unconscious bias. We've also delivered training to our Board of Trustees and Executive Team on inclusive leadership, sponsorship, privilege, and anti-racism.

- Launching a series of **bite-size EDI training videos** on our staff intranet to improve understanding, awareness, and knowledge of EDI across the organisation. Our EDI knowledge hub contains a wealth of resources, including videos, articles, podcasts, and literature.

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6   Rethink Mental Illness Race Equality Action Plan

Our EDI efforts have received external recognition, further validating our achievements and commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive organisation:

- We have received **Investors in People**, **A Mindful Employer**, and **Disability Confident Employer** accreditations.

- We were shortlisted as a finalist for the **British Diversity Awards** in 2024[7] and 2025[8] in the Not-For-Profit/Charity Sector category.

- We were shortlisted for the inaugural **Diversity Network Awards 2024**[9] in the Best Network Initiative category.

- We were shortlisted for the **Inclusive Awards 2023**[10] in the Inclusive Culture Initiative Award category.

We *recognise* that our EDI journey is *just beginning*

7   British Diversity Awards, 2024
8   British Diversity Awards, 2025
9   Diversity Network Awards, 2024
10   Inclusive Awards, 2023

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Our priorities

This EDI Strategic Plan outlines how we will achieve our organisational aims around EDI and what actions we will take to become a model employer and service provider.

The **Staff Networks Action Plan** supports the delivery of this strategic plan. We are grateful to our staff networks, internal support groups, Equity and Inclusion Practice Forum, and other colleagues and stakeholders who have worked with us to identify gaps in our EDI provision.

We will focus on the following four priority areas to create a diverse charity and an environment where staff feel included, valued, and heard:

Representation: We aim to cultivate a diverse and representative workforce at all levels, mirroring the communities we serve. Our focus includes attracting, retaining, and developing passionate and talented people in an inclusive environment where they can thrive and progress.

We will:
- Embed inclusive recruitment practices, talent management, and succession planning.

- Introduce diverse recruitment panels to increase diversity in our talent pipeline, particularly for managerial positions.

- Redesign our website to promote our evolving employer brand and highlight our inclusive internal culture.

- Sustain the diversity of our Lived Experience Advisory Board and Carers Advisory Board to elevate the voices of people with lived and caring experience.

- Launch a mentoring programme for our staff networks to promote career development and inclusive practices.

Mental Health Inequalities: We are committed to addressing the mental health inequalities in access, experience, and outcomes that disproportionately affect ethnically diverse and other marginalised communities.

We will:
- Publish our **Advancing Mental Health Equalities Plan** to address disparities in mental health care and outcomes for underserved communities.

- Pilot the plan in selected service areas to evaluate activities aimed at closing gaps in mental health services.

- Take forward the six recommendations in the **Black Mental Health Manifesto**[11], including reforming the Mental Health Act and ensuring full implementation of the PCREF.

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11   Black Mental Health Manifesto

Inclusion: We aim to foster compassionate and inclusive behaviours across the organisation, creating psychologically safe environments for all staff.

We will:

- Continue supporting our staff networks to strengthen their collective voice and influence EDI across the organisation.

- Develop and launch a **Management Development Framework** that is tailored to the needs of the organisation and its managers. This framework will equip our managers with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to foster an environment where every team member feels valued and will support them to create a culture of inclusion, respect, and belonging.

- Provide guidance for managers to implement reasonable adjustments for their teams effectively.

- Publish **Inclusive Practices Guidance** for managers to foster supportive team environments.

- Embed our newly designed **Equality Impact Assessment** template and guidance tool for policy and procedure reviews.

- Produce resources on EDI topics such as microaggressions, use of language, pronouns, and allyship.

- Introduce ethical, transparent and effective practices in a new **Procurement Policy** that will establish clear standards and procedures to support equitable decision-making and achieve value for money while upholding our organisational values

Accountability: We will measure EDI improvements across the charity for our staff and service users, using data and feedback to inform our actions.

We will:

- Strengthen the strategic oversight of our **Equity and Inclusion Board**.

- Develop our **EDI dashboard** with insights data across all directorates.

- Use external benchmarking and good practice accreditations such as the **Business in the Community Race at Work Charter**, **Stonewall Index**, and **Disability Confident Employer**.

- Publish our **Gender Pay Gap** and **Ethnicity Pay Gap** reports and use the data to make improvements to our workplace practices.

- Continue improving the collection of service user data and produce a diversity data monitoring guide.

- Embed recommendations from **Care Quality Commission inspections** to strengthen EDI in service provision.

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Our approach

We will implement this EDI Strategic Plan primarily through the Staff Networks Action Plan. Progress will be measured using various data sources, staff and service user engagement, feedback, and national benchmarks, allowing for adjustments as needed, either by adding or reprioritising interventions. This approach will ensure that we are iterative and responsive in our approach to EDI by being:

Evidence-led: Measure the impact and outcomes of the EDI Strategic Plan through appropriate and relevant indicators, using a range of data sources, experiences, and perspectives to inform our decision-making and ensure our actions are impactful for our staff and beneficiaries.

People-focused: Understand the needs of our staff and service users by working with internal and external stakeholders to identify and address disadvantages and inequities in our workplace practices, mental health support, and service delivery.

Targeted: Focus on underrepresented and marginalised groups who are experiencing the greatest disadvantage and/or exclusion, both internally and externally, informed by data analysis and periodic reviews.

Accountable: Integrate equity, diversity, and inclusion into our policies, practices, and processes by being open and transparent, with clear accountability and effective governance to track progress against the ambitions outlined in this EDI Strategic Plan.

Beyond compliance: Go beyond the nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 and consider wider aspects of identity such as gender expression, carer responsibilities, and socio-economic background, as well as the effect of intersectionality on people with multiple protected characteristics and their backgrounds.

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Our data

We are proud of the diversity of our workforce and that everyone who works for Rethink will feel included and valued so that they can contribute and participate. We want to continue improving the collection of our representation and inclusion data to spot gaps and monitor progress against our EDI Strategic Plan.

Representation: Our headline data based on declarations for ethnicity, gender, disability, and LGBTQIA+ shows that we are moving in the right direction in diversifying our workforce:

18% The representation of our employees from ethnic minority backgrounds is **18%**, increasing from **15%** in 2023.

The overall representation of women has remained at **69%** in 2023 and 2024. **69%**

16% Our representation of disabled employees has declined slightly from **17%** in 2023 to **16%** in 2024.

However, our representation of LGBTQIA+ employees increased by **2%**, from **10%** in 2023 to **12%** in 2024. **12%**

We will continue to encourage our employees to declare their diversity data so that we can identify areas of difference between groups, which will help inform change and develop interventions to address underrepresentation. Our diversity dashboards will allow us to measure ourselves against government census data, ensuring that the diversity of our workforce is representative of the national population we serve.

Inclusion: Our inclusion data will help us shape, prioritise, and refine our approach to delivering this EDI Strategic Plan, providing us with a clear picture of how inclusive our organisations for our diverse staff. Our **Colleague Engagement Survey 2024** provided an opportunity for Rethink staff to share their thoughts on their role, team, and the organisation.

We are encouraged that EDI had an overall positive engagement score of **75%** in the Colleague Engagement Survey, broken down in more detail as follows:

84% Our workplace culture encourages, celebrates, and supports equity, diversity, and inclusion.

All colleagues are treated fairly, regardless of their background. **83%**

80% Our organisation provides adequate support for employees with different needs, such as flexible working and accessible facilities.

I feel a sense of belonging within my team. **78%**

76% I feel comfortable being myself within our organisation **(76%)**.

We will build on the positive inclusion metrics in the Colleague Engagement Survey and consult across the workforce to understand the data on belonging, which will inform the steps we need to take to address this feedback.

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Our staff setworks and support groups

We have several staff networks (also called Employee Resource Groups) and internal support groups at Rethink Mental Illness:

Ability Inclusion Network – Aims to promote understanding of the issues faced by disabled and neurodiverse colleagues across the charity.

Gender Equality Network (GEN) – Aims to support and share experiences for non-dominant gender colleagues at Rethink.
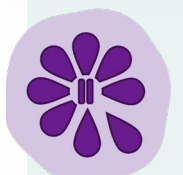
Menopause Peer Support Group – Aims to provide a friendly, safe space to listen, learn, share experiences, get support, and ask questions among colleagues experiencing menopause symptoms.

Mental Health Subgroup – Part of our Ability Inclusion Network and aims to provide support around mental health and wellbeing for staff at Rethink.

Pride and Progress Network – Aims to help our LGBTQIA+ colleagues connect, share experiences, and create an open and inclusive environment at Rethink Mental Illness.

Race Equality Action Leaders (REAL) Network – Aims to positively promote ethnicity and race equality within the charity.

The staff networks and support groups represent and support their members and our diverse workforce by providing an important voice on various matters. They will be key to unlocking the potential of this EDI strategic plan for the benefit of the charity. Each staff network is sponsored by a member of the charity's Executive Team, including the CEO and Deputy CEO, who act as Diversity Champions by proactively supporting their network and acting as visible advocates and sponsors.

Our staff networks and support groups have led or supported many of our programmes, hosted events with guest speakers, and internal EDI events, including sharing personal stories and lived experiences through blogs and vlogs for key EDI and religious events such as Black History Month, International Women's Day, Pride Month, Disability Pride Month, South Asian Heritage Month, East and Southeast Asian Heritage Month, and Ramadan.

We will continue to support our staff networks and other internal groups by building on their strengths and ensuring they thrive, contribute, and influence our organisational diversity and inclusion agenda.

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Governance

Our EDI governance framework extends to all levels at the charity – from our most senior leaders and staff networks to colleagues in teams, functions, and directorates – to ensure we are monitoring and reviewing our progress against the EDI Strategic Plan through the following:

Board of Trustees, Executive Team, and Directors Team: Our senior leaders will champion this EDI Strategic Plan by modelling inclusive behaviours and providing strategic oversight in its delivery across the organisation.

Equity and Inclusion Board: Our Equity and Inclusion Board is chaired by our Deputy Chief Executive and will provide senior-level leadership and strategic guidance to ensure that Rethink's EDI objectives are integrated into the organisation's core strategies and operations. It will monitor progress, review key initiatives, and assess the impact of actions taken to foster a diverse and inclusive environment.

Equity and Inclusion Practice Forum: Our Equity and Inclusion Practice Forum, chaired by the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Manager, has played an important role in the co-design and development of this EDI Strategic Plan. The practice forum brings together EDI leads from all our directorates, staff network representatives, and other colleagues to share and discuss good EDI practices and help track the delivery of this EDI Strategic Plan through constructive challenge and feedback.

Staff Networks and Support Groups: Our staff networks and support groups not only support personal and professional development, but also drive positive change by influencing our campaigns, service delivery, and workplace practices. They amplify diverse voices, which is crucial for making our organisation anti-racist, diverse, and inclusive.

Equity, Inclusion, and Involvement Team: As a Centre of Excellence, our Equity, Inclusion, and Involvement team supports and evaluates activities across the EDI spectrum and business partners across all levels at Rethink to integrate inclusive workplace practices and service delivery.

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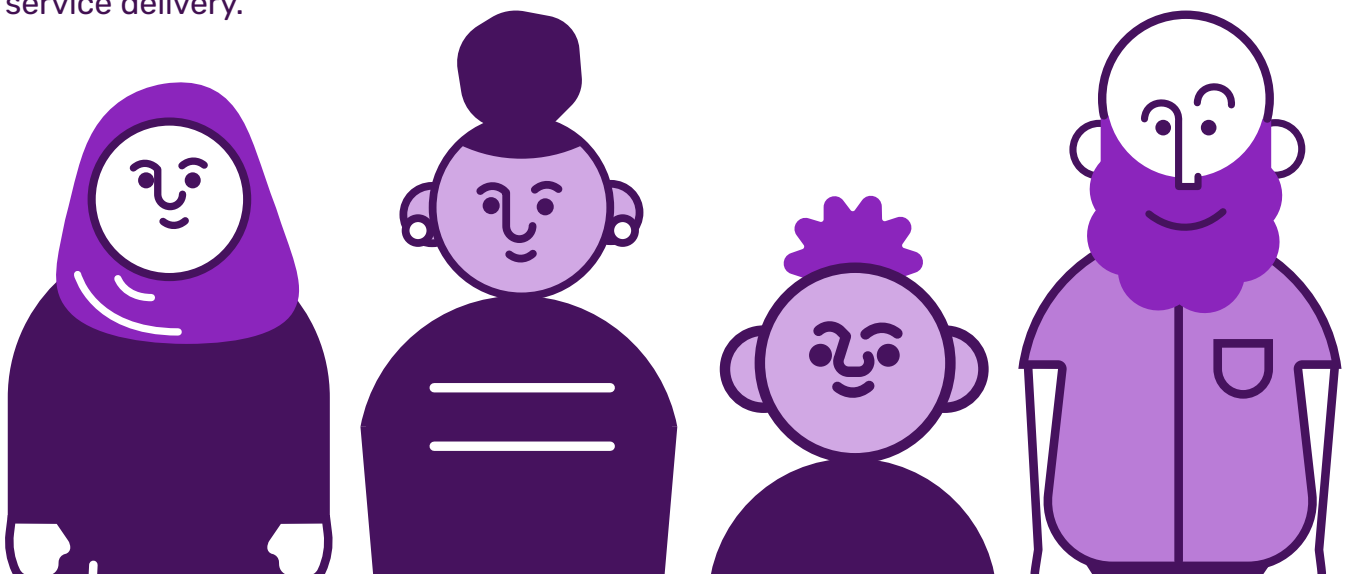
Next steps

We will communicate and engage with colleagues about this EDI Strategic Plan to promote collaboration and promote shared ownership across the organisation. We will use a range of channels and platforms such as our Workplace intranet, engagement surveys, and Directorate team meetings.

We will involve Experts by Experience, including from our Lived Experience Advisory Board and Carers Advisory Board, in the ongoing development, implementation, and review of the strategic plan, as well as other stakeholders within Rethink.

This will enable us to collect and utilise feedback mechanisms to evaluate and monitor our progress. We invite everyone to contribute and play their part through collective action to make our commitment to becoming a more diverse, inclusive, and anti-racist organisation a reality.

> **We *invite* everyone to contribute and play their part to make our commitment to becoming a more diverse, inclusive, and anti-racist organisation a reality.**

Rethink Mental Illness

We are the charity for people severely affected by mental illness, no matter what they're going through.

For further information
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