

Equality and Diversity Policy

Effective Date: July 2026

Review Date: July 2027

Person Responsible for Reviewing this Policy: Lindsey Townsend

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, learners, contractors, and visitors engaged with Network Learning Pathways, including partner education settings and community-based services.

Policy Statement

At Network Learning Pathways, equality and diversity are explicit within our mission, vision, and values. These principles are actively promoted through our culture and embedded within our policies, processes, and training.

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and wider society. It replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, making the law easier to understand and strengthening protection in some situations. It sets out the different ways in which it's unlawful to treat someone.

We are aware of the importance of this Act in relation to all who work within our organisation and those who use and visit our provision, including contractors. We also strive for this within partner education settings, the workplace, and wider communities.

We consider our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty, namely to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between different groups
- Foster good relations between different groups

Legal Updates

- As of 26 October 2024, employers have a proactive legal duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. Network Learning Pathways meets this duty through policies, training, reporting procedures, risk assessment and regular review of workplace culture.
- Following the UK Supreme Court judgment (April 2025), references to 'sex' in the Equality Act 2010 are interpreted in accordance with that judgment. Protection for the protected characteristic of gender reassignment remains unchanged, and Network Learning Pathways continues to support trans individuals through inclusive practice.

Protected characteristics as defined by the Act are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origins)
- Religion or belief
- Sex or sexual orientation

We take all reasonable steps to provide a work environment in which all employees are treated with respect and dignity and that is free from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation based on the nine protected characteristics.

We recognise that disability includes visible and non-visible disabilities, including many neurodivergent conditions, and will make reasonable adjustments where required.

We are a Champion Member of Race for Opportunity, and a Director Member of the Board for Race for Opportunity.

Network Learning Pathways also adheres to the principles of and promotes anti-oppressive practice in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Human Rights Act 1998.

Definitions

Direct Discrimination

Occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have, are thought to have (perception discrimination), or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic (discrimination by association).

Discrimination by Association

Applies to all characteristics except marriage/civil partnership. This is direct discrimination against an individual because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.

Perception Discrimination

Applies to all characteristics except marriage/civil partnership. This is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic, even if they do not.

Indirect Discrimination

Occurs when a condition, rule, policy, or practice applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic. Indirect discrimination can be justified if it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Harassment

Unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that violates an individual's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.

Harassment applies to all protected characteristics except pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership.

Staff may complain about behaviour they find offensive even if it is not directed at them. Protection also applies through perception and association.

Victimisation

Occurs when a member of staff is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint under the Equality Act or are suspected of doing so. Malicious complaints are not protected.

Recruitment & Selection

Network Learning Pathways, part of Network Healthcare Professionals (NHP), takes all reasonable steps to employ, train, and promote employees based on experience, abilities, and qualifications without regard to protected characteristics.

We:

- Encourage applications from all suitably qualified and unqualified people
- Use inclusive advertising and job descriptions
- Conduct demographic and sector research to ensure representation
- Implement positive actions where under-representation is identified
- Assess candidates against agreed criteria based on knowledge, skills, experience, and qualifications
- Make reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants at all stages of recruitment and employment

Training Statement

All employees attend induction training covering the Public Sector Equality Duty. Training is provided regardless of protected characteristics and includes:

- One-to-one sessions
- Online modules
- Workbooks
- Group meetings
- Individual supervision
- External courses as required

Policies and procedures are reviewed regularly, and staff are informed of updates. Observations are conducted to assess competencies.

Monitoring & Audit

Our HR department monitors legislation and subscribes to expert updates.

We conduct:

Equality monitoring data is processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

- Annual policy reviews
- Diversity audits of job specs, forms, interview processes, and recruitment channels
- Equalities monitoring for employees and learners (data kept separate from applications)
- Lesson observations with equality and diversity metrics
- Appraisal-linked action planning to improve practice

Action plans are shared with stakeholders in accessible formats.

Accessibility

Network Learning Pathways is committed to the Accessible Information Standard.

We ensure:

Digital learning resources and AI-supported systems will be reviewed to promote accessibility and minimise bias where reasonably practicable.

- Physical environments are accessible (lifts, ramps, communal and private spaces)
- Facilities are located in communities and accessible by public transport or provided transport
- Single-sex toilets and changing facilities are provided in accordance with the clarified legal definition of sex
- Mixed-sex, single-user facilities are available where possible to accommodate all individuals respectfully and safely

Complaints

Our Anti-Bullying Policy and Code of Conduct for learners and staff outline equality and diversity duties and complaint procedures.

Staff and learners sign up to these during induction.

We have a clear complaints and grievance procedure, with copies available.