



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy 2022



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A welcome from our CEO

I am delighted to introduce the first Guide Dogs Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy (DEI).

This isn't just my strategy, it's a strategy for everyone. I'm proud that we have co-produced this document with members of our staff networks and their allies. We've asked staff from across the organisation about their experiences and what is important to them, as we set out the diversity, equity and inclusion roadmap for the next three years.

I fully endorse this strategy and as a leader I'm building an inclusive culture, with a strong sense of belonging and togetherness. Our executive board will model the behaviours that will ensure we're an inclusive environment for everyone, regardless of our background or differences.

I'm optimistic for our future and want to inspire and feel inspired by others in the organisation. We are committed to learning about different life experiences and the challenges and barriers people face.

Over the last two years, we have come a long way on our journey. However, we still have so much to do. We will hold ourselves to account for achieving this strategy by creating an inclusion forum, which I will chair, and which will be an expert panel, who will act as a place to check our progress. The values and principles of inclusion and belonging will underpin all our other activities. To be transparent the forum will produce an annual DEI report which will articulate our progress against this strategy.

For my part, I will continue to empower and challenge. Above all, we will support our diverse communities to ensure they're able to thrive.

I actively encourage everyone to understand their part in delivering this strategy and to play their part in making it happen.



Tom Wright CBE
Chief Executive



Our vision

Our strategy is split into four main areas, or pillars. Together these help us to achieve our vision of a diverse, inclusive and equitable Guide Dogs where employees feel they belong. Because we recognise people work better when they work together, we aim to stop working in silos.

We will work to strengthen our routes of engagement and data integrity in relation to our volunteers, which will enable us to broaden the scope of this strategy in the future.



Pillar one

Becoming the gold standard employer for people who are vision impaired

Guide Dogs recognises the value of staff who are vision impaired in shaping the organisation. Crucially, we recognise that their experience of working here hasn't always been positive. We recognise our built and digital environments, processes and culture has and can be disabling. However, we will build on the solid work of 2021 and 2022 to continue to strive towards being a gold standard employer.

We will:

- Ensure that accessibility is embedded from the outset, in all our built and digital environments, processes and culture.
- Ensure that our staff who are vision impaired are empowered to thrive in their roles and are supported to achieve their aspirations.
- Ensure that our staff who are vision impaired are provided with the equipment they need to excel in their role within a reasonable timeframe.
- Ensure our colleagues who are not affected by vision impairment understand the impact their behaviour can have on their colleagues who are. We will equip them by raising awareness to ensure they always consider the intent and impact of their actions.
- To develop a dedicated vision impairment awareness training session, to be compulsory for all staff, with bi-annual refresher training.





Pillar two

Being inspired by difference

A diverse organisation has a richness of thoughts and ideas which allows us to be our best selves. It gives us diversity of perspective, lived experience and better problem-solving skills. It also ensures that everyone can see themselves meaningfully represented at Guide Dogs.

To respect difference, we will:

- Support our managers to develop a consistent and equitable application of our policies. We'll remove their uncertainty or concern by equipping them with the knowledge and confidence to act fairly.
- Review and refresh our unconscious bias training to ensure it's fit for purpose.
- Celebrate the range of lived experiences our colleagues and volunteers bring to Guide Dogs by ensuring under-represented and often excluded voices are amplified.
- Tell the stories of our people more powerfully, so that we normalise difficult conversations and break down stigmas.
- Create diverse collateral that speaks to the people we are trying to reach, while rejecting tokenism and virtue signalling.

Pillar three

Levelling the playing field

Being equitable ensures that everyone gets what they need in order to thrive at Guide Dogs. This is a step forward from equality, where everyone gets the same regardless of whether it is enough for them.

We will achieve this by:

- Developing mechanisms to eliminate bias from the recruitment process.
- Reviewing the routes to progression for those from minority communities, identifying and mitigating barriers to progression to ensure there is a fairness of approach to everyone regardless of background.
- Developing a meaningful reverse mentoring programme which allows all participants to benefit.
- Ensuring we are transparent, open and honest about our current position. We will do this by publishing an annual diversity report and reporting our pay gap analysis findings on the Pawtal, for gender, ethnicity and disability. We will include a specific diversity, equity and inclusion section in our annual staff engagement survey.





Pillar four

Building a culture of belonging

At Guide Dogs we want everyone to feel like they belong. We want to create a strong sense of togetherness, where although people may not share life experiences, they are always respectful of the journeys of others.

We will create a range of tools to help colleagues to achieve this consistently across the organisation, such as:

- Developing a baby loss/ IVF/ trying to conceive policy.
- Developing a range of resources and a robust policy on menopause.
- Building on our parental leave policies to ensure all families are supported equitably, particularly at times of difficulty and challenge such as bereavement or divorce.
- Adopting a trans inclusion policy.
- Developing a cognitive decline policy, to ensure we are able to appropriately support people who may experience early onset conditions such as dementia.
- Continuing to roll out our allyship programme.
- Continuing to support and grow our staff networks, including the development of a new carers network.
- Introducing volunteer networks.
- Growing our cultural competence by investing in training, mentoring and educational resources for all our people.

Our behaviours

We are proud that our diversity, equity and inclusion work embodies our PEOPLE behaviours.

Through this strategy we demonstrate our commitment to these behaviours, and in particular we seek to empower all of our staff to lead by example to help us achieve these strategic aims and make Guide Dogs a welcoming, supportive organisation for everyone.

Our commitments

This strategy sets out our roadmap for diversity, equity and inclusion for the next three years.

As this is our first strategy of this kind, it focusses on our employees. Our employees need to be representative of the people we wish to serve, culturally competent and welcoming to all communities.



To help us get there, we've set out some high-level commitments, which will underpin all our activities over the term of this strategy. They are:



Impact and intent

We will recognise that good intent is not enough if the impact of our actions causes harm or disadvantage.



Accessibility and VI

We will get it right for our colleagues who are vision impaired.



Leading by example

We will have leaders who are able to effectively model inclusive behaviours and deliver the equitable actions needed for this strategy to succeed.



Being culturally competent

We will partner with a range of stakeholders who can support us on our journey towards being more culturally competent.



Continuous improvement

We recognise this strategy is a beginning, not the full journey. We will commit to continuous improvement, growing our activities as we go to ensure we remain relevant.

“

I started going to the Disability Network at the end of 2021 and I enjoy hearing from the guest speakers on different topics such as recruitment, accessibility, and technology. It is great to hear from people across Guide Dogs and learn more about how we can support each other. I also joined the neurodiversity group at the start of 2022 and I am so grateful for the group. It is a place where we can have real honest conversations or just listen to others as they share their stories. I feel more engaged and confident being part of both these groups and I am excited to see where the DEI Strategy takes us!”

Pippa Bolton, Disability Network and Southwest Regional Wellbeing Team member.



The journey so far

Recently, we've taken big steps towards becoming a more inclusive and equitable organisation. Over the last two years we've focussed on putting foundations in place to help us reach this goal.

We have:

- Delivered cultural awareness training for our staff and volunteers, including race and ethnicity, allyship, neurodiversity and disability awareness.
- Created staff networks, run by staff, for staff. They include Proud@Guide Dogs, Beyond Bias, Disability Network, Women's Group and Men's Group.
- Listened to our colleagues with vision impairments and made many of the changes they needed. This includes the recruitment of an access to work coordinator, the creation of two new assistive technology roles, recruitment of a head of accessibility, compulsory training for everyone on creating accessible documents and a review of our recruitment processes.





“

I find the group an encouraging ‘safe space’ where I can be open about how I am feeling and where a ‘listening ear’ can often make all the difference. We are a non-judgemental and supportive group where it is great to be able to listen to and empathise with others in confidence. Sometimes sharing similar experiences can be empowering and I would recommend anyone join who is looking for (or is able to give) support and encouragement.”

Daniel Scholes, Men’s Health & Wellbeing group member

What do we mean by diversity, equity and inclusion?

Diversity, equity and inclusion are not only the right thing to do, they are also important to our success as an organisation.

We want everyone to be able to bring their whole self to Guide Dogs, because our core DEI principles help us to ensure that the organisation is multi-dimensional, rich in different values and life experiences. This will help make us better problem solvers and gives us a wider audience for recruiting staff and volunteers.

It also makes us more credible and relevant to people who are vision impaired in minority communities. We're here to help people who are vision impaired live the life they choose, so we must ensure our staff and volunteers are also representative of the people who benefit from our services. This gives our service users confidence that we understand their journey and are culturally competent.

Diversity

Diversity means understanding that each individual is unique, and that we value and recognise the differences between us.

Both The Equality Act 2010 and Section 75 of The Northern Ireland Act 1998 provide protection to minority communities. When we talk about minority communities, we group them like this:

- Race
- Sex
- Age
- Disability
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Sexual orientation
- Religious belief
- Political Opinion (NI)

Equity

When we treat everyone equally, we treat everyone the same. When we treat everyone equitably, we are person-centred and focus on their individual needs.

In a diverse organisation, differences inevitably exist. For everyone to be the best version of themselves, we need to be confident in our response to their needs; and we need to support them to bring their whole self to their engagement with us.

This could mean anything from making adaptations to our buildings, offering assistive technology or giving people a protected lunch time to enable their religious observance.

Inclusion

Inclusion means that everyone who comes to work, volunteers, or receives a service from us can feel comfortable and confident to be fully themselves.

By working in a way that has inclusion at its core, we reduce the number of reasonable adjustments we need to make.

This not only makes good sense, but it also reduces duplication and makes us more efficient. By being inclusive, we will create an environment where everyone feels they belong.

We can only work inclusively once we recognise those differences among us, understand the role unconscious bias plays on our thoughts and decision-making and put systems in place to mitigate against prejudice – conscious or otherwise.

**“
Diversity is being
asked to the disco,
inclusion is being
asked to dance.”**

Aileen Bradley, Head of Strategy

Building a culture of togetherness and belonging

We want everyone involved with Guide Dogs to be themselves, their whole selves without fear of judgement, discrimination or prejudice.

For us to be successful in our efforts to help people who are vision impaired live the life they choose, we need to ensure that everyone feels like they belong. And to be exceptional we need to ensure that we are transparent, honest and accountable.

We recognise that people do not fit into boxes, and we are committed to developing this strategy through an intersectional lens. This will ensure we respect value and consider all aspects of people's identities.



The biggest positive impact we can make will stem from embedding inclusion and belonging into the culture of the whole organisation. We aim to embed these values in such a way that they permeate all decision making, strategy development, policies and behaviours.

So, we will:

- 1 Refresh our recruitment and onboarding processes to reflect gold standards for inclusion.**
- 2 Continue to build on the inclusive communities that our staff networks provide space for.**
- 3 Equip our managers and leaders with the knowledge and resources to be inclusive.**
- 4 Make inclusion central to all we do, including our leadership, decision making and most importantly our behaviours.**
- 5 Improve inclusivity and accessibility of our built and digital environments.**





“

I've always believed that anything is possible; however, I was in several situations where the outcome of my destiny depended on inclusion and the principles of fairness. This has not always been the case and so I decided to be the best version of myself and actively change the system so that others like me do not have to believe their worth is based on a pre-judgement or the inequality they face. It is for this reason that I am a part of the networks at Guide Dogs and continue to actively influence perceptions wherever I can.”

Karishma Shah, Beyond Bias and Proud @ Guide Dogs member

Shaping our strategy

This strategy is co-produced by everyone who has an interest in its key aims.

To produce this strategy, we held consultations with staff networks, people with lived experience of a minority community, senior leaders and trustees.

Participants told us what really matters to them – and here's what they said:

We would like you to stop:

- Assuming we know what people want.
- Making me feel like I have to “come out” all the time.
- Making me feel like it's a lottery whether I can work flexibly to support my family.

We would like you to start:

- Being equitable and person-centred.
- Making sure flexible benefits are relevant to everyone.
- Making it easier for me to bring my whole self to work.
- Measuring the extent to which inclusion is embedded in business as usual.
- Creating powerful role models who are visible throughout the organisation.

We would like you to continue:

- Support our staff networks to create a safe place for allyship and advocacy.
- To focus on what my strengths are and what I can do, which is far more important than what I can't.
- To strive to be more diverse, we need more people who are like me working at Guide Dogs.

Devolved nations

Guide Dogs delivers life-changing services across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

This is a strategy for everyone and our principles are the same across the four nations. However, we recognise there are some cultural and legal differences to the way we conduct our business in the devolved nations.

We are delighted to have leaders in the devolved nations who model the behaviours specific to the country of their work.

We are committed to having the leaders of our activities in each of the devolved nations on our inclusion forum to ensure that our DEI work is relevant and credible to all the countries in which we operate.



Guide Dogs and diversity

Our diversity is low. Guide Dogs is, like many UK charities, a female dominated organisation made up of people who are in the main white British.

To address our diversity deficit, we first need to understand the extent. We examined our existing HR data, (correct on 25th April 2022) and found that:

Gender

This table consists of 3 columns and 3 rows.

General population	81.5% women	18.5% men
Managers	73% women	27% men
Senior managers	66.7% women	33.3% men

Sexual orientation

This table consists of 2 columns and 7 rows.

Bisexual	1.56%
Gay or Lesbian	2.40%
Heterosexual	70.66%
No response	18.31%
Other	0.24%
Prefer not to answer	6.71%
Prefer to self-describe	0.12%

Ethnicity

This table consists of 2 columns and 7 rows.

Asian/Asian British	1.02%
Black/ Black British	0.30%
Mixed/dual heritage	1.26%
No response	10.48%
Other ethnic group	0.12%
Prefer not to say	0.72%
White/White British	86.10%

Disability

This table consists of 2 columns and 2 rows.

All disabilities	8.56%
Vision impaired	2.57%

Religion

This table consists of 2 columns and 18 rows.

Agnostic	6.29%
Atheism	5.87%
Buddhism	0.18%
Catholic	1.08%
Christianity (any denomination)	31.32%
Hinduism	0.36%
Islam	0.06%
Judaism	0.30%
No religion or belief	30.06%
No response	16.11%
Other	1.26%
Paganism	0.24%
Prefer not to say	5.69%
Protestant	0.54%
Sikhism	0.36%
Taoism	0.12%

Our pay gap analysis

*24th March 2022

In addition to our demographic data, we have also undertaken pay gap analysis for not only gender, but also ethnicity and disability.

This table consists of 4 columns and 3 rows.

	Gender	Ethnicity	Disability
Mean	13%	3.49%	-1.92%
Median	9.67%	-3.04%	-3.72%

The gender pay gap is the difference in the average hourly wage of all men and women across a workforce. At Guide Dogs, our gender pay gap is 13%, which is 5.1 percentage points higher than the national average of 7.9% (as at 2021 reporting).

We’ve seen a slow but steady improvement in the gender pay gap over the last three years. Our gender pay gap can be explained by the large population of women employed in our lower paid roles. This is a situation that is not unique to Guide Dogs and is common across the charity sector.

We are confident that our pay structure is fair and equitable, and we scrutinise our pay reviews for evidence of unconscious bias. Equally, we are confident that we have robust processes in place to prevent bias in our recruitment of new employees.

Our board of trustees and executive directors are gender balanced; our senior leadership team is made up of 27 women and 13 men.

In terms of ethnicity and disability, we are showing a positive pay gap in both cases for median pay. This is because the sample sizes are so small, and the number of roles held by senior staff from these communities is relatively high.

It is important to undertake the analysis so that we are aware of our position and can continue to track any trend as we work to increase the diversity of our workforce.

Closing remarks

I am very proud to have this Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy now in place. Guide Dogs is an organisation steeped in over ninety years of history and is a well-loved national institution.

However, it is also an employer, a provider of services and a recipient of public money and it is hugely important that we are open, honest and equitable. It makes good sense for the organisation to be a diverse and inclusive employer and for us to have a strong sense of belonging among our workforce – we are better together.

I share Tom's ambition for the organisation, and I am delighted that he has made such a bold and determined statement and will chair the inclusion forum himself. Along with my executive director colleagues, I fully endorse his sentiments and understand the part I have to play in making this strategy a reality.

I commit to being a powerful ally, effective role model and trusted advocate to all those from a minority community who work or volunteer at Guide Dogs.



Kathryn Ward
Director of People & Performance



Common phrases you may hear

Accessibility

Accessibility refers to how usable a service, environment or product is. If something is accessible it means there are no barriers which hinder certain groups' participation. At Guide Dogs we often talk about accessibility from a vision impaired or disability perspective due to our purpose.

Allyship

Allyship is standing with a person, a group of people, or a cause which you don't personally have a lived experience of. It's saying "I stand with you and support you, even though I will never personally understand how it feels to go through this". It's using your place, privilege and power to step aside and give the spotlight to someone else. The best ally is one who fully recognises the limits of their own agency.

Anti-racism

In today's society, racism is structurally inherent and therefore it is no longer enough simply not to be racist. Anti-racism is the practice of having active allyship to ethnically diverse communities and opposing racist ideals, behaviours and structures. Anti-racism is a term which has grown in relevance since the summer of 2020.

BAME

BAME is an acronym which stands for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic. Recently, there has been a lot of criticism around this term, as it reduces so many distinct, vibrant communities into one homogenous group. This fails to acknowledge the wide differences in culture and identity across these communities. We do not use the term in this strategy, but you may have come across it in other discussions relating to DEI. Other terms which can be used include ethnically diverse communities or racialised communities.

Cultural competence

Cultural competence refers to having a level of understanding of a culture in order to interact with members of its community appropriately, equitably and respectfully.

D/deaf

The word deaf is used to describe anyone who has a severe hearing problem. Sometimes it is used to refer to people who are hard of hearing too. Deaf with a capital D describes people who have been deaf all their lives, or pre-lingually (before they learnt to speak). This means that their first language tends to be sign language and English is a second language. Deaf people identify as culturally Deaf, meaning they view their Deafness as an identity and not a disability. In the UK we use British Sign Language, often shortened to BSL.

Emotional labour

Emotional labour is a term used to describe the emotional work people from minority communities are often asked insensitively to do in order to benefit or educate people with privilege. For example, being asked as the only non-binary staff member to tell your story repeatedly for different senior leaders who are not willing to seek out their own education.

Intersectional

We use the term intersectional to describe the areas in which different aspects of identity crossover to impact experience. For example, a 75-year-old with vision impairment might experience both ageism and ableism when trying to access a digital service.

LGBTQI+

LGBTQI+ is an acronym which stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/ Questioning, Intersex and "+" for all other identities in the spectrum. If you are unsure of any of these terms you may find it useful to visit Stonewall's glossary of terms.

Neurodiverse

Neurodiversity is a term which describes the different ways in which peoples' brains work. There is no such thing as a "normal" brain, and it is important we acknowledge the different ways in which people process things. Some conditions which come under the neurodiversity banner include dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Power

Power lies where influence meets visibility. When we talk about power we refer to the ability someone has to direct, influence and be heard without hindrance.

Privilege

When we talk about privilege, we are referring to the advantages afforded to us by aspects of our identity in certain contexts. For example, in a building where all the rooms are labelled with written text signs, if you do not have a vision impairment you have the privilege of being able to navigate easily without assistance.

Systematic oppression

Systematic oppression refers to the barriers and stigmas which are inherently built into our systems which disadvantage certain communities.

Vision impaired

Vision impaired is an umbrella term used to describe people with no, little, or deteriorating vision. Some other terms used include blind, partially sighted and sight-loss.



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