

Northamptonshire Children's Trust Equalities Strategy 2021 – 2025

Foreword from our Chief Executive

On the 25th May 2020 the world was shaken by the death of George Floyd in the USA. It quickly gave rise to a global movement against the oppression of Black people.

George's death captured a moment in our cultural history, reignited conversations about equality and diversity, and signalled the need for concerted action to address inequality, discrimination and oppression for all those who experience it.

There are nine established protected characteristics: race, age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex and sexual orientation. We recognise that as individuals we often have more than one of the protected characteristics, which can impact on our lived experiences of inequality, oppression and discrimination.

At Northamptonshire Children's Trust, we acknowledge that we are far from perfect; that changes can be made to foster and instil equality in our own organisation. To that end we have established our Equalities Strategy Steering Group and Equalities Forum.

This is where our improvement journey begins.

Colin Foster, Northamptonshire Children's Trust Chief Executive April 2021

Introduction

Many of us enjoy the benefits of 'privilege'; of being male, white, straight, neuro-typical¹ or middle class for instance. 'Privilege' doesn't necessarily mean some people have special advantages (although that can be the case), but that those people do not experience disadvantages associated with characteristics that others hold. We might not even appreciate the confidence privilege gives us; the unearned respect, advantages or protections it brings. We are also aware that when we make generalisations we can exclude or include people.

But today, among young people in particular, there is an awakening happening. In the streets and on social media, there is a push to expose the inequalities of our society.





As a voice for children and young people, it is our duty to address our own ways of thinking.

Northamptonshire Children's Trust must re-commit to providing equal support for the children and families we work with and a fair, inclusive environment for our workforce, irrespective of background, rights or privilege.

The **vision** [\[insert business plan hyperlink\]](#) for our Trust is *to have Children, Young People and Families at the heart of every decision we make and every action we take*. Equality, diversity and inclusion are intrinsic to our Trust's Conditions for Success:

¹ Neuro-typical is a term that describes people who do not have the varying characteristics and behaviours of neurodevelopmental conditions

<p>Conditions for Success</p>  <p>Partnerships</p> <p>We will work together meaningfully with openness towards shared goals.</p> <p>Children, Young People and Families will benefit from us working side by side with them.</p>	<p>Conditions for Success</p>  <p>People</p> <p>We will enable all to be the best they can be and develop an awesome workforce.</p> <p>Children, Young People and Families will benefit from a highly skilled, motivated workforce.</p>
<p>Conditions for Success</p>  <p>Communication</p> <p>We will ensure that all voices are listened to, heard and valued.</p> <p>Children, Young People and Families will benefit from clear communication at all times.</p>	<p>Conditions for Success</p>  <p>Environment</p> <p>We will create accessible and welcoming spaces to work collaboratively and privately with colleagues.</p> <p>Children, Young People and Families will benefit from the best work environment we can create.</p>

<p>Conditions for Success</p>  <p>Processes</p> <p>We will empower our system to deliver the best support by having clear, up to date policies which enable slick processes.</p> <p>Children, Young People and Families will benefit from a system that works effectively, efficiently and is delivered with care.</p>	<p>Conditions for Success</p>  <p>Tools</p> <p>We will support a confident and competent workforce who have the tools they need to aspire to excellence.</p> <p>Children, Young People and Families will benefit from everybody having the right toolkit to do their best work.</p>
<p>Conditions for Success</p>  <p>Empowerment</p> <p>We are all leaders and will strive at all levels of the organisation to build respect, trust and a positive learning culture where diversity is celebrated and equality is embedded.</p> <p>Children, Young People and Families will benefit from a confident and empowered workforce who are culturally competent and understand social graces.</p>	<p>Conditions for Success</p>  <p>Culture</p> <p>We will treat each other with kindness, compassion and respect.</p> <p>Children, Young People and Families will benefit from everybody giving their very best, every single day.</p>

Our Equalities Survey for staff, carried out in early 2021 to inform this strategy, highlighted some of our successes. In general, our workforce feels supported by their colleagues and their managers.

They feel safe and confident to contribute in meetings and to projects. There's a general consensus that our organisation is culturally diverse and helps protect employees from discrimination.

However, the survey also picked up particular areas for improvement. We need to actively encourage our staff to engage in discussions about issues of equality and appropriate behaviour. We need to better value diversity within our workforce. We need to work together to eradicate bullying and discrimination in our workplace.

The aim of our Equalities Strategy is to generate a positive culture and dialogue within our Trust, where our staff follow the principles of the Social GGRRAACCEEESS² and our Signs of Safety practice model which acknowledges, among other key characteristics, strengths and individuals. The strategy has been created in collaboration with our staff, children and young people.

The Trust has established an **Equalities Strategy Steering Group** to oversee the development of our strategy, its implementation and monitor what difference it has made. We also have an **Equalities Forum** to provide support and education to all staff in relation to raising awareness of anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice.

We have also developed an **Anti-Racism Statement** [\[add hyperlink\]](#) with our staff which sets out our pledge to generate long term change for the better.

This Strategy and our Anti-Racism Statement are supported by our **Equalities Action Plan** to actively promote equality and diversity and address issues as they arise. The Action Plan is updated following input from each Equalities Forum session and is reviewed annually at our Equalities Strategy Group.

Our Commitments to Our Children and Young People

We have spoken to our children and young people, who have told us what they would like equality and diversity to look like at Northamptonshire Children's Trust. We promise them that we will:

- **Treat you with kindness and respect and make you feel comfortable, valued and welcome**
- **Be reliable, aware and alert to your personal needs and support you as much as you need us to**
- **Be mindful of what we say and write to and about you**
- **Reflect, acknowledge and apologise if we discriminate against or offend you**
- **Constantly update our knowledge about your equality and diversity rights and needs so we can always support you in the best way possible and ensure equal access to support your needs**

How will we know we have made improvements?

- Children and young people will have positive experiences and good outcomes through the work we do with them – measured through quality assurance, complaints, compliments, performance and impact measures, feedback and evaluation from children, young people, families and practitioners

² An acronym developed by John Burnham (2012) to represent aspects of difference in beliefs, power and lifestyle, visible and invisible, voiced and unvoiced. It stands for: gender, geography, race, religion, age, ability, appearance, class, culture, ethnicity, education, employment, sexuality, sexual orientation and spirituality.

- We will see children and young people's cultural, heritage and diverse needs understood and supported in all the work we do and on our case recordings
- We will see the voice of children and young people in the work we do and in our case recordings
- Our participation groups and other children and young people who we work with will tell us that they see a positive change in how we work with and support children and young people's cultural, heritage and diverse needs, including their rights and equal access to support

Our Commitments to Our Staff

We think what our children and young people told us they would like equality and diversity to look like at Northamptonshire Children's Trust should apply to our colleagues as well as to our children and young people. So we also promise our colleagues that we will:

- **Treat you with kindness and respect and make you feel comfortable, valued and welcome**
- **Be reliable, aware and alert to your personal needs and support you as much as you need us to**
- **Be mindful of what we say and write to and about you**
- **Reflect, acknowledge and apologise if we discriminate against or offend you**
- **Constantly update our knowledge about your equality and diversity rights and needs so we can always support you in the best way possible and ensure equal access to support your needs**

In collaboration with our Equalities Forum and taking on board feedback from the 2021 Staff Equalities Survey, the Trust has set out the following objectives to achieve between 2021-2025:

1. Instil a culture and dialogue whereby all employees are able to demonstrate a commitment to equality within our workforce and to our families, children and local communities

We will do this by

- Encouraging open conversations without fear of judgement about issues relating to equality and diversity; apologising for mistakes, learning from them, supporting people to understand others' perspectives and experiences with mutual respect
- Refreshing and updating our understanding of equality and diversity with regular, quality continuous professional development and mandatory training
- Establish Equalities Champions to promote equality, diversity and inclusion needs and provide a safe space for colleagues to share concerns and good practice with – the themes from which will be captured to inform further improvement actions

2. Improve our workforce data and address barriers to employment for underrepresented groups in our workforce

We will do this by

- Publishing regular staff Equalities surveys and encouraging our staff to complete them. We will respond to the results and monitor the progress and impact we are having.
- Encouraging staff to provide information on their characteristics so we can better understand the backgrounds and needs of our workforce

- Encouraging applications for jobs from people with protected characteristics, and supporting those who identify with a protected characteristic to advance in their career with the Trust
- Analyse and evaluate what the data tells us about how well we represent our local communities, to enable us to take an informed approach to becoming more representative

3. Deliver accessible services which take into account the changing needs and voices of the children, young people and families we support

We will do this by

- Listening to the feedback from our families and young people and amending our practice to take on board their views, and letting them know what we have done as a result
- Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments on key aspects of our work, including policies, service provision and commissioning when they come up for review to ensure they are fit for purpose and respond to the needs of our employees, families, children and young people
- Analyse and evaluate what the data tells us about how well we are reaching all communities, to enable us to take an informed approach to becoming more inclusive

4. Demonstrate zero tolerance for discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010 (or any subsequent equalities legislation)

We will do this by

- Supporting employees who are victims of discrimination, harassment, victimisation or any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010, learning from these experiences and making continuous improvements.
- Supporting our families, children and young people who are victims of discrimination, harassment, victimisation or any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010
- Establish a mechanism for anonymous reporting, alongside our formal HR procedures, to share experiences of discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010 to encourage people to speak out in a safe space and to learn from themes until we get to a place where people feel confident to have open conversations.

5. Celebrating heritage and diversity

We will do this by

- Recognising and educating each other about the religious and secular holidays and festivals celebrated by our diverse community and supporting employees and our families and young people to take leave to celebrate them
- Encouraging conversations among our staff about different cultural holidays and events celebrating our diverse communities
- Resources to support young people who are living with people who don't share their cultural heritage

We will know we have made improvements when:

- There is an improvement in the experiences of our workforce, as reported in our Equalities survey and other forms of feedback, such as our Equalities Forum
- There is greater diversity at all levels of our organisation
- Children and young people we work with tell us they feel well supported in understanding and celebrating their cultural heritage and diversity

Public Sector Equality Duty

Northamptonshire Children's Trust is required by law, under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, to ensure that equality is embedded across its policies and services. Under this Duty, the Trust must have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act
2. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
3. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

The Trust therefore considers how its decisions advance equality, inclusion, and diversity by removing or minimising disadvantages experienced by people as a result of their protected characteristics. These include: race, age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex and sexual orientation.