Equality & Diversity
Outlining our commitment
Introduction

Respecting equality and diversity is at the core of Dimensions’ organisational vision for an inclusive society where people have equal chances to live the life they choose. Our mission is to provide high quality personalised support for people with learning disabilities and autism, helping them to be actively engaged with, and contribute to, their communities.

This is reflected in our organisational values:

- we are ambitious about helping people reach their potential
- we show respect and recognise that people’s individual contribution adds value to us all
- we are guided by the courage of our convictions to make a difference
- we act with integrity to ensure what we do is grounded in what we believe
- we work in partnership with others to achieve more for people.

Dimensions operates in accordance with the Equality Act (2010) and Public Sector Equality Duty and will actively oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination.

Over the years, through listening, engaging and responding to the needs of the people we support, our staff, families, and other professionals, we have made steady progress in promoting equality and respecting diversity. More information on how we have achieved this can be found in this document.

We are committed to providing accessible communication and training which improves understanding and delivery of best inclusive practice. Through regular monitoring and evaluation and pursuing independent accreditation, we are continually developing and improving our organisation’s success in achieving our Equality and Diversity vision. Our Equality and Diversity strategy means that we continually learn, develop, monitor and review our progress.

We are proud of the progress we have made so far and are committed to achieving the Equality and Diversity strategy aims in the forthcoming year. This impacts on all areas of the business and will support our strategic intent to be the research-based exemplar provider delivering outcomes-focused care and support, and to be the employer of choice.

Helen Baker, Chair
Steve Scown, CEO
About Dimensions

At Dimensions, we provide research-based, outcomes-focused services for people with learning disabilities and autism. Alongside supported living and residential care, we also offer vital specialist services including sector leading Positive Behaviour Support. We help people to be actively engaged in their communities, to live the life they choose, and to achieve their goals and ambitions.

As one of the country’s largest not-for-profits, we are driven by our values. People with learning disabilities and their families are at the heart of everything we do and we want every person we support to have a great life, with excellent outcomes.

Our values

We want to create an inclusive culture that understands and respects the individual differences of the people we support and employ. Respecting diversity and promoting equality underpins our five core values of ambition, respect, courage, integrity and partnership.

Our Equality and Diversity vision, strategy and policy make sure we are compliant and transparent in this process, and that we treat everybody fairly.

Personalisation

We are always working to improve standards – our own and across the sector. Dimensions was one of the pioneers of personalised support, showing how it works in practice, and enabling thousands of people to have greater choice and control.

Person-centred thinking is a set of values, skills and tools we use to get to know someone and discover what they find important and what they want out of life. It ensures that we focus on what matters to the people we support and their family, and that we pay attention to our employees as well. Matching our employees according to cultural needs, preferences and beliefs helps make sure we can deliver truly personalised support.

By working in this way, we can make sure that people are truly listened to and are kept at the heart of all decision-making and how our service is commissioned, provided and organised.

Being a person-centred organisation is our ongoing priority and at the heart of our personalisation journey.
Dimensions strives to be an organisation which reflects and responds to the diverse range of communities in which we work. We aim to create an inclusive culture that understands and respects the individual differences of the people we support and employ.
Our aims

Respect
The people we support and our tenants will be treated with fairness and respect.

Courage
We are committed to developing and maintaining an open and inclusive culture which values and respects difference to enable us to reach shared goals.

Partnership
We aim to increase our knowledge and understanding of what makes good culturally sensitive person-centred support.

Integrity
We continue to embed our vision and aspirations for promoting equality and respecting diversity within our core values.

Ambition
We strive to ensure that at all levels we are representative of the communities we serve.
Our business case for valuing diversity

An inclusive culture that respects and values difference means that we can benefit from a wealth of diverse knowledge, skills and experience in our organisation. Recruiting from the widest possible variety of backgrounds also aids our recruitment challenges. Staff who feel respected for who they are will be more engaged and be more productive. Meaningfully connecting with diverse communities enriches our shared knowledge and enables us to enhance the culturally sensitive person-centred support we provide. It also makes us attractive to people looking for support from those with diverse backgrounds and means that we are well prepared for the projected changing demographics in the UK.

Why equality and diversity matter

Dimensions strives to be an organisation that reflects and responds to the diverse range of communities in which we work. We want to create an inclusive culture that understands and respects the individual differences of the people we support and employ.

The Equality Act 2010 requires us to treat our staff and the people we support with respect and fairly. But for Dimensions, this is certainly not just about ticking a box. Being an inclusive employer and support provider means that:

- people we support and employ feel respected for who they are and are encouraged to participate actively in celebrating diversity;
- everyone demonstrates their social and moral responsibility from a basis of shared values;
- we are recruiting from the widest possible variety of backgrounds – this makes us attractive to people looking for support from those with diverse backgrounds and means that we are well prepared for expected demographic changes in the UK;
- we are meaningfully connecting with the diverse communities we work in – this enriches our shared knowledge and enables us to enhance the culturally sensitive person-centred support we provide.
Promoting awareness

We promote awareness of equality and diversity throughout Dimensions to make sure that all the people we support, employ and work with are aware of their rights and responsibilities.

We have a range of resources available on our employee Portal, including:

- our Equality and Diversity policy
- our Dignity at Work policy
- a variety of guidance on topics such as dyslexia, English as a second language, building and promoting respect in the workplace and religious beliefs
- access to work guidance
- why we monitor diversity.

All employees are required to read our Equality and Diversity policy and sign to say they have done this. Any changes are circulated by the Policies, Compliance and Safeguarding Manager to managers who, through supervisions, training and team meetings, ensure their staff understand the changes. The policy is reviewed every two years by our Equality and Diversity Advisor and the Executive Director of HR.

As part of our mandatory training programme, all employees receive training in Equality and Diversity legislation, which is refreshed every three years. There is additional mandatory Equality and Diversity training for anyone who has line management responsibility or ‘manager’ in their job title. Bespoke training can be available if there is a specific issue that needs to be addressed.

We circulate information via our quarterly Equality and Diversity Newsletter, email ‘newsflashes’ and in the monthly ‘Core Brief’ and ‘Witter’ to all staff which is covered during team meetings. Staff also have access to a diversity calendar, which raises awareness of cultural dates and events.

We recognise that sometimes we need to offer alternative communication methods. All staff have access to Photo Symbols and each department has a ‘lead’ on producing accessible information.

We assist the people we support to understand the need for respect of equality and diversity, and we have a ‘welcoming diversity’ fact sheet for families we work with.
Equality impact analysis

All policies, processes and proposals that directly affect the people we support or employees are subject to an Equality Impact Analysis (EIA). For policies we follow a consultation process involving our staff Diversity Matters group and National Staff Forum policy group. This allows for any considerations of impact to be identified and action taken if required. EIAs for policies are published alongside the policy and logged alongside the policy on the portal. This process really affords consideration and is not just a tick box exercise.

EIAs are also used during the personalisation journey for our services. This ensures that consideration to all demographics is given, and facilitates discussions that may be overlooked. It ensures that where there may be a potential negative impact, these issues can be highlighted, addressed and rectified or rationalised.

An example of when we have used the EIA tool in practice was when we reviewed terms and conditions for all employees. It highlighted areas that required consideration and adjustment to ensure that those with particular protected characteristics were not adversely affected.

Introducing Activate

Activate is our new model of support, founded on eight ‘domains’ which touch everything that happens at Dimensions — from the support we provide to our governance.

It involves teaching new skills and enabling people to try new experiences. Activate puts decision making closer to people we support by setting personalised outcomes with them, their families and staff.

This is another approach that we feel will enable us to ensure that the people we support connect with their communities and that respect for, and consideration of, the diverse needs of the people we support is acknowledged, understood and addressed.
How progress will be monitored

While each and every employee at Dimensions has responsibility for delivering the strategy, the key responsibilities are as follows.

The Executive Director of HR is the sponsor for equality and diversity. The Executive Directors and Board members are responsible for ensuring the strategy objectives are delivered and will monitor the progress every six months.

The strategy has an annual action plan which is reviewed and an update reported to the Board.

The Equality and Diversity Advisor has overall responsibility to ensure the strategy actions are achieved and aims are realised.

All managers are responsible for actively promoting equality and respecting diversity and assisting with the delivery of the strategy priorities.

The Diversity Matters champions are profiled role models and actively engage with activities that assist with the delivery of the strategy.

They meet four times a year where the strategy is reviewed.

Employees are updated through communications via Witter, blogs, Core Brief and the Equality and Diversity Newsletter. In addition, communications are disseminated via the staff forums and regional Everybody Counts groups.
Our Diversity Matters Groups

There are two Diversity Matters groups, one for our employees and the other for the people we support. The aim of Dimensions’ Diversity Matters Groups are to enrich our knowledge and understanding of the diverse group of people we support and employ. Anyone with a passion for promoting equality and celebrating diversity can become a member.

What does the employee group do? Members of the group…

- act as a ‘champion’ in their region or department, sharing information about equality and diversity issues and events with colleagues and people we support;
- have a personal interest and experience in valuing and respecting diversity, and use this in reviewing policies and procedures using an equality impact tool;
- share examples of good practice with the group members and the wider organisation so we can learn and develop from the positive experiences of the people we support and staff;
- share any resources or useful information with the group, to develop a wealth of knowledge and guidance for all staff to access;
- positively promote the aims and objectives of the Dimensions Equality and Diversity Strategy;
- are the voice for promoting equality and respecting diversity in everything we do!

Our ‘people we support champions’ meet to discuss their own experiences and work together to make sure we are all being treated fairly and with respect. They share equality and diversity information at their Everybody Counts group, and assist with developing resources to help achieve Dimensions vision for promoting equality and respecting diversity.
Learning and Development

At Dimensions we pride ourselves on a sector-leading suite of training resources to promote equality and celebrate diversity.

All colleagues have equal access to learning and development opportunities. We use a wide range of resources and offer a diverse range of learning activities, events and opportunities that aim to help our colleagues to grow and develop in a way that suits them.

Colleagues can access a variety of learning materials through our new online learning platform. This platform allows individuals to find learning materials that meet their needs, as well as using it to access the range of online mandatory training (in the form of e-learning) that they are required to complete.

Some training is also provided face to face, where appropriate. In addition, formal training is also provided using webinars, which allow for high levels of interaction whilst being delivered online. This allows colleagues to participate in training without having to travel. We also provide coaching, opportunities to learn from others and we support learning ‘on the job’. Studies show that this form of learning is often highly effective.

The new learning platform allows for a range of reports to be generated showing learning activity, and will, over the coming months, include demographic analysis. Reports are used to monitor activity, particularly in relation to mandatory training compliance. Evaluation of the performance impact of learning is also used.

Aspire

Our Aspire programme is a career development programme for all permanent employees. This flexible programme provides coaching opportunities as well as networking and project work. There is an Aspire+ strand that focuses on specific resources for our employees from Black, Asian, Minority, Ethnic backgrounds. This is to support our commitment to increase the ethnic diversity of our employees at management level.

Skills for Care BAME programme

Locality Manager Cheryl Read was on our Skills for Care Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) leaders’ programme for five months.

Cheryl says, “The programme focused on which doors were open to me and my ‘enablers’. I was supported to explore the impact of self-limiting beliefs which can ‘derail’ someone’s career. I also learned to articulate my own leadership vision.

“The most useful part of the programme was the opportunity to have a mentor who supported me with any learning queries and met me for six sessions to formulate a bespoke development plan just for me.

“The programme has reinforced my view of how competent I am as a leader and helped me to look at things on a broader scale. My aim is now to be more robust in my role and keep learning so that I’m an even more effective leader. I would recommend this programme because it stretches your learning, supports inclusion and helps shape a positive culture.”
Support planning

Respect for people’s dignity is embedded in everything we do. Our systems, processes, aims and ambitions are built around providing personalised, quality services that promote choice and control.

Our support planning process uses person-centred thinking tools to capture information about an individual and their preferences for how they would like to live their life. This ensures that we provide truly personalised support that acknowledges, understands, addresses and respects an individual’s diverse needs and preferences.

We use person-centred thinking resources to explore history, culture, religion, language and more. ‘Reaching Out Guidance’ produced by the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities on delivering culturally competent support has been incorporated into the support planning process. It takes into account all characteristics when designing what support an individual needs and how it should be delivered.

We take the cultural and religious needs of the people we support very seriously in our support planning process, ensuring staff show respect and enable individuals to take part in activities, observe prayer and attend cultural events as they desire.

The information we gather is also used to support the person with their community connections, personal care and meal preparations, taking into account dietary requirements dictated by their beliefs.

We ask:

- Is it important to the person for their supporter to speak the same languages as them and their family?
- Is it important to the person for the supporter who accompanies them to cultural or faith activities to be of the same culture?
- What is important to the person for their personal care? (e.g. washing, dressing, going to the toilet, do they use specific products for their hair, etc.)
- Is there anything important regarding meal preparation and diet (e.g. Halal)?

Outcomes are identified and we then agree what support is required to meet these outcomes. Guidelines in an individual’s support plan show how best to support the individual in each area. All staff familiarise themselves with support plans for the people they support and regular monitoring and reviewing ensures we continue to work effectively, taking account of people’s individualities, values and principles.

Culturally sensitive

Two Muslim gentleman (A and Y) have been supported to go to mosque for a few years and more recently have been introduced to a Muslim gentleman, S, from a different service in the same area to go to mosque together and develop their relationship.

Initially the service, Fountain House, tried to abide by A and Y’s culture and faith but did not really understand how things should be done. After going to mosque and building a relationship with the Imam, M, they learnt more and now make extra effort to ensure they are all adhered to.

M advised them on storing prayer mats, celebrating festivals, planning for end of life, purchasing, preparing and storing halal meat and other dietary information. Now utensils used for halal meat are stored separately from others and they buy it from a local store, meaning a relationship has been built with the owner of the shop too.

Now A, Y and S, as well as their staff teams, are involved with the culture and the elders and family from the mosque have become part of the family at A and Y’s service. They often listen to CDs and watch DVDs on prayer and Bollywood films together.

Help from the mosque has been integral in this progress; they have provided suitable clothes to be worn at mosque and during festival season, welcome non-Muslim members of staff and helped to dispel some myths and legends around the culture.

One of the ladies who works in A and Y’s service has a husband who is Muslim so she also helps to direct, advise on and support the changes and festival celebrations.

Now there is a greater understanding and communication between communities and diverse backgrounds and friendships have been made all round.
Our work with Tunstall Healthcare is helping people with learning disabilities and autism use personalised technology to lead more independent lives.

Personalised technology, a term we use to describe assistive technology, comes in many forms. For example, we use Telecare to promote independence and improve quality of life for the people we support. Some people we support benefit from using epilepsy sensors that monitor seizures through the night.

These measures can lead to people being able to reduce the support they receive, in turn giving them more privacy and independence. It also means the cost of their support package is reduced, so they have more choice over how they spend their money.

Part of our personalisation journey is providing ‘just enough support’. We aim to ensure people are having neither too much, nor too little, support, and to help people see support not only as paid care, but also in a variety of other ways.

As an employer we have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for all disabled employees (as defined by the Equality Act 2010).

In recognition of this, and the fact that 10% of the UK population has Dyslexia, we offer resources to help. We want our employees to be able to do their jobs to the best of their ability, and have the necessary resources to achieve that. In addition to people with Dyslexia, these resources can also benefit people where English is a second language, or who have a visual or physical impairment. The offer of the resources is open to anyone who feels they may benefit.

Our recruiting process involves occupational health checks which ensure that reasonable adjustments are considered prior to starting employment. We actively use Access to Work guidance and information to ensure we are meeting the needs of each disabled employee.
Debbie Johnson has been working at Dimensions for six years and is profoundly deaf.

Debbie says, “I’m a support worker and originally supported two people who were deaf, so I only needed an interpreter for meetings. However, sadly one of these people passed away and the other one left, so I moved on to supporting hearing clients and needed an interpreter more of the time.

“The people I support now have varied needs and some are more independent than others. Mostly I support them with things like finances, shopping, keeping healthy, maintaining their homes and education and employment. I also arrange trips or holidays and support them with their hobbies.

“I have some equipment that I use while working – I have a vibrating pager which tells me if the doorbell rings or if the fire alarm goes off. Both of the services I work at have receivers installed which enables the pager to work.”

Debbie uses British Sign Language to communicate and receives funding from AtW (Access to Work), a government scheme, to cover the cost of her interpreters. These are all professionally registered and bound by a code of ethics so that confidentiality is protected at all times. AtW has worked closely with Dimensions to ensure the interpreters are all familiar with relevant policies and to create their own Health & Safety policy which is in line with Dimensions policies.

Yet Debbie does not need an interpreter all the time. “In the evenings I support the tenants with dinner,” she explains. “If there are incidents I text my manager and she comes to support me. I also administer medication without an interpreter.”

Debbie finds her work phone invaluable as she can text a colleague to help her if needed, or her duty manager for advice and support.

Debbie does regard Dimensions as an inclusive employer, although she adds that there are always ways it could improve – such as doing more to recruit people with disabilities.

Yet generally, Debbie feels fully part of the Dimensions team and plays her part fully – including in training where she can use one or two interpreters paid for by AtW. She is enthusiastic about contributing to the work of the Executive Team and helping to organise events.

“There are many great ideas at Dimensions,” she says.
Proving life can get better

Dimensions provides evidence-based, outcomes-focused support including sector leading positive behaviour support for people with learning disabilities, autism and complex needs. We help the people we support to be actively involved in their communities.

Find out more

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