



Valuing you as you

Outlining the commitment of the Dimensions Group to equality, diversity and inclusion of all colleagues



“I am proud to work for an organisation which does not pay lip service to equality, diversity and inclusion but actively promotes and celebrates them as fundamental aspects of what it is and does. ”

Diversity Matters Group member

Why diversity matters



In today's society, many people question why are we still talking about equality and diversity? Surely respect for difference is a given, and equality exists for all?

Certainly we have come a long way since the Equality Act 2010 came into force, and we're proud to say that we have gone beyond the requirements of the law. That's because we understand the value of having a diverse workforce, the need to reflect the communities we work within and the importance of treating colleagues fairly – so that in turn they feel valued, can be themselves at work, do a great job and make a positive difference to the lives of people we support.

The UK's population is diverse, including in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion and belief, marital status, disabilities and gender reassignment. As a large provider of support to people with learning disabilities and autism across the country, we need to ensure that we reflect the communities we work within. Our vision for equality and diversity reflects this.

Diversity is about difference and this enriches our knowledge, thinking, and understanding on so many levels. We take action to recruit from the widest talent pool to encourage people from all backgrounds to work for us. Sometimes working with people who aren't like us pushes us out of our comfort zone – that's a good thing! This allows for creative thinking, for ensuring that we can be a great provider of support and an employer of choice. The recent Great Place to Work survey results are a testament to this.

You may be surprised to learn that we are all biased. Not consciously, but we ALL have unconscious biases. This can have a huge impact on everyday decisions we make, whether we are a support worker, and administrator, a manager or the CEO. We have taken steps to mitigate this by providing training to all colleagues and sending out reminders about this.

By striving to be an inclusive organisation, never resting on our laurels, never settling for just ok, we can ensure that colleagues and people we support are treated with respect and valued as individuals. We want every colleague to know that the Dimensions Group values you *as you*.

Steve Scown
Chief Executive
Dimensions Group

Our vision and aims

for promoting equality, diversity and inclusion across the Dimensions Group



Our vision

We strongly believe in promoting equality, celebrating diversity and ensuring inclusion – for the people we support, the people we employ and wider society.

We strive to be an organisation which reflects and responds to the diverse range of communities in which we work, and aim to create an inclusive culture that understands, respects, encourages and celebrates the individual differences of the people we support, employ and work in partnership with.

We believe that the diversity of our staff team is one of our strengths and so we are committed to ensuring that it reflects the diversity of society as a whole at all levels of the organisation.

At the Dimensions Group, we value you as you – not *despite* your diversity, but *because* of it.

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

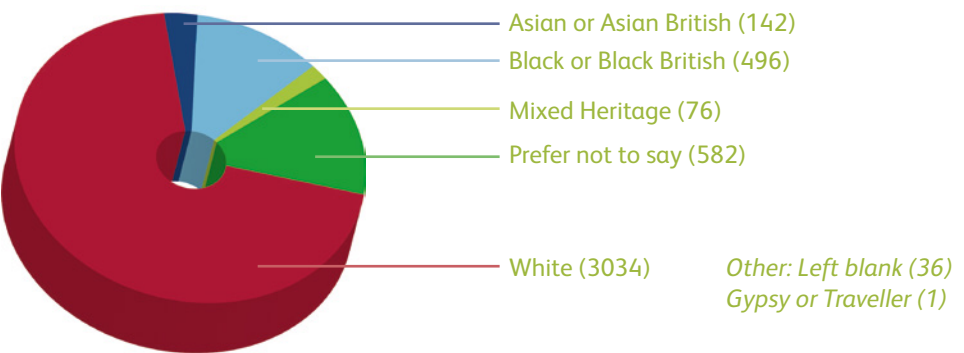
We strive to ensure that at all levels we are representative of the communities we serve.

The diversity of our team

As a national organisation that works in communities up and down the country, it is important that we reflect the demographic profile of the communities we serve – from ethnicity, to age, to gender, etc. All our colleagues are encouraged to share their demographic information confidentially on our internal IT system. This helps Dimensions check that we do reflect the communities we are working within, that we are treating people fairly and that we are taking any steps necessary to support any particular groups.

Provided below is some commentary to explain the demographic data that we have, which is based on the responses of about 4,300 colleagues who completed the online form on our system. The commentary will let you know what we are doing, or plan to do, to support colleagues. With all demographics, it is our ambition to reflect the national census information or, where this is not applicable, we aim to benchmark against similar organisations.

Ethnicity



Ethnic diversity of whole workforce

Approximately 13 % of the UK population is from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds. Within Dimensions, just over 12 % of colleagues are from these backgrounds, so this would indicate that our recruitment practices are fair and non-biased. We will be comparing this data regionally with the most recent national census data to see if there are any actions required in any regions to attract from wider pools of possible candidates.

“Hi. I’m Cheryl Read. I’m a locality manager for Essex and Suffolk. I like to sing, I like to dance, I like to read, I’m black and I’m proud, and Dimensions values me as me.”

Ethnic diversity of managers

Over the last few years, due to the lack of ethnic diversity in management positions, Dimensions has taken positive action to recruit and retain more colleagues from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds into senior positions.

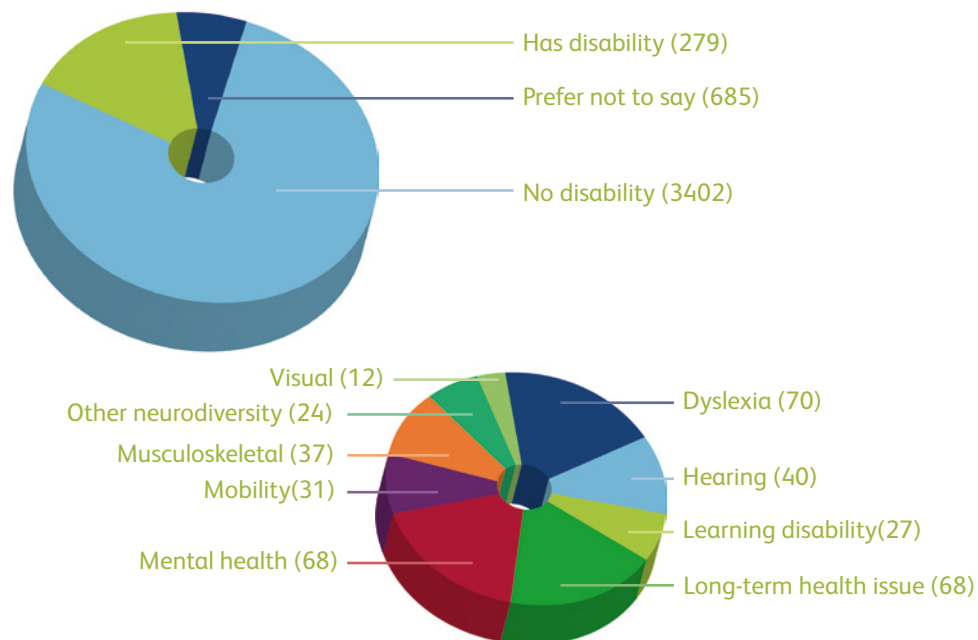
We are pleased to report that currently 9.3 % of managers are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. Currently these positions are held at locality manager, assistant locality manager and business support manager level. Our next steps involve reviewing how we can increase the ethnic diversity of more senior management positions from operations directors and above.

Over the last five years we have supported 19 colleagues to participate in the Skills for Care ‘Moving Up’ programme and hope to offer it to more colleagues in the year ahead. We have also consulted with a group of managers from BAME backgrounds to develop a learning pathway that will give colleagues an equal opportunity to progress. This includes the opportunity for reverse mentoring from junior colleagues to senior managers.

We have also signed up to the Race at Work Charter, led by Business in the Community and supported by the government, which commits organisations to have more people from BAME backgrounds in management positions. We will be considering the results from a national survey completed as part of the charter and taking action accordingly.



Disability

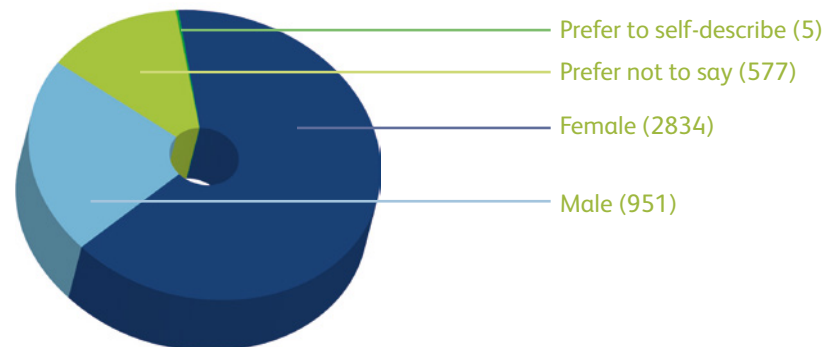


Our ambition is to reflect similar organisations in the number of people we employ with a disability, and we have exceeded this target at 6.4%. The disabilities vary, but the highest indicated were dyslexia and mental health issues. We have taken steps to support these colleagues by providing assistive technology and training Mental Health First Aiders.

As one of the largest providers of support for people with learning disabilities and autism, Dimensions is committed to supporting people with learning disabilities and autism to gain employment in mainstream roles as well as in specialist roles. Steps we have taken to support colleagues include disability leave, the employment of a supported employment advisor in head office and 'reasonable adjustments' such as hearing loops, work trials instead of traditional interviews, dyslexia software and job shaping.

We have also introduced a work trial as an alternative to face-to-face interviews which has proved successful, particularly for colleagues with autism and learning disabilities. We are continuing to focus in this area and are engaging with colleges to offer work experience opportunities and job shaping, and supporting managers with best practice guidance. Furthermore, we now have 80 trained mental health first aiders to support all colleagues with their wellbeing.

Gender



This is an area where our gender split of male/female is comparable with our competitors. However, within the sector as a whole, men are under-represented in support worker roles and, therefore, Dimensions has been proactive in focused recruitment campaigns to attract more men to work for us.

A recent video featuring a middle-aged man moving into support work and discussing the impact this has had on his work and personal life has been picked up in the media. Dimensions has also been featured in a specific piece by the Guardian highlighting the need for the industry to attract more men.

Furthermore, our gender pay gap as officially notified to the government has been almost zero for the last two years.

Marital status / pregnancy & maternity

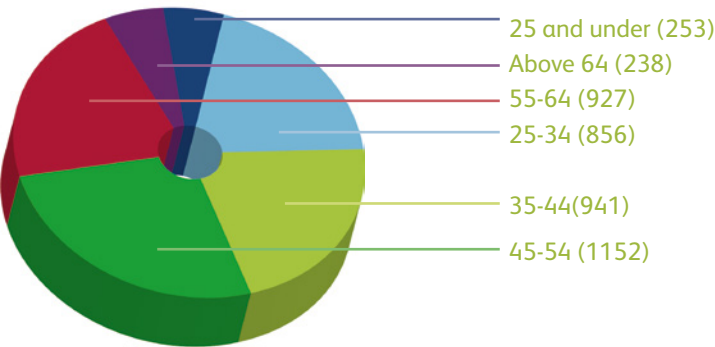
We ask colleagues to tell us their marital status because it is one of the legally protected characteristics and has in the past been a possible area of discrimination.

We have not asked colleagues specifically about pregnancy and maternity, as this is a changing demographic and would be difficult to monitor.

However, at a local level colleagues are supported in accordance with our policies and practices. We are confident that our policies and procedures mean that no-one will experience any discrimination on the basis of this protected characteristic.

“I’m Leon. I’m a resourcing coordinator based in the Theale head office. I like spending time with my god-kids and reading, and I’m disabled. Dimensions values me as me.”

Age



In line with our sector, the majority of colleagues are aged between 25 and 64.

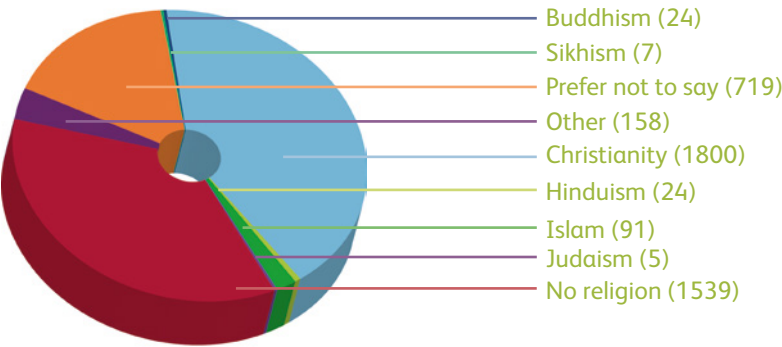
We have been proactive in running age specific recruitment campaigns, tailoring our approach and offer to younger and old workers accordingly. We have digitally targeted people in these categories through online campaigns as well as tailoring paper based recruitment materials.

We have a range of videos featuring younger and older workers where they discuss what attracted them to working as a support worker, and what keeps them engaged with their role.

Recognising that we have a high proportion of female colleagues, and particularly in the age range of 45-54 years, we have developed a guide for managers on the menopause. This has recently become a much talked about issue for women, and the guidance aims to support colleagues and managers.

“Hello. I’m Shabana, Office Manager at Head Office in Theale. I have a beautiful daughter, I love holidays, I’m a Muslim. Dimensions values me as me.”

Religion and belief



As one would expect, given the results of the national census, the highest percentage of colleagues identify as Christians. This is then followed by those with no religion and those who preferred not to say.

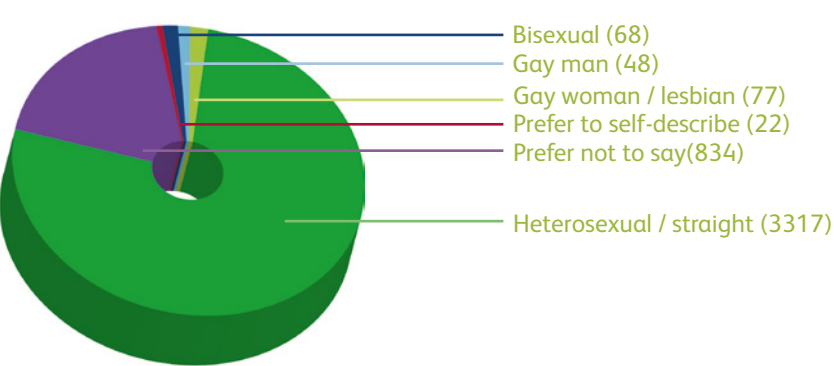
At Dimensions, we value and respect all our colleagues whatever their faith or belief, or whether they have faith or not. There is a wealth of information about religions and beliefs on Learning Connect, and the blogs about faith that colleagues have written have been positively received.

As with all the legally protected characteristics, we have a diversity champion for religion and belief. There are facilities for prayer and reflection at our Head office and arrangements are agreed at a local level to support individuals with their faith.

Our diversity calendar and showcased diversity dates regularly focus on religious festivals and this helps managers to pre-plan rotas when considering the needs of colleagues such as those who may be fasting due to a religious occasion.

“Hi. I’m Greg Chef. I’m a business analyst. I enjoy cooking, I enjoy travelling, I enjoy gardening. I’m of Polish descent and I’m gay, and Dimensions values me as me.”

Sexual orientation



In 2017 the Office for National Statistics reported that 2 % of the UK population identifies as lesbian, gay or bisexual. However, campaign group Stonewall believes that the actual figure is significantly higher than that, with people still being cautious about sharing this information.

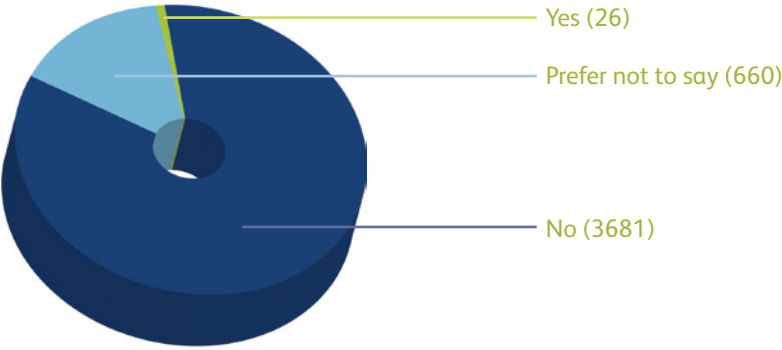
With 3.69 % of our colleagues being willing to share they are lesbian, gay or bisexual, it is reassuring that many colleagues do feel that they can be themselves here – although we want more people to feel that way and will be working on this.

There is guidance on LGBT issue on the intranet and Learning Connect, and blogs from diversity champions have been written to encourage colleagues to be open and to be themselves. We have supported, and will continue to support, Pride events across the UK with colleagues and people we support.

Research shows that gay men are the most likely demographic to experience mental health problems, so it is important that we encourage an open and inclusive environment irrespective of any demographic.

“Hi. I’m Ceri Dixon and I work as a volunteering officer for Dimensions. I enjoy going to the theatre, having a cocktail with my friends, and I have a disability. Dimensions values me as me.”

Gender reassignment



Gender has become far wider than male and female identity, and Dimensions has taken steps to support colleagues who identify in other ways. The way we ask for colleague data relating to gender has an option to self-describe (see page 9 on gender) and colleagues are also asked whether their gender identity is different to that assigned to them at birth.

Colleagues who are in transition have assisted with developing a guide for managers to support colleagues through the process while in employment with Dimensions. There are also resources available on Learning Connect about gender reassignment and we are continuing work in this area, including a guide for all colleagues and families/circles of support.

There is no robust data in the UK about how many transgender people there are, so it is difficult to comment on whether we are comparable to this. Currently, 26 colleagues have shared that they are in transition. Although this figure is seemingly low, in light of the work that we do and the complexities of supporting people with learning disabilities and autism, we are pleased that these colleagues have felt comfortable and safe to share this confidentially.

Better Lives for More People

Implications for equality and diversity in our new five-year strategy for 2025



Our new corporate strategy for the whole Dimensions Group has been launched this year. Its essence is our new vision, our mission and values which are remaining unchanged, and five new Strategic Pillars.

Promoting equality, celebrating diversity and ensuring inclusion are key strands that run throughout the new strategy.

For example, each of our values of Ambition, Respect, Courage, Integrity and Partnership can readily apply to the ways in which affirm the equality of all colleagues.

To take just one example – our value of Respect is defined as follows: “We show respect and recognise that each person’s unique contribution adds value to all.”

The same is true of our Strategic Pillars of Quality, Reputation, Scale, Capacity and Sustainability. Indeed, one of the objectives for the ‘Reputation’ pillar is “to enhance our reputation as a great employer and for valuing and promoting diversity”.

We are not only committed to ensure that we respect equality and diversity in Dimensions, but also that we are

seen as a leader in this regard beyond our organisation.

In explaining the new strategy, Chief Executive Steve Scown has explained that the stated vision of creating “better lives for more people” applies just as much to the people who work for Dimensions as it does to the people we support and house, the families and loved ones of the people we support, our commissioners, our sector and society as a whole.

We are committed, therefore, to ensure respect for equality and diversity as an employer, as a support

provider and as an organisation which seeks to make a difference in society as a whole.

As Steve Scown has said, “I would like to give my personal assurance that here at Dimensions we value every single one of our colleagues because of who they are.

“The diversity of our staff team is one of our strengths, and we are committed to ensure that everyone is welcomed and valued here – not *despite* people’s diversity, but *because* of it. Dimensions values you *as you*.”

Our Diversity Matters Group

At Dimensions we have a committed group of colleagues who champion diversity by volunteering as members of our Diversity Matters Group. These colleagues meet together in person every three months (with catch-up calls held in between meetings) to drive and deliver the Equality and Diversity Strategy and ensure that promoting equality, celebrating diversity and ensuring inclusion are at the core of everything Dimensions does.

The group's members are drawn from across the organisation, from both Operations and Business Support. They represent a wide range of demographics and possess a variety of skillsets and experiences. The Group's chair is Lisa Govier – our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager.

As well as being responsible for the Equality & Diversity Strategy, the group also has responsibility for the regular equality and diversity newsletters, the showcased diversity dates and the Equality & Diversity page on the intranet.

Some members of the group are designated champions for particular legally protected characteristics, and their role is to serve as points of contact for colleagues who have a query or concern relating to one of these and to champion of the characteristic in blogs and other resources.



Members of the Diversity Matters Group at an Investors in Diversity awards event

Over to you...

As a Dimensions Group colleague, what can you do to promote equality and respect diversity?

Each and every one of us has a responsibility to ensure that our colleagues and the people we support are treated fairly.

Here's some things that you can do –

- Challenge discriminatory language used by colleagues and people we support
- Use the diversity calendar, and in particular the two showcased dates per month as chosen by the Diversity Matters Group. This can help to plan rotas to accommodate the needs of colleagues such as prayer or fasting. Use the dates to raise awareness.
- Be aware of your unconscious bias. We are all biased. Check out the unconscious bias training on Learning Connect.
- Make use of the diversity question in your one-to-ones. Is there anything that Dimensions can do to support you better with your diversity?
- Keep up to date with your basic equality and diversity knowledge. Take the Equality and Diversity course on Learning Connect and use the resources and information available on the colleague intranet.
- Put Equality and Diversity on your team meeting agenda.
- Complete the Bullying and Harassment training on Learning Connect.
- Share this booklet with colleagues.
- Watch our short film on diversity, which features colleagues explaining that Dimensions valued them as them, not *despite* their diversity, but *because* of it. You can access the film by visiting the homepage or Equality and Diversity page on the colleague intranet.



Meet our inspiring colleague Cleony

We were first introduced to Cleony by Ways into Work, a Community Interest Company which aims to match people with learning disabilities and autism with employers keen to give them an opportunity of paid work.

We were keen to work with Cleony as she didn't have any work experience and employed her as an office assistant at Head Office in Theale as steppingstone into the world of work for her.

Her line manager, Office Manager Shabana Rylewicz, recalls, "Cleony quickly got stuck into her role with enthusiasm and started to make friends, but she had a lot to get used to and needed support to understand how to behave professionally at work. We worked hard to learn how autism affected her personally, and worked

out how best to communicate with her – such as by using checklists, timetables and pictures.

"In turn, Cleony learned quickly and before long was keen to take on some reception roles, including drafting emails in business appropriate language and taking enquiry calls. We used double headsets so that she could listen in to calls and learn how the reception team handled them, and soon was answering calls herself with reception colleagues listening in."

After a few setbacks, Cleony mastered the challenge of answering a range of enquiries, and she also worked hard to overcome other challenges of working in a professional office. Eventually the team advertised for permanent customer service assistant within the reception team, and Cleony

applied. A number of candidates were interviewed but Cleony came through with flying colours and was offered the role. She then took up her promotion with gusto.

Cleony says, "My job as a Customer Service Assistant involves answering support enquiries by phone and email, greeting visitors to Head Office who are attending meetings, passing messages on to colleagues and preparing ID badges for external attendees.

"The best thing about my job is being able to meet different people from outside and within the company, learning more about Dimensions and improving my confidence in terms of communication and independence. I am learning more and more every day about all the different types of

"She has proved herself to be a very intelligent person, a dedicated worker and very reliable."

enquiry we receive at Head Office and how to adopt different approaches in handling them all."

Shabana is delighted with Cleony's contribution in her role. "She brings different perspectives and asks interesting and thoughtful questions," Shabana observes. "She has proved



herself to be a very intelligent person, a dedicated worker and very reliable. She also shows a lot of initiative. These qualities weren't all evident when she started with us some three years ago, but working here has brought them out of her and she is now much more confident."

Shabana adds, "It is clear that working here has made a big difference to Cleony's world. She is now much more independent, has her own money, uses public transport and has a great group of friends in and out of work."

Certainly Cleony would recommend working for Dimensions to anyone else in her situation. "I would advise them to make sure they are honest and truthful in terms of what support they need and not to be afraid of asking for help or advice if you need it," she says. "I'm pleased to say that Dimensions is a very supporting and accommodating organisation and they do ensure that the needs of all colleagues met."



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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