



**Ambitious
about Autism**



**Equity, diversity,
and inclusion
strategy**

2024 - 2026
September 2024

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Introduction

Ambitious about Autism's vision is a future where every autistic child and young person can be themselves and realise their ambitions.

Our mission is to stand with autistic children and young people, champion their rights and create opportunities.

Through our EDI strategy, we also working to build a more equitable and inclusive organisation and society where everyone can belong, thrive and achieve.

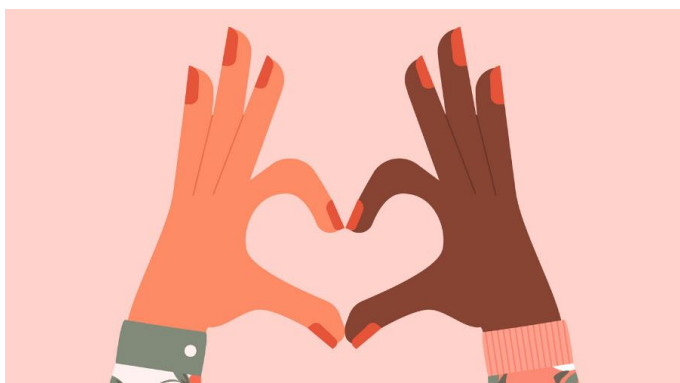
We can only achieve this by ensuring that we are diverse and inclusive across all our work, from our governance and leadership to people, services to wider influencing. By embracing and championing equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), we can create a high performing, dynamic and compassionate organisation that will truly transform the lives of all autistic children and young people.

We are committed to implementing a comprehensive EDI strategy that goes beyond mere compliance. Our aim is to embed EDI at the core of our organisation's culture, ensuring that it is reflected in all our plans, policies, practices and decision-making. We are actively working to create an organisation where diversity is celebrated, inclusivity is championed, and equity is upheld at every level. Through our EDI strategy, we are also working to build a more equitable and inclusive society where everyone can belong, thrive and achieve.

This EDI strategy outlines how we intend to achieve this over the two-year period of 24-26. It supports our overall Time for Ambition strategy.

This document sets out the following.

1. Our context: The importance of EDI and defining EDI.
2. Our EDI vision.
3. Our strategic priorities.
4. Overarching goals.
5. Monitoring, evaluation, and reporting.



Our context and the importance of EDI

In 2021 Ambitious about Autism published its three-year EDI strategy, to support its *Time for Ambition* strategy. During the period of this strategy, we have established a strong foundation across the organisation to build on. This two-year strategy will focus on further embedding EDI in the organisation and ensuring our work has meaningful impact.

If we are to succeed in achieving the best possible outcomes for autistic children and young people, we have to be diverse and inclusive. We need a workforce that reflects the demographics of the people we stand with and provides a workplace where all employees feel a strong sense of belonging. We want everyone who works with us to have an excellent experience and be confident that everything we do is inclusive.



EDI is about being the best we can be – a high performing organisation that brings together all the different elements defined below:

Equity: While equality focuses on providing the same opportunities to all individuals regardless of their background and needs, equity seeks to address inherent inequalities by considering the diverse characteristics and circumstances of each person. It aims to ensure fair access to resources and tailored support that meet the specific needs of people, thereby promoting equal outcomes and opportunities for everyone.

Diversity: Acknowledging and embracing difference is at the core of diversity. It acknowledges the benefit of having a range of perspectives in decision-making - and the workforce, volunteers and supporters are representative of the organisation's beneficiaries.

Inclusion: is where people's differences are valued. An inclusive working environment is one in which everyone feels that they belong. Their contribution matters, and they can perform, no matter what their background, identity or circumstances are. An inclusive workplace has fair policies and practices in place and enables a diverse range of people to work together effectively.

Values

Autistic children and young people are at the heart of everything we do.



One of our core values is that 'we celebrate difference'. We strive to live by this value every day in all that we do. We are ambitious in name, and this includes ambition in EDI. We must do and want to do much more. It is part of our core purpose to be an organisation that champions and supports diversity.

To achieve this vision, we must be an organisation that embeds EDI in all that we do and model key behaviours that will enable us to achieve our vision.

This strategy is a critical component of Ambitious about Autism's strategy. Annually, we will produce an EDI Plan, which will also be embedded in the organisation's Operational Plan.

Our EDI vision

Ambitious about Autism's vision is a future where every autistic child and young person can be themselves and realise their ambitions. Through our EDI strategy, we also working to build a more equitable and inclusive organisation and society where everyone can belong, thrive and achieve.



EDI strategic priorities

- a) **Courageous governance and leadership** – an organisation with a diverse and inclusive leadership that proactively champions and drives EDI initiatives.
- b) **Inclusive workplace** – creating a workplace where everyone feels a deep sense of belonging and can authentically show up as their true selves.
- c) **High quality and inclusive education and services** – reach and support diverse communities in a way that is enabling and appropriate to ambitions, interests, experiences and needs.
- d) **Influential national work** – we will stand with autistic children and young people from diverse backgrounds nationally.

Overarching goals

a) Courageous governance and leadership

Our governance and leadership will:

- proactively and confidently embrace and lead the EDI agenda as a central part of our approach and plans.
- become increasingly diverse over time, through open and inclusive recruitment.
- report on progress and gather evidence to inform actions that will improve outcomes.

b) Inclusive workplace

Our workplace will have equity, diversity and inclusion at the heart of what we do by:

- developing a deeper understanding of the profile, needs and views of all our people.
- ensuring leadership and management is driven by the principles of EDI and ensuring EDI is built into our core values and behaviour framework.
- having fair and consistent policies, systems and processes
- investing in developing staff recruitment, learning and development and progression

- creating an environment that celebrates EDI and gives all staff an opportunity to learn and develop their knowledge and skills around EDI.

c) High quality and inclusive education and other services

We will reach and support autistic children and young people from diverse backgrounds and needs in a way that is enabling and appropriate to their ambitions, interests, experiences and needs by:

- ensuring that all plans, policies, systems and processes for our education and other services take a holistic approach to EDI.
- ensuring the curriculum, approaches and environment within our services reflects the diverse interests and experiences of the children and young people we serve.
- working to ensure we promote our services widely and ensure they are accessible.

d) Influential national work

Nationally, we will stand with all autistic children and young people by:

- researching and highlighting the views, experiences and needs of all autistic children and young people to help shape policy and practice nationally
- working in partnership to make change happen with and for autistic and children and young people impacted by multiple barriers.
- ensuring our work is representative of and promoted to people from a range of backgrounds.

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

We will monitor, evaluate and report on progress against our EDI strategy.

a) Courageous governance and leadership:

Termly:

- Review and report progress against Operational Plan, with EDI objectives embedded.

Annually:

- Review and report progress against EDI plans annually to assess progress and areas for development to inform future plans. To be reported to SMT, ELT and Board.
- Assess the diversity of governance and leadership positions to ensure that roles are accessible to people from all backgrounds.
- Review EDI Committee's effectiveness to inform future development plans.

b) Inclusive workplace:

Annually:

- Review and report people recruitment, retention, learning and development, employee relations and progression rates against protected characteristics.
- Report results of annual staff survey, including EDI data.

- Report gender pay gap annually and explore reporting across other characteristics, depending on completeness of data.

c) High quality and inclusive education and other services

Termly:

- Review and report school/college pupil/learner profiles, progress and attainment against protected characteristics to SLT, Governing Bodies and Education and Care Committee.
- Review and report progress against school/college development plans in relation to EDI to Governing Bodies and Education and Care Committee.
- Review and report progress on access to and satisfaction with National Services to SMT, ELT and Board.
- Review impact of events held to celebrate diversity.

Annually:

- Review and report schools/college pupil/learner profiles, progress and attainment against protected characteristics to SLT, Governing Bodies and educational Committee.
- Review and report progress against school/college development plans in relation to EDI via the Governing Bodies Education and Care Committee.
- Report results of pupil, learner and staff surveys against protected characteristics.
- Review and report progress on access to and satisfaction with National Services to SMT, ELT and Board.

d) Influential national work

Termly:

- Review and report on key initiatives that the organisation has led or participated in to influence the wider environment in relation to autistic children and young people or the sectors we work in.