



Sandwell
Children's Trust

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

STRATEGY (2025-2028)

PEOPLE



sandwellchildrenstrust.org

Trust Board Chair and Chief Executive's Foreword

We are proud of the progress made regarding how the Trust developing an inclusive, diverse, and equitable environment for our staff, children and families. Our diverse workforce reflects the communities we help; and our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion remains central to our mission of improving the lives of our children, young people and families of Sandwell. Importantly, we are now making the shift to **equity**, hence ED&I now describes our **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion strategy**.

Underpinned by our **Ethos and ST*R Practice Model**, we have worked hard over the last few years to develop a culture of openness and inclusivity at every level. Building on the progress we've made, this strategy reinforces our ambition to challenge inequality, embrace diversity and embed a culture where everyone feels empowered to reach their full potential.

Through our first strategy, we made demonstrable progress in all areas. We introduced an ED&I Operational Task Group; staff from across the Trust became ED&I Ambassadors; and we introduced a range of activities that celebrated and embraced cultural differences, activities that have been led and contributed to by our staff and young people. However, there is more to do. Our staff have shared their views on what we now need to focus on and our ED&I Task Group, Trust Board, recognised Unions and our children and families have helped to shape it. We will work together within a framework of:

- **Anti-discriminatory** and **anti-racist** policies and practice that enables continuous learning and improvement
- **Fair** and **consistent** application of our policies regarding our workforce, partners, our community, children and families
- **Zero tolerance** regarding any form of discrimination
- **Intersectionality** so every individual is seen equitably, not just through one characteristic



Graham Archer
Board Chair



Emma Taylor
Chief Executive

We are pleased being Care Experienced is now a protected characteristic in Sandwell, highlighting that our children, young people and families are at the heart of everything we do.

We want to improve further and will continue to listen and learn from our staff, our communities and our children as we strive to be an organisation with a strong culture of inclusion, where diversity is invited and celebrated. Our strategy will help us achieve even more together, where our staff are enabled to reach their potential, free from any prejudice and where the Trust's culture and values impact positively on the children and families we help.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Task Group's Foreword

We the ED&I Task Group, as ambassadors representing Sandwell Children's Trust employees, are proud to introduce this strategy – a testament to our collective commitment to creating a truly inclusive and equitable environment across the Trust. Our journey has been one of continuous learning, challenge, and profound inspiration.

We recognise that diversity is not just about representation – it's about creating a genuine belonging in an environment where we feel comfortable, accepted, and can do our best work. We have been listening, learning, and responding to the needs of our colleagues, children and families. However, there is more to be done and most importantly, we are working towards ensuring that actions are followed through and communicated. Each of us brings a unique perspective, shaped by our individual experiences, backgrounds and identities.

We are the change makers, advocates and bridge builders. We have held challenging conversations, pushed boundaries and supported our colleagues and our community that we support to understand the critical importance of equity and inclusion whilst standing firm with our zero-tolerance approach to discrimination.

Our Collective Promise as ED&I Ambassadors

We commit to:

- Actively listening
- Challenging inequitable practices
- Supporting our colleagues, children, young people and families
- Holding ourselves and our Trust to account

This strategy is a collaborative effort, and we are continuing an exciting path towards equity, diversity and inclusion. Our differences are our strength and together, we can create meaningful and lasting change. We invite you to join us.



Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Ambassadors

Introduction

The Trust was established to improve the lives of children in Sandwell. Our values and behaviours are rooted in our Ethos, ST*R and Practice Model. Leaders, officers and practitioners at every level are responsible for making sure excellence, equity and opportunity underpin everything we do and are reflected in our work. We want to continue developing as a place where our staff are proud to be part of our diverse Sandwell Family, respected, supported and empowered to thrive.

Our ED&I activity is embedded within **Priority 1** of our **Transformation Programme**. Our **strategic aims** in this priority are:

- A stable, safe and progressive workforce that embraces **equity** and our **inclusive culture**
- An ambitious, aspirational and creative workforce that achieves the priorities within our whole Transformation Programme and wider children's system
- Talent management and succession planning at every level

Our **key objectives** are:

- To attract and retain outstanding people to our Sandwell Family
- To develop an organisation that reflects national strategy and policy
- To develop our workforce by 'growing our own' with career pathways, apprenticeship & development programmes
- To embed a culture of continuous learning and development

Through our first strategy, an **ED&I Strategic Governance Group** was created to oversee activity and progress. An **ED&I Task Group** was also created with volunteer **Ambassadors** reflecting all protected characteristics. Through our Task Group our ED&I our Chief Executive leads activity, with progress overseen by the Trust's **Workforce Committee**.

The strategy is underpinned by our [Ethos](#) and [ST*R Practice Model](#):

- Listening, learning and caring
- Being ambitious and confident
- Encouraging innovation
- Acting with openness and transparency

ST*R is our **S**trengths based, **T**rauma informed, and **R**elationship based approach to working with children and families. Everyone working in the Trust is expected to work in this way because everyone plays their part in improving children's lives. It is also a shared partnership practice model so everyone can work with families consistently through this relational approach.

Importantly, how we work with each other and our children and families should also be driven by our [Working together Strategy](#). Written and led by our young people, this strategy drives how we should all be listening to and involving children in everything that matters to them. It sets clear expectations on the language we all should use, and how we write about them on their files.

Approach to this strategy

This strategy reflects our achievements so far and sets out our approach over the next 3 years to continue developing our diverse and inclusive workforce, where we demonstrate ‘lived experiences’ not just acknowledge them and make best use of our data to achieve a more equitable organisation. It has been developed through consultation with our staff, our Trust Board and Strategic Leadership Team; recognised Unions, feedback through our employee groups and staff survey; our VOICE and FIYA groups; and informed by national learning and research. It should be read in conjunction with the Trust’s broader Workforce Strategy.

As a result of our ED&I activity to date, we have taken the approach to create our new strategy that seeks Equity rather than just Equality. Equality means that every individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities. However, in striving for Equity, we believe that every colleague has a different circumstance and that this should be recognised and considered to help everyone achieve an equal outcome.

Informed and led by data, this strategy has 4 themes that inform its action plan:

- **Leadership and Culture**
- **Our Workforce**
- **Our Children, Families & Communities**
- **Governance**

Legal context and our obligations

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination, harassment and victimisation in the workplace and in wider society because of nine protected characteristics:



We are required to follow and abide by this legislation and all staff are personally responsible for their conduct.

The Public Sector Equality Duty

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to have due regard of the need to demonstrate that we are:

- Putting an end to [unlawful behaviour that is banned by the Equality Act 2010](#), including discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advancing equal opportunities between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Fostering good relations between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not
- The Public Sector Equality Duty reinforces our legal commitment to adhere to the General Equality Duty, as set out in [Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010](#)

The Independent Review of Social Care

The Independent Review of Social Care was published in May 2022. It recognised discrimination faced by Care Experienced people and how this can impact people throughout their lives. In response, Sandwell accepted the recommendation to make Care Experienced a protected characteristic. Implementing this will enable us to:

‘Identify and reduce discrimination that may occur due to a person’s previous care status. Increase understanding and awareness of the impact that care experience may have on an individual with a view to reduce stigma faced by care-experienced individuals and improve their ability to access opportunities, including, but not limited to education, training, training and housing.’

The Equality Framework for Local Government

The Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) outlines our dedication to:

- Understanding and working with our local community
- Leadership and organisational commitment
- Responsive services and customer care
- Diverse and Engaged Workforce

In discussion with local partners and local people, its purpose is to help organisations to review and improve their performance for people with characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010. The EFLG also offers the opportunity for the Trust to benchmark their actions planned and undertaken through a peer review to support recognition of best practice and opportunities for improvement.

Anti-Racist and Anti-Discriminatory Framework

Our approach to ED&I must be seen within a strong anti-discriminatory and anti-racist framework. Whether it’s our staff or our families, we must continue to actively address any existing inequalities, making sure that there are no systems, processes and practices that could prevent this by either explicit or unconscious bias. All people with protected characteristics can experience discrimination and oppression, for example, based on their gender, sexual preference, age, religion and/ or the fact that they are disabled or care experienced. Therefore, the Trust must work within an anti-discriminatory framework, both within the workplace and our communities, challenging any form of discrimination or oppression that impacts on our workforce or the families we work with.

Social Work England

Social Work England guidelines outline the requirement to:

- Protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and wellbeing of the public
- Promote and maintain public confidence in social workers in England
- Promote and maintain proper professional standards for social workers in England

Social Work England Equality & Diversity Policy states:

- Provide equality, fairness, and respect for all our people, whether temporary, part-time or full-time
- Do not discriminate because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation
- Oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities

Our Profile

Our Workforce



The highest ethnicity for the Management Team (all managers) is White/White British at 51.26%. The lowest ethnicity for the same group is 'Mixed Ethnicities' at 6.72%. There are more Asian/Asian British ethnicities within workforce level roles (19.35%) in comparison to management roles (13.45%).



There is a higher level of females within management roles (82.38%), the difference between management roles and workforce level roles is 5.07%. In comparison to males, where there is a higher level within management roles (22.69%) compared to 16.09% at workforce level. The data highlights that as of April 2024, SCT had a mean gender pay gap of 7.1%. This means that when we compare pay, males earn 7.1% more than females. SCT had a median gender pay gap of 1.2%.



A majority of the whole organisation identifies as having no disability. The highest level of disclosing disability is within the 'workforce' level at 9.20% and 4.21% within the management roles. There is a rate of 12.48% unknown disability data across the Trust.



The largest age range within the Trust is 36-40, the lowest are under 20 and over 70+. The highest age range within the Management Team level is 41-45, the lowest is under 31.

Source: Trust data gathered April 2024

[sandwellchildrenstrust.org](https://www.sandwellchildrenstrust.org)



Our Community



50.8
Female



49.2%
Male

Source: Office for National Statistics – Census 2021

42.8% of Sandwell residents are from a Minority Ethnic Group. 25.8% of Sandwell residents identified their ethnic group within the 'Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh' category, up from 19.2% in 2011.

Source: Office for National Statistics – Census 2021

39.9% of Sandwell residents are Christian, lower than the national average of 46.2%. 13.4% of Sandwell residents are Muslim, 11.5% are Sikh and 26.1% identify as having no religion.

Source: Office for National Statistics – Census 2021



17.9% of Sandwell residents identify as disabled under the Equality Act 2010.

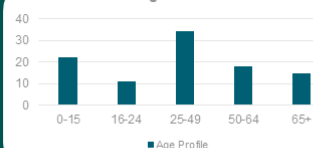
Source: Office for National Statistics – Census 2021



Overall, 80.8% of all households in Sandwell speak English as a Main Language. However, 8.6% do not speak English as a Main Language.

Source: Office for National Statistics – Census 2021

Age Profile



Source: Office for National Statistics – Census 2021

Sexual Orientation	Sandwell	England
Heterosexual	89.29%	89.37%
Gay or Lesbian	1.06%	1.54%
Bisexual	0.95%	1.29%
Other	0.29%	0.34%

Source: Office for National Statistics – Census 2021

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Strategic Theme 1: Leadership and Culture

What have we achieved	To progress further we will
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong oversight of ED&I led by the Trust Chair and Chief Executive, including the recruitment of an Independent Scrutineer to provide scrutiny and challenge • Maintained a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, harassment and discrimination, with clear systems / mechanisms for whistleblowing and reporting concerns • Created safer spaces for more reflective discussions regarding ED&I. • Created our Leadership Hub to share learning and challenge our own thinking & behaviours • Created our Task Group with Ambassadors, plus a dedicated ED&I webpage • Worked with recognised Unions, introducing ED&I questions to the Staff Survey • Improved leadership training via HR programmes and became part of regional training opportunities, including an Intersectionality Conference and LeaderHERship programme • Recruited a full-time dedicated ED&I Officer • Introduced training for Mental Health First Aiders as a confidential support group for staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop our Leadership Hub to enable open and honest conversations about ED&I in a 'safe space' based on mutual trust and respect • Improve analysis of market trends and adapt recruitment activity, so shortlisting & interview processes encourage more candidates from under-represented groups for leadership roles • Continue to train our leaders to identify and prevent bias (conscious and unconscious) and introduce leadership development opportunities as we shift from equality to equity • Review our policies so they sit in an anti-oppressive framework and anti-racist framework • Refresh the Trust's Mental Health First Aiders programme • Build on our Staff Survey by introducing ED&I questions into our exit interview process • Actively demonstrate 'you said, we did' using an 'explain or reform' approach by reflecting the feedback in our Staff Survey regarding any bullying, harassment and exclusion issues • Develop intersectionality across the Trust, so inequality is not seen as a unitary characteristic
Impact - What we want to see	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ED&I championed by all leaders who model the inclusive behaviours we expect • Curious leaders who examine data intelligence, enable open conversations; and challenge behaviours that don't meet our standards • A shift from equality to equity as we proactively develop under-represented groups • A strong zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment • Staff development through a range of opportunities and an increase in senior appointments • Confident leaders, able to ask respectful questions, and learn from each other's experiences and perspectives as a part of our culture of openness, inclusion and continuous learning • Increased cultural humility and inclusiveness at all levels • An increased regional and national profile 	

Strategic Theme 2 - Our Workforce

What have we achieved	To progress further we will
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A stronger approach to wellbeing with weekly messages promoting individual support for health and mental wellbeing and building confidence to challenge or request support • Disability Passports across the Trust and 'Disability Confident' employer status • Raised awareness of ED&I issues through individual personal stories of staff • Trained the HR and Business Admin team to undertake DSE assessments • Training around resilience and maintaining a trauma informed approach • Full disability access, child safe environments and increased disability parking in main sites • Introduced dedicated prayer and contemplation spaces • Improved our training offer with mandatory ED&I and H&S eLearning courses • Introduced training for Mental Health First Aiders as a confidential support group for staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop opportunities for minoritised groups, including effective mentoring and reverse mentoring programmes • Understand and educate our workforce on how to understand lived experiences • Increase the breadth and depth knowledge and understanding of intersectionality through specific training, including neurodiversity, disability and LGBTQ+ • Review our Wellbeing Programme and our approach to Emotional Health • Empower the Trust's ED&I Ambassadors and groups to enable change through consultation, monitoring, reporting and the introduction of data led initiatives • Increase knowledge, awareness and use of our Disability Passports including greater support for neurodiversity • Create opportunities for more open discussions about menopause related matters • Continue the programme of accessibility across all our buildings
Impact- What we want to see	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An open and honest culture embedded across the Trust, built on understanding and equity • Behaviours across the Trust that reflect our ethos and expectations • A workforce able to discuss ED&I matters in a place where they feel psychologically safe • All our staff feeling valued and supported, with opportunities for growth • A safe, inclusive and accessible physical and virtual working environment • Everyone able to recognise conscious and unconscious bias and microaggressions • A workforce that has a deeper understanding of intersectionality and specific ED&I matters • A workforce, able to acknowledge what they don't know and therefore ask for support 	

Strategic Theme 3 - Children, Families & Communities

What have we achieved	To progress further we will
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changed our language so our work reflects the Trust's ST*R Practice Model • Developed cultural heritage & language support packs to help our families and our workforce • Developed relationships with religious and community organisations to better understand how best to support our families • Improved the way our children can speak about issues facing them via FIYA & VOICES groups • Worked alongside our workforce and children to understand what diversity means for them, the concerns that they face and how the Trust could improve and provide a better service • Examined our complaints and compliments, learning how to improve practice • Improved our knowledge and understanding of our communities at town level • Enabled systems to accurately record child/ family data in a non-discriminatory way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed Care Experienced as a protected characteristic • Increase Foster Carer recruitment activity and improve training to improve understanding of our diverse cultures and protected characteristics • Increase the range of our communication tools so all families have their voices heard • Embed our Working Together strategy and evaluate its effectiveness • Enable our children to feel comfortable speaking about discrimination and introduce clear processes to proactively deal with any incidents • Use our increased knowledge of our diverse communities to inform commissioning intentions • Integrate ED&I in our ST*R Practice Model so all staff understand families' lived experiences • Work collaboratively with our families and communities, including schools, to support a wide variety of cultural heritages, languages that occur within the borough
Impact- What we want to see	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A deep understanding of our communities, with staff able to build trusting relationships with a good understanding of family histories, culture and values • Staff able to challenge themselves and others to think and act differently as we strive for best outcomes • Equity in service delivery, so all children achieve the best possible outcomes • Fair and accessible services that are responsive to the diverse needs of our families. • Our children to feel proud of their heritage and comfortable raising issues of discrimination knowing we will respond appropriately • Our communities to feel included, rather than disadvantaged or marginalised, in the language and communication methods we use • Clear processes and approach to dealing with racism and other forms of discrimination in our communities • Children and families to benefit from consistent practice, underpinned by ST*R 	

Strategic Theme 4 - Governance

What have we achieved	To progress further we will
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthened oversight and improved scrutiny through an ED&I Governance Group, then transitioned this function to Workforce Committee where it's a standing item A representative ED&I Task group with Ambassadors to help support our ED&I programme Improved our workforce data that in turn has improved our understanding of where specific work is needed to achieve our ED&I ambitions Introduced reporting of ED&I performance indicators reflecting protected characteristics across our workforce and used this to inform our policies, processes and business planning Introduced specific questions and gathered workforce data through Staff Surveys to inform our ED&I programme Reported and reviewed the Trust's Gender pay gap since 2021 Implemented ED&I and H&S eLearning as part of the mandatory package that is reported on monthly to ensure we maintain an informed workforce Reviewed our ED&I information and reviewed statistical data against SW England and SMBC Updated the Trust's intranet to include an Accessibility Tool Bar that allows on-line documents to be shared in different languages and caters for more disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure ED&I remains a standing item on our Workforce Committee and report quarterly on the strategy's progress, with oversight from Trust Board Seek opportunities to invite external review and scrutiny of our activity and its effectiveness Introduce changes to service specifications so commissioned services reflect our ethos and commitment to ED&I Raise the profiles of our ambassadors so there is a stronger line of sight to senior leaders Embed our Employee Groups and introduce 'Allyship' to increase the collective impact on our workforce and families we work with Undertake regular temperature checks to evaluate progress at a point in time Extend our transparent approach by publishing our ethnicity pay gap data alongside our gender equality return Better understand our workforce through the use of data and feedback from our workforce to inform where we need to focus improvements Review what data is reported on a regular basis to the ED&I Task Group and Workforce Committee to better inform our decision making and confirmation of any ED&I initiatives
Impact- What we want to see	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong oversight, scrutiny and challenge, with transparency and ownership of our strategy A workforce confident in reporting any ED&I concerns, knowing they will be listened to, and issues acted upon appropriately An effective system that makes best use of its workforce data and intelligence to inform activity as we strive for equality and equity across the organisation Work with colleagues regionally and nationally and our families and young people to provide challenge and review best practice for the Trust A strong and effective Task Group that supports the organisational culture of the Trust 	

Evaluation

Success of the strategy will be evaluated through a range of performance measures and feedback mechanisms:

Performance Measures	Feedback Mechanisms
Diversity Measures <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New appointments at leadership level• New appointments• Internal promotions• Staff in formal HR processes• Reported incidents of discrimination• Reported incidents of discrimination by children and families• Exit interviews• Transparency in our practices, policies and processes	Line of sight Measures <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ED&I Task group• Service and team meetings• Leadership Hub attendance• EMT on the Road• Individual supervision and appraisal• Market Place events• Service and team meetings• VOICE and FIYA meetings
Training Measures <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ED&I training completion rates• Professional development opportunities• Mandatory training rates• Impact of development opportunities• Reverse mentoring activity• ST*R practice model numbers• Foster carer training	Survey Measures <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employee Engagement Surveys• Point in time surveys- staff• Point in time surveys- foster carers

Monitoring and Review

Effectiveness of this strategy will be tracked through an action plan, based on our 4 themes. Regular reviews will help identify successes, challenges, and any areas for adjustment. This will be achieved through:

- i. Quarterly Reviews in the Strategic Leadership Team and Quarterly Workforce Committee meetings.
- ii. Progress Reports presented to the Executive Management Team on specific themes, especially workforce performance indicators.
- iii. Bi-monthly ED&I Task Group meetings.
- iv. Children and Families Strategic Partnership and Safeguarding Partnership will also track partnership progress against theme 3.