


Celebrating diversity and inclusion in the NHS: Equality, Diversity, and Human Rights Week 2025

19 May 2025  Laura Dukes

Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Week 2025 or #EQW2025 (19 - 23 May 2025), now in its thirteenth year, gives NHS organisations the opportunity to reflect on their workplace cultures and take proactive steps towards greater inclusion.

A diverse workforce brings enormous value to the NHS, including improved quality of care for patients, a more sustainable workforce supply, increased efficiency of services, and diverse teams bring different skills, experience and knowledge to the table.

However, inclusive practices need to be proactively pursued, reviewed, and updated where necessary. Leadership representation, mindful cultures and behaviours, and fair progression opportunities are all essential to support and develop a diverse and inclusive workforce.

Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Week will involve discussions on Legal EDI changes on the horizon, and also a number of specific themes including:

1. Neurodiversity

An inclusive workplace supports the talents of all staff, including those who are neurodivergent. People with autism, ADHD, dyslexia and other cognitive differences bring valuable skills to the NHS, including creative and innovative thinking, specialised and detailed knowledge, emotional intelligence, amongst other strengths.

NHS organisations can support these staff through reasonable adjustments, for example, clear role expectations, flexible working patterns, and tailored supervision. A supportive environment improves staff wellbeing, reduces absences from work, and retention rates.

2. Being an active bystander to address bullying, harassment, and discrimination

Despite clear policies and anti-bullying campaigns, many NHS staff still experience bullying, harassment, and discrimination at work from their colleagues. Often these incidents go unchallenged, often due to discomfort or uncertainty about how to respond.

Being an active bystander empowers staff at all levels to challenge inappropriate behaviour quickly and confidently. Creating a workplace culture where all staff feel a shared responsibility for their behaviour is especially important in the context of the increasing demands and pressures faced within NHS organisations, where respectful, collaborative working is essential to maintaining staff wellbeing and high-quality care.

3. Cultural diversity

With a growing percentage of doctors, nurses and support staff coming from ethnically diverse backgrounds, cultural diversity is a defining strength of the NHS. However, this diversity must be met with proactive inclusion practices. Many staff from minority ethnic backgrounds continue to face barriers to career progression, subtle and overt discrimination, and unequal treatment in disciplinary processes.

To address this, NHS employers must go beyond just having written policies. Listening to lived experience, through staff networks, surveys, and active engagement, is central to creating culture change.

4. Sexual safety

Sexual harassment, misconduct, and abuse can occur in any workplace and the NHS is not immune. The introduction of the NHS's Sexual Safety Charter signals an important step forward, but organisations must also take proactive steps, including:

- Mandatory training for all staff on what constitutes sexual harassment and how to report it.
- Clear pathways for raising concerns, including anonymous options where appropriate.
- Swift and fair investigations, with consequences and accountability for misconduct.

More broadly, NHS organisations must commit to creating environments where boundaries are respected, voices are heard, and concerns are taken seriously. This is even more important in light of the [new pro-active duty to prevent sexual harassment at work](#), which came into force on 26 October 2024.

In conclusion, creating a workplace where staff feel respected, safe, and included is essential to the delivery of compassionate, high-quality healthcare to patients. During Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Week, NHS organisations are encouraged to recommit to action that makes real change to its workforce.

As we reflect on the insights and discussions from NHS Equality, Diversity, and Human Rights Week 2025, Browne Jacobson remains committed to advancing these crucial values within the [healthcare sector](#). As a specialist healthcare law firm, we are uniquely positioned to provide bespoke training and support to help your organisation navigate and champion equality, diversity, and human rights. Connect with us to learn how we can assist you in fostering an inclusive environment that upholds these principles.

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