



Parliamentary
and Health Service
Ombudsman

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

September 2024

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

About this policy

At the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) we are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

This policy sets out our vision to create an inclusive working environment and the role each of us has in contributing to this. This policy defines those responsibilities, expected behaviours, and how our colleagues will be supported to make this vision an everyday reality. It also defines our commitments as an employer in line with legislation and the action we will take to address behaviour which contradicts our EDI approach.

Who this policy applies to

This policy applies to everyone who works at PHSO, including those on fixed term contracts, those on secondment from other organisations, as well as external contractors we work with. It encompasses how we treat one another and how we treat the people who use our service and our suppliers.

The Equality Act 2010

This policy complies with the statutory requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Under the Equality Act, PHSO is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), meaning the organisation as a whole and all of our colleagues, will have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not
- foster or encourage good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not.

Commitments

EDI is a strategic priority with Board oversight of our activity and commitments in this area. We continuously monitor our progress to measure the success of our activities, including our people diversity demographics, recruitment, turnover, engagement, participation in EDI activity, and other related feedback.

We are committed to having a diverse workforce, which brings with it diversity of experience, perspectives and ideas. This diversity enables us to

better represent the public we serve, and when combined with creating an inclusive culture where people feel valued and respected, it generates a sense of belonging for those who work here.

We will not tolerate any form of discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics. These are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

We have a zero tolerance approach to discrimination, harassment and victimisation. Any behaviours, words or actions, which are not in line with this policy, will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in line with the organisation's disciplinary policy. Further information about what we mean by discrimination, harassment, and victimisation, and examples of what this may look like, can be found in our Harassment and Bullying policy.

Behaviours

It is important that our people understand their rights and their individual accountability for helping us to achieve our vision for EDI. PHSO expect everyone to embrace equality, diversity and inclusion by:

- respecting and valuing others, regardless of personal differences
- understanding the value that a diverse workforce brings with a range of qualities, backgrounds, and experiences
- constructively challenging or praising others to ensure our EDI vision is lived out as well as recognising unacceptable behaviour and taking appropriate action
- demonstrating an understanding of the policy and our strategic approach to EDI
- participating in developmental activities relating to EDI

Further information on the standards of behaviour expected of PHSO employees is available in the Code of Conduct and the Values and Behaviours page on OmbudsHub (our intranet).

Raising Concerns

Everyone has a responsibility to challenge, report or address discriminatory behaviour, unfair treatment, harassment or bullying if

encountered at PHSO. We expect our colleagues to take appropriate action either directly with the individual in question or by seeking support to do so from their line manager, a member of the People and Talent team or a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian. We will support our colleagues to feel comfortable and confident to do so through guidance, advice and training. Our Harassment and Bullying, Grievance and Freedom to Speak Up policies outline the process through which colleagues can raise formal concerns internally.

If you experience harassment or bullying behaviour from people who use our service, please speak to your line manager who can provide guidance in line with our Unacceptable Behaviour policy.

Learning and Development

To empower everyone to contribute to our EDI approach, we provide training and development opportunities for all colleagues to enhance confidence and knowledge about diverse identities and experiences and evolving best practice, language and behaviours. EDI resources and activities are shared and promoted regularly, providing further opportunities to learn and increase awareness and understanding of EDI topics.

Equality Impact Assessments

Equality Impact Assessments are a tool to constructively assess whether we are having due regard to our duties under the Equality Act 2010 in our decision making and can reduce risk and impact on resources. They help us make informed decisions and define what action we may need to take to mitigate impact or realise benefits.

As an organisation, we will consider how our decision making is likely to impact different protected characteristic groups. In line with this, colleagues are expected to consider whether an Equality Impact Assessment is needed ahead of starting a new activity or make changes to an existing activity. By activity we mean any policy, process, strategy, project, event and/or technology which would represent a change to the current or standard way that we work. A screening tool is available which will help you to determine if a full Equality Impact Assessment should be completed ahead of an activity. Guidance for this process can be found on OmbudsHub.

Reasonable Adjustments and accessibility

We seek to create an accessible workplace, which at times will mean making reasonable adjustments to address barriers and provide appropriate support for disabled colleagues. Colleagues should discuss

their needs with their line manager and make any requests for reasonable adjustments via a Workplace Adjustment Passport. Further guidance for this process can be found on OmbudsHub.

Policy information

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Related policies and guidance: Code of Conduct
 Harassment and Bullying Policy
 Unacceptable Behaviour Policy
 Disciplinary Policy
 Grievance Policy
 Equality Impact Assessments
 Workplace Adjustments
 Values and Behaviours
 Freedom to Speak Up (Raising Concerns) Policy

Version control

Date	Version	Content/changes made	Owner of changes
20/12/2022	1.0	Final	AD HR
03/09/2024	2.0	Simplified policy, improved wording in line with best practice and plain English. Removed out of date organisational references.	AD People and Talent

Review date

Date	Owner of review
August 2026	AD People and Talent

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