

# Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2023-2027

## Our Commitment to Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

### Equality

Our commitment extends beyond legal requirements for equality. We strive to provide everyone working with us equal opportunities, free from any form of discrimination, regardless of who they are.

### Equity

Equity acknowledges that people have different starting points and involves being fair and impartial in all our processes, practices and interactions with all our people, to address the imbalance.

We commit to dismantling systemic disparities that prevent equitable access to opportunities and resources. Our work is guided by the principle of fairness, where every individual has the chance to thrive and succeed, regardless of their background, socioeconomic background or identity.

### Diversity

Diversity is the presence of difference.

We celebrate the abundance of diversity that exists within our organisation and communities. By acknowledging and embracing a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, cultures, and perspectives, we will foster a culture that is open to new ideas and innovation.

### Inclusion

Inclusion is about valuing difference and ensuring all our colleagues and esteemed clients feel respected and welcomed. We will cultivate environments that nurture a profound sense of belonging and ensure that no one feels left out because of their gender, sexual orientation, marital or civil partner status, gender reassignment, religion or belief, race (including colour, ethnic origin, national origin and nationality), disability, age, pregnancy or maternity leave or on grounds of their lived experience, trade union membership, or part-time or fixed-term status or any other visible or invisible differences. Everyone who works at St Giles will feel valued and be celebrated for all they bring to the organisation.

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## Our Values



## Background

Since April 2022 we have been working to review our approach to EDI and setting up a formal programme that will weave through everything the organisation does, at every level and will underpin our new strategy to 2027.

We acknowledge that structural inequalities still exist, within institutions and society as a whole. Central to how St Giles delivers services are trained people with lived experience who use the skills and competencies they have developed to support others. This is a positive asset, though we recognise that a disproportionate number of people with lived experience face other inequalities.

To tackle these issues requires active change. As an organisation that states our commitment to helping the most disadvantaged in society to have a positive future, we recognise the key role we play in tackling those inequalities, in order to better support the clients we work with. This cannot be achieved without tackling inequalities internally, starting with our own team, setting the best example and being the best role models.

The purpose of this Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy is to set out our priority EDI objectives and the steps we need to take to deliver against these objectives. The initial focus will be internal, acknowledging that these achievements will inevitably improve our workplace and service delivery. We will then shift our objectives to external priorities.

This strategy is interlinked with our People Strategy 2023-2027, which has EDI as one of its six strategic aims.

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## Progress to date

We currently have 8 Employee Resource Groups (ERGs):

- BLAG (Black Lives Awareness Group)
- Mental Health Awareness Group
- Neurodiversity Forum
- Women's Network
- Salaam (Muslim Staff Group)
- SWIMS (Supporting Women in Menopausal Stages)
- Vis-Able (Disability Awareness Group)
- LGBTQ+ Group

These ERGs are voluntary, staff-led initiatives. They are generally organised on the basis of common identities, interests, or backgrounds. The goal is to support fellow staff by providing opportunities to network and feedback via their Leadership sponsor to create a more inclusive workplace.

In addition to these Employee Resource Groups, we have our Expert Panel. The Panel's remit is to ensure that our staff, volunteers, Peer Advisors and learners with lived experience can directly influence our organisational strategy, development and delivery.

## Our EDI Vision

### Turning Difference into Strength

Together, with our unique lived experiences we will forge safe, inclusive workspaces and services where every voice is heard, respected and understood.

## Moral Case

St Giles' core values and vision aligns with the belief that everyone, especially those facing the greatest disadvantage, should have equal access to opportunities and be treated equitably in order to fulfil their potential. Our EDI policy and Zero Tolerance Statement commits us to ensuring that everyone is treated with dignity and respect, free from discriminatory, offensive or harmful behaviour, creating a place where people are happy and feel that they belong. We believe it is important to embody this approach when dealing with employees, volunteers, clients and external parties.

Investing in and committing to EDI is simply the right thing to do and aligns with our purpose as a social justice charity and all we seek to achieve through our work; this will not only benefit us as an organisation but society as a whole.

## Business Case

Although the moral case is sufficient, we cannot deny the other benefits that diversity can bring to our organisational culture and the way we work. Putting EDI at the heart of all we do will support us to:

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- Produce positive performance outcomes through recognising, valuing and supporting individuals' unique skillset, abilities and contributions through an inclusive culture.
  - Maximise and retain valued skills, knowledge and expertise.
  - Provide psychological safety to voice dissenting opinions, which prevents group think, and improves quality of decisions.
  - Attract and retain new talent, with prospective applicants having a greater expectation and demonstrable commitment to EDI from employers.
  - Improve job satisfaction, commitment and wellbeing; employees feel respected, included and treated fairly.
  - Foster better employment relations with fewer grievances.
  - Achieve greater impact and sustainability by remaining relevant and dynamic. Engaging with a diversity of partners, perspectives, abilities and opportunities will help to achieve this.
  - Manage risk effectively and enhance our reputation including by specifically and intentionally considering the potential impact of our policies, practices and activities on different groups. By taking an intersectional approach, this allows us to mitigate against potential discrimination, unfairness.

## Legal Case

The Equality Act 2010 sets minimum legal requirements that we adhere to with regards to treating everyone we come into contact with fairly and having zero tolerance of any type of discrimination, harassment and victimisation, related to 9 protected characteristics.

We will continue to exceed our legal duty. This applies right from recruitment, policy development, pay, managing staff, training and development through to when employees leave the organisation. We also take our duty to make "reasonable adjustments" very seriously to ensure that workplace practices do not disadvantage anyone with a disability.

St Giles also has a legal obligation as a service provider; this applies to service design, delivery and maintenance. The nature of many of our services makes compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty essential.

Due to the unique organisation we are, we recognise that to truly create fair and equitable workplace opportunities, we will go beyond the 9 legally recognised characteristics and consider additional factors such as lived experience, socioeconomic disadvantage and intersectionality, which we acknowledge have a significant role in holding employees and clients back.

## EDI Framework

This framework and actions within it will require strong and active leadership right at the top of the organisation.

## Our Objectives

Four key objectives underpin our EDI Strategy until 2025. They focus on internal EDI issues as a priority and seek to build on what has already been achieved in the last year. The strategy will then shift to focus

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on service delivery to ensure our EDI approach continues to cascade to our clients and communities we serve.

- 1. Embedding an Inclusive Organisational Culture**
- 2. Promoting and Supporting Inclusive Leadership**
- 3. Achieving Fair Recruitment and Progression Opportunities**
- 4. Measuring Progress and Impact**

### **1. Embedding an Inclusive Organisational Culture**

A culture where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, nurturing a sense of belonging and psychological safety. It is everyone's responsibility to ensure they contribute positively, through their actions and behaviours to promote and maintain an inclusive culture. Differences are to be celebrated and everyone has a responsibility to recognise how their own unconscious bias and privilege can affect their views. Challenging, educating and reporting inappropriate language and/or behaviour is a normal part of our culture, with two-way feedback at all levels. A variety of training options are available to increase knowledge, understanding and to promote a learning culture and behaviour change.

### **2. Promoting and Supporting Inclusive Leadership**

Leaders are crucial in promoting inclusion, influencing and achieving a fair, positive working culture. It is important to support leaders particularly, but not exclusively, in senior positions to role model inclusive leadership behaviours, including challenging behaviour as necessary.

This objective is recognised and aligns with our People Strategy which has "Effective Management and Leadership Capability" as one of its six aims.

### **3. Achieving Fair Recruitment and Progression Opportunities**

Providing fair, consistent and transparent recruitment and progression processes are key in gaining trust, avoiding resentment and claims of unfairness. EDI is a focus throughout recruitment, retention, learning and development to embed transparent processes so employment and opportunities for promotion are accessible to everyone, fully inclusive and free from bias. Progression is not only upwards, it can be outwards and we have a key role to play in the development of our people.

### **4. Measuring Progress and Impact**

Tracking progress of this strategy is vital to identifying areas for improvement, managing risk and focusing resources and priorities. Standards and benchmarking are useful tools but should not be used alone as they will have limitations. An evidence-based approach should be utilised compiling and analysing both qualitative and quantitative data. Feedback from the ERGs and EDI Forums is crucial in understanding the impact any actions have had on the workforce. Publishing and sharing key findings are essential in order to maintain transparency and trust.

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## Responsibilities and Governance

EDI should be at the centre of everything St Giles does and it is everybody's responsibility, although it will be led by the CEO and will be reported on at every Board meeting within the People report.

Each Employee Resource Group will have a Leadership sponsor, who will rotate annually. Their role includes championing and advocating for the group, whilst supporting them to bring about new and progressive activity.

We will continue to share responsibility and require accountability from the Board of Trustees, CEO, Executive Team and Senior Management Team. Their support for this Strategy and commitment to it through their behaviours and attitudes will make a critical difference.

This EDI Strategy will be fully owned by the Executive Team and managed by the EDI Steering Group and Head of EDI.

This Strategy and supporting action plan will be regularly reviewed by the EDI Steering Group (who continue to meet with the Trustees' EDI Committee) and updated accordingly. Each year priorities will be agreed with the EDI Steering Group.

This is a live, working document which we will keep under review, and as such it may be added to/amended as and when required.