

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Equality (EDIE) Strategy 2021



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Foreword

At Oxfordshire Mind, our vision is that:

We won't give up until everyone experiencing a mental health problem gets both support and respect.

Inequality and discrimination in any form significantly affect people's mental health, their ability to access mental health support, the quality of support given, and the very decision to reach out for help. Addressing questions of equity, diversity, inclusion and equality (EDIE) are therefore key to realising our vision.

EDIE is everyone's business at Oxfordshire Mind, and our strategy sets out how we will work together across the organisation to respect and reflect the diversity of the communities we seek to serve. We are committed to understanding the make-up of our service users, paid and volunteer workforce, and then addressing our practices and approaches where necessary to ensure we are a fair and inclusive organisation.

Thank you for taking the time to read our EDIE strategy and thank you if you participated in the conversations or completed a survey that shaped it. If you would like to share your thoughts, we're always happy to hear from you. Please email us: edie@oxfordshiremind.org.uk

With best wishes,



Dan Knowles,
Chief Executive Officer



Nick Welch,
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Executive summary

This strategy has been developed in the context of two global events which shone a spotlight on inequalities. The COVID-19 pandemic has hit poorer and more marginalised communities hardest. The indirect effects have included bereavement, the stresses of lockdown, financial strain and health anxieties – all adding to mental health risk, but impacting more heavily on some sections of society than others, including those who were facing mental health challenges prior to the pandemic. The murder of George Floyd was a shocking and stark reminder of the impact of systemic racism. His death triggered a global reassessment of the need to renew commitments to addressing prejudice and unfair treatment.

Oxfordshire Mind is an independent charity which is part of the Mind Federation. In setting our EDIE priorities, we have reviewed evidence collated by National Mind as part of its Equalities and Human Rights work. Locally, we have then followed two broad lines of enquiry:

- Who are we at Oxfordshire Mind?
- What do equity, diversity, inclusion and equality mean to us?

Our approach and EDIE vision at Oxfordshire Mind is that:

We won't give up on striving to be an ever-fairer, more inclusive organisation for those we serve and those we work with. This is because we believe that everyone deserves respect and to be valued equally, whatever their identity and story.

Our approach is framed by **six strategic aims**.

1. We will be **open and transparent about our approach to challenging inequity** in access to, experience and outcomes of mental health support, positively inviting challenge to develop our thinking and learning.
2. We will take an **evidence-based approach to setting our priorities** and tracking our progress towards becoming an ever more representative organisation, reflecting the communities we serve through our staff, volunteer, trustee, and service user make up
3. We will develop our Human Resources (HR), Volunteering and Trustee Recruitment processes to **attract and retain more diverse talent**, continuing to **monitor access to pay and progression opportunities** so we can address any inequalities within our organisation.
4. We will **equip our workforce with the skills, capabilities and support to advance equity, diversity, inclusion and equality**.
5. Our services will be **co-designed, co-developed and monitored to reflect the diversity of communities** we aim to support.
6. We will **offer and promote services in inclusive ways**.

Definitions

Equality and Equity: The terms equality and equity are often used interchangeably to mean fairness. They are terms about ensuring each person has fair access to opportunities and that bias (discriminatory behaviours and actions we are both aware and unaware of) does not get in the way of fair treatment.

Often, **equality** has come to be understood as **treating people the same regardless of their differences**. This is a simple way of expressing the importance of addressing direct discrimination. Discrimination may also be indirect, however, and less obvious. **Equity** is a term which has a clearer focus on **treating people fairly**, and this may mean changing the approach **dependent on the needs of the individual**.

Diversity: Diversity means recognising, respecting and valuing each other's differences. It highlights that there is **no monolithic experience** – e.g. if two people share the same ethnicity, it does not mean that their experience of life will be similar or the same. Respecting diversity therefore challenges tokenism as it acknowledges that one person cannot be the sole spokesperson for a particular demographic. Diversity recognises that everyone is unique and that nobody is a stereotype.

Empowerment: If you empower someone, **you give power to them**. For example, you support their voice being heard and give them the opportunity and freedom to create change for themselves. Very often the power we give people was **already rightfully theirs** to begin with!

Inclusion: Inclusion means taking into consideration and truly valuing everyone in the choices we make. We get closer to achieving more inclusive outcomes when we acknowledge and challenge our biases. Inclusion is also about making sure that everyone can equally take part and be involved, regardless of additional support they may need or any accessibility needs they have.

Intersectionality: recognising everyone's identity is influenced by many different factors in differing ways – in short, that people are more than just one part of their identity! This means that we should never assume that people's identities or experiences are exactly the same or that people sharing one experience all want the same type of support. It also means that when we help a community, we're actually helping people with multiple experiences e.g. an LGBTQ+ group may also be supporting people with disabilities, people from different ethnic backgrounds and of different ages, so it's important to think about people from multiple perspectives and to always give people the opportunity to define themselves and share their own stories. Like diversity, intersectionality is a concept which helps to avoid stereotyping people and reminds us that everyone is unique.

Protected characteristics: It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marital/ civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity status, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. These aspects of identity are called the nine protected characteristics. Further information can be found in the Equality Act (2010).

Tokenism: making a symbolic gesture/action which may give the appearance of promoting equity but is not grounded in achievable plans for lasting change.

Why Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Equality matter to Oxfordshire Mind

We know from decades of research that discrimination in any form negatively impacts people's mental health. In addition, the impact of discrimination has a domino effect on those indirectly affected by it, reducing the health and wellbeing of society as a whole.

Mental ill health is directly linked to wider health inequalities globally. People with severe mental disorders on average tend to die earlier than the general population. The World Health Organisation reports that there is a life expectancy reduction (premature mortality rate) of 10 to 25 years in patients with severe mental disorders (WHO, accessed December 2021).

As a mental health charity, we therefore have a responsibility to address equity, diversity, inclusion and equality (EDIE) in our work. This is to ensure that the people we serve receive good mental health support, and that those working for our organisation - whether in a paid capacity or giving of their time voluntarily - have an environment in which they feel safe, confident to be themselves, and valued.

EDIE priorities at National Mind

National Mind has highlighted the impact of systemic racism on mental health support, which results in disproportionate diagnoses, hospital admissions and poor treatment and outcomes for racialised communities in the UK. National Mind has made a commitment to becoming a truly anti-racist organisation as a pivotal part of its strategy, with objectives planned through to 2024.

Alongside its anti-racism commitment, National Mind has also pledged to focus on tackling mental health injustices caused by poverty and faced by people who identify as LGBTIQ or autistic.

The murder of George Floyd

Following the devastating murder of George Floyd on 28th May 2020, there were acknowledgements across the globe of the need to improve equity, diversity, inclusion, and equality across different industries, including the charity sector, acknowledging the existence of systemic racism and unconscious bias as prevalent factors in preventing fair and equal access to support and services.

Locally, the county of Oxfordshire and the city of Oxford made commitments to become areas of anti-racism, and the Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership (OMHP), of which Oxfordshire Mind is a member, has also made a commitment to improve equity, diversity, inclusion, and equality, acknowledging that not enough has been done in these fields.

“Whether deliberately or subconsciously we have furthered feelings of exclusion and otherness, and this must stop.” (Lesley Dewhurst, Chair of the OMHP, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 global pandemic shone a spotlight on inequalities in the UK and elsewhere, with the poorest and most marginalised experiencing further suffering and greater loss of life. This was often the result of living and working conditions which increased the risk of contracting the virus, and poorer health outcomes for those who became infected.

Measures taken to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in England meant that access to paid work, to services and to people's various community networks were limited in many ways from March 2020. The impact of this has often been felt more keenly by those already living on lower incomes, leading to higher need to access resources such as food banks and health services, including mental health services.

The impact of COVID-19 also demonstrated the need for significant improvements in all sectors to support people with disabilities and long-term health conditions, as well as older people who are at greater risk of deterioration of health and loss of ability. Both the risks from COVID-19 itself, and the restrictions on contact imposed to reduce the spread of the virus, were greater for people with certain long term health conditions as well as those aged 70 or over. This in turn increased the strain on people's mental health and emotional resilience.

Reports looking through intersectionality lenses highlight that racialised communities have often been most adversely affected, with the impact on mental and physical health being even greater due to various factors of social and economic injustice.

National policy developments

In September 2020, NHS England and NHS Improvement published their *Advancing Mental Health Equalities Strategy*, both an acknowledgement of and a response to the inequalities highlighted by recent global events. This sets out commitments to supporting local health systems to address inequalities in access, experience and outcomes of mental healthcare.

In the summer of 2021, the UK Government affirmed its commitment to reforming the Mental Health Act (1983), building on the 2018 Independent Review. This recognises the need for change in order to deliver a mental health service that respects and empowers individuals. The Government acknowledges disparities in how the 1983 Act has affected people from racialised communities. National Mind has welcomed the announcement, but also highlighted the need to, "address the systemic racism that results in disproportionate detentions and the use of humiliating and life-threatening practices among people from certain racialised communities."

Oxfordshire Mind's commitment

In 2020, Oxfordshire Mind's Board and Senior Management Team approved the creation of an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Project Lead role, in order to better support the organisation in achieving its mission. This role was made permanent and renamed as Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Equality Lead in September 2021, demonstrating a lasting commitment to progressing Oxfordshire Mind's EDIE journey.

Who are we at Oxfordshire Mind?

At Oxfordshire Mind, we aim to reflect the diversity of the communities we seek to serve. In 2021, the majority of our work is based in Oxfordshire, and so we have tried to compare our staff, volunteer and service user make up with the population of Oxfordshire as a whole.

Paid workforce

- Our workforce is relatively young, with a median age of 34, and we will continue to monitor whether this indicates any barriers to older workers joining us.
- Our workforce largely identifies as female (78%) indicating those of other gender identities are under-represented, which is quite common in the charity sector.
- The proportion of staff who identify as White (88%) is greater than that of Oxfordshire as a whole (83% White British), indicating that people from ethnic backgrounds other than White are under-represented in our workforce.

We will continue to monitor our staff profile across other aspects of identity, including the protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act (2010). Caution will need to be exercised in interpreting patterns from small data sets, however, and we will not publish or share data which could identify individuals.

As well as absolute numbers within our workforce representing different aspects of identity, we also recognise the need to look out for and address disparities in pay and progression, and this will be part of our ongoing plans.

Volunteers

Significant steps have been taken to diversify our Board following a successful recruitment campaign in 2020. Given the small number of trustees, however, it would be inappropriate to publish a demographic breakdown as this would identify individuals.

We have insufficient data to be able to draw firm conclusions about the wider volunteer demographic profile at Oxfordshire Mind at this time. However, this is something which is being developed and explored.

Service users

There are some ways in which we should expect our service user group not to be representative of the general population. Rather, we would aim for over-representation of groups which we know experience higher levels of mental health risk, and we will consider pro-actively targeting these groups.

- Older people seem to be under-represented in our services, particularly the over 65s (7% of the total, compared to 12% in Oxford City and 20% in rural Oxfordshire), but we recognise that recent trends have shown a greater prevalence of mental ill health amongst younger people.

- Around 60% of our service users identify as female. Those who identify other than as female appear to be under-represented, but some of this seems to be in line with recent national data on gender disparities in mental health need.
- 90% of service users identify as White, whilst the proportion of Oxfordshire's population recorded as White British is 83%. This indicates that people from ethnic backgrounds other than White are under-represented, and this is a priority for us to address given recent reports on greater mental health need amongst people from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are other sections of the population which we know face particular risks to their mental health, where it is less clear how well-represented they are within our services. This may be because of small numbers, e.g. asylum seekers and refugees; limited local comparator data, e.g. the LGBT+ population; or varying definitions, e.g. carers. Due to the additional mental health risks that these groups face, it is important for us to conduct further research, going beyond simple statistics, to explore the extent to which these groups use our services and feel that their needs are met.

What do equity, diversity, inclusion and equality mean to us?

Our staff members

81 staff members completed our 2021 EDIE survey

- EDIE issues are very important to our staff, who want the organisation to speak up publicly about these issues too.
- Almost two thirds of staff members who completed our EDIE survey feel they would benefit from further EDIE training. Individual workloads need to be addressed to allow staff members to further their outreach work and continue their EDIE learning and development, however.
- We need to build confidence and trust across the organisation to empower more staff members to engage in challenging discussions around EDIE topics.
- More staff report they would feel confident to report an EDIE concern than know how to do so, indicating that there is work to be done in promoting our policies around reporting discrimination.
- More than three-quarters of staff have not seen colleagues treated unfairly due to an aspect of their identity. However, it is a source of great concern that 18% of respondents to the staff survey had seen this.
- Overwhelmingly, staff feel confident to 'be who they are' within their team. Confidence levels are less strong at an organisation-wide level, but this may be a reflection of less familiarity with other colleagues.
- Most of our staff members feel Oxfordshire Mind meets their workplace needs and would recommend us as a place to work to people they care about. The majority feel their work is evaluated fairly, but there is a significant minority which have concerns about fair pay, and this needs to be explored.

Our volunteers and trustees

We had 22 respondents to our 2021 EDIE survey. Respondents were an unknown combination of volunteers and trustees.

- All of the volunteers and trustees who completed our EDIE survey agreed that being involved with an organisation that is equal, diverse and inclusive is important to them, and around half think that Oxfordshire Mind should speak up publicly on matters of discrimination and social injustice.
- Volunteer and trustee experiences at Oxfordshire Mind seem to be largely very positive in terms of belonging, empowerment, and fair opportunities to develop.
- The majority of survey respondents would recommend Oxfordshire Mind as a place to volunteer.
- Volunteers and trustees appear to be less aware of the organisation's position, policies and processes around EDIE matters than our staff, though many feel confident speaking up if someone says something they feel is not okay and would feel confident to report a concern if they had one.

Our service users

31 service users completed our 2021 EDIE survey.

- Equal, diverse and inclusive services are important to the majority of our service users, and most who responded to the EDIE survey want the organisation to speak up publicly about matters of discrimination and social injustice.
- More than half of survey respondents indicated that experiences of discrimination had affected their mental health.
- Most service users feel that Oxfordshire Mind provides a safe environment for people to express their ideas and beliefs freely, and to be who they are.
- The majority of service users who responded to our survey would feel confident recommending Oxfordshire Mind to people they care about if they needed mental health support.
- Some of our service users often feel like they are 'the only one' at Oxfordshire Mind.
- Survey responses suggest that people need more choice around when they access services.
- Many service users appear to be unfamiliar with the organisation's policies and processes regarding EDIE matters but would feel confident to raise a concern.

These findings led to the creation of our six strategic aims:

1. We will be ***open and transparent about our approach to challenging inequity*** in access to, experience and outcomes of mental health support, positively inviting challenge to develop our thinking and learning.
2. We will take an ***evidence-based approach to setting our priorities*** and tracking our progress towards becoming an ever more representative organisation, reflecting the communities we serve through our staff, volunteer, trustee, and service user make up

3. We will develop our Human Resources (HR), Volunteering and Trustee Recruitment processes to **attract and retain more diverse talent**, continuing to **monitor access to pay and progression opportunities** so we can address any inequalities within our organisation.
4. We will **equip our workforce with the skills, capabilities and support to advance equity, diversity, inclusion and equality**.
5. Our services will be **co-designed, co-developed and monitored to reflect the diversity of communities** we aim to support.
6. We will **offer and promote services in inclusive ways**.

Discover more

If you would like to know more about how we have developed this strategy, or if you would like to share your views and ideas with us, we'd be delighted to hear from you.

Please email: edie@oxfordshiremind.org.uk

What next?

This strategy will be supported by an Action plan setting out the detailed actions we will take to achieve our strategic aims. We will monitor this Action plan through our staff EDIE Action Group and ensure routine opportunities for feedback from staff, service users and volunteers. This feedback will shape annual revisions of our Action plan. Thank you for taking the time to read our EDIE strategy and if you participated in any way in the work that shaped it.