

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Framework 2025 to 2028

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Launch of the Arthritis UK Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Framework 2025 to 2028

Message from the Chair Kate Tompkins and CEO Deborah Alsina

We're delighted to launch Arthritis UK's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Framework for 2025 to 2028.

This Framework marks a key milestone in embedding EDI principles and practices across all areas of our organisation. It underpins the charity's Organisational Strategy 2023 to 2028, guiding our internal and external efforts to become an even more accessible and inclusive charity for everyone affected by arthritis.



Since the launch of our first Diversity and Inclusion Strategy in 2021, we've made meaningful progress, particularly in shaping an accessible and inclusive organisational culture and expanding EDI learning and development opportunities for staff and volunteers.

Our EDI Framework 2025 to 2028 replaces that previous strategy and builds on its foundation; advancing our strategic objective to deepen our understanding of diversity, inclusion and antiracism, and ensuring equity is central to everything we do.

We're committed to ensuring that every individual at Arthritis UK understands their role in delivering this Framework, and that we continue to expand our reach to a broader demographic of people with arthritis. Our aim is to provide every adult, young person and child with arthritis the tools to live well now, while sustaining hope through our ongoing pursuit of better treatments and, ultimately, cures.

As we work towards our vision of a future free from arthritis, we remain acutely aware that arthritis does not discriminate. More than 10 million adults, young people and children in the UK live with arthritis, touching lives regardless of age, background or circumstance. Chronic pain can lead to isolation, depression and poverty, while economic deprivation can increase the likelihood of a person developing arthritis 10 to 15 years earlier than people in more affluent communities.

Our **MSK State of the Nation Report** highlights the most up-to-date UK-wide data on arthritis and other musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions. It illustrates the scale, impact and inequalities surrounding MSK conditions – inequalities we define as 'unfair and avoidable differences in health across the population, and between different groups within society.'



We recognise that people from some backgrounds are disproportionately affected, with nearly half of women in the most deprived areas reporting chronic pain, and certain ethnic groups more likely to experience MSK conditions and poorer health outcomes. Clearly, action is urgently needed.

We know there's more to be done to reach all people affected by arthritis. This Framework is both a roadmap and a commitment to hold ourselves accountable and ensure equity is embedded into every aspect of our work.

Our first Framework focused on internal development. The next three years will be seeking to go further to extend our reach and improve outcomes and impact for all people with arthritis, as well as build upon our internal foundations. We want to empower our Trustees, staff, volunteers and stakeholders so that Arthritis UK can become a truly inclusive charity, open and responsive to the needs of every adult, young person and child with arthritis, regardless of their background.

A detailed, operational action plan with our anticipated EDI outcomes and measures will accompany this Framework. These are intended to hold us to account for the change we want to see within our charity and for all people with arthritis.

Thank you for taking the time to read our Framework and for supporting Arthritis UK in making equity, diversity and inclusion central to who we are and what we do.



Kate Tompkins, Chair
Deborah Alsina, CEO

Arthritis UK Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Framework 2025 to 2028

Introduction

The purpose of this EDI Framework is to establish a clear strategic approach for the both the communities we serve and our people (staff, volunteers and involved people) to ensure that everyone feels valued, respected and empowered to achieve their full potential.

This Framework directly supports our organisation's aim to be a forward-thinking, accessible and inclusive charity that reflects the needs of diverse communities with arthritis across the UK. It aligns with our mission by embedding inclusive principles and practices into every aspect of our operations, from recruitment and leadership development to service delivery and stakeholder engagement. By doing so, we aim to create a charity that not only embraces diversity, but which thrives because of it. Ultimately, EDI makes us a more resilient, responsive and future-ready organisation.

Framework consultation

We developed this Framework through meaningful consultation across Arthritis UK and with external partners. This approach helped ensure that the Framework reflects the voices, experiences and needs of the communities we serve, while aligning with best practice and recognised standards.

Our consultation involved engaging with, conducting or reviewing:

- Staff focus groups.
- A session with the Board: EDI Charity Governance Code.
- Our people Survey 2024 results.
- Individual sessions with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
- A focus group with staff networks.
- Diversity and Inclusion Practitioner Network of over 100 external members.
- The Arthritis UK Health Inequalities working group.
- Feedback from our EDI workshops delivered to new staff.
- Feedback from our 3-year refresher EDI workshops delivered to staff.
- A session with our Community Involvement Network.
- The Arthritis UK' Involvement Network.
- Grant Thornton EDI Audit, February 2025.
- Regular reviews, monitoring and management of EDI risks, plus putting in place effective controls and mitigation actions.

Thank you to everyone who been involved in the development of our Framework, which ensures shared accountability for successful delivery and impact. This collective input has shaped a Framework that is ambitious, inclusive and grounded in the lived experience of people affected by arthritis.

Our values

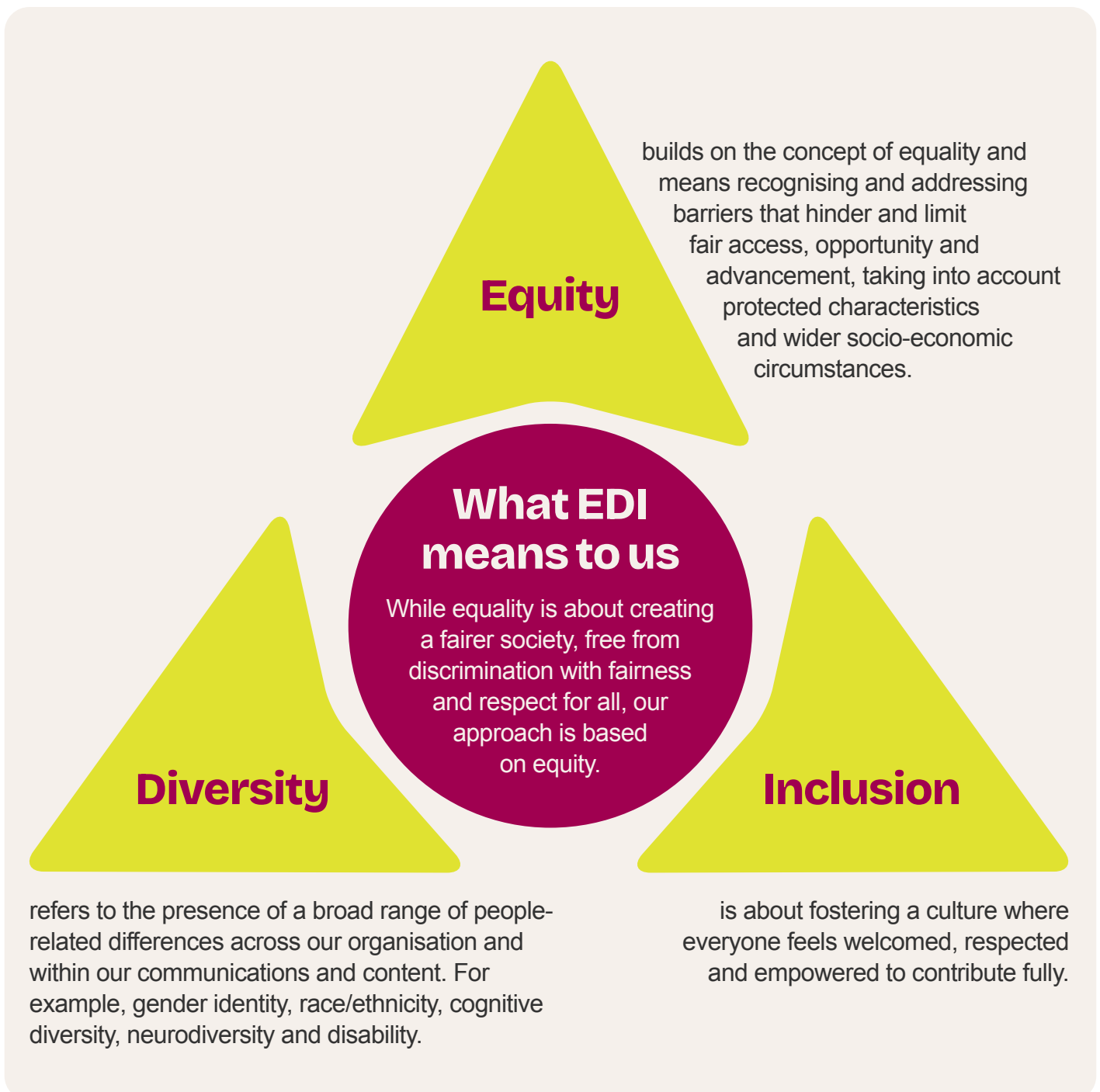
Embedding the values of **United**, **Compassionate**, **Inclusive** and **Brave** into our EDI Framework strengthens our commitment to creating a fair, representative and empowering environment for all. Here's how we're integrating each of these values.

Our values	How this relates to our EDI Framework
 <p>United</p>	
<p>We unite as a community to ensure better outcomes for people with arthritis now and long into the future.</p>	<p>By embedding EDI into all we do, we amplify our reach, improve outcomes, and ensure that no one is left behind in the journey to live well with arthritis.</p>
 <p>Compassionate</p>	
<p>We truly care about people with arthritis; they are at the heart of everything that we do.</p>	<p>We act, so that every person with arthritis feels included, empowered and supported on their own unique journey.</p>
 <p>Inclusive</p>	
<p>Our variety of knowledge and experience helps us to succeed.</p>	<p>We cultivate a culture in which all contributions matter so that together, we can improve life for every adult, young person and child affected by arthritis.</p>
 <p>Brave</p>	
<p>We use evidence and expertise to challenge inequality and drive change.</p>	<p>We take action even when it's difficult, to challenge injustice and build a more equitable future for all people with arthritis.</p>

Our vision for EDI

Our vision for EDI is an organisation where equity, diversity and inclusion are at the core. Where our research, services and influencing reflect the diverse experiences of people living with arthritis, and our workforce mirrors the rich diversity of communities across the UK. We are committed to removing barriers and identifying and tackling arthritis-related inequalities

so that everyone – regardless of background, identity or circumstance – can access the information, support and resources they need to live well with arthritis, as we work towards a cure.



Outcomes

Our understanding of EDI forms the foundation of our commitment to fairness, representation and a true sense of belonging in everything we do.

Our EDI framework is set out over **3 key outcomes**. It aims to have EDI embedded at the core of our charity, with our research, services, influencing and policy reflecting the diverse experiences of people living with arthritis, our volunteers and involved people, along with a workforce which mirrors the rich diversity of communities with arthritis across the UK.

To see the change we want, we're committed to achieving the following outcomes.

Outcome 1: Enable diverse people representation and an inclusive culture.

Our trustees, staff and volunteer community will better reflect the diverse experiences of people with arthritis across the UK. We will foster an organisational culture that is inclusive, welcoming and accessible to all.

To do this we will:

- Support a safe, inclusive and values-led workplace culture where we listen and respond to feedback from our people.
- Gather demographic data across all levels of the charity and use this to inform targeted and positive actions, and to measure progress.
- Continuously review and improve recruitment and resourcing practices to improve representation across trustees, staff and volunteers.

- Develop high-calibre leadership and management capabilities inclusive of EDI principles.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers have the tools, knowledge and skills they need to carry out their roles effectively.
- Develop staff, volunteers and partners understanding of the drivers and impact of health inequalities to ensure we can embed health equity in our strategic planning and delivery.
- Support an effective work-life balance culture, to foster an environment where all employees can thrive.
- Enable people with arthritis and other long-term conditions to stay in work and thrive by promoting flexible, inclusive workplace practices that recognise fluctuating health needs, create supportive cultures and influence wider sector employer standards.



Outcome 2: Deliver an equitable and inclusive approach to services, research, influencing and policy.

Our research, services, influencing and policy activity will be equitable, inclusive and truly representative of the UK's diverse communities.

To do this we will:

- Analyse data to identify issues of under-representation and where improvements are needed across our charitable purpose and organisational activity.
- Increase our knowledge of how arthritis-related health inequalities affect adults, young people and children with arthritis, identifying and addressing these inequalities through our research, services, influencing and policy work.



Services

To do this we will:

- Engage directly with adults, young people and children affected by arthritis, especially from under-served or marginalised groups, so we can understand their challenges engaging in our services.
- Partner with organisations that work within under-served communities, to learn and develop a plan for how we can extend and diversify the reach and impact of our services and ensure the identified unmet needs inform our research agenda and prioritisation activities.
- Optimise our website to provide information in multiple languages and to increase our engagement, reach and impact among people with arthritis from under-served communities.
- Use research findings and arthritis-related health inequality insights to ensure our service design, information, education and support enhances access to our services and results in better outcomes for people with arthritis.



Research

To do this we will:

- Actively work towards building fully inclusive research communities, removing existing barriers for under-represented researchers where possible, and promoting team research.

- Work to make sure that everyone has fair, open and equal opportunities to take part in research if they want to, while also ensuring that the research we fund is designed and run with, and for, the people it is meant to help.
- Actively promote the timely and effective sharing of research results and findings with research participants.
- Seek to identify and prioritise research proposals that address arthritis-related health inequities, and that provide new knowledge and benefit for all, regardless of background.
- Share our learning within and external to the charity to help wider understanding of new knowledge and the application of research findings, as well as enhancing research progress.
- Collaborate with partners and fund studies focused on arthritis-related health inequalities to generate evidence-led approaches to influencing better outcomes for people with arthritis from under-served communities.



Influencing and Policy

To do this we will:

- Work with policymakers to advocate for equitable healthcare policies that address the specific needs of people with arthritis, ensuring that treatment options and support are available to all, regardless of background.
- Collate and analyse data on arthritis-related health disparities within specific populations, creating a Health Inequalities Framework.
- Seek to better understand how social factors like income, education, race/ethnicity, geographic location, the food people have access to, as well as people's experience of racism and discrimination, affect arthritis outcomes and use to this to underpin our influencing, services and policy work.



Outcome 3: Ensure awareness of arthritis and Arthritis UK is high, through an inspiring, inclusive and accessible brand which generates support for people with arthritis.

Our fundraising and engagement activities will reflect our EDI commitment and make us relevant to the more than 10 million adults, young people and children living with arthritis across the UK.

To do this we will:

- Use inclusive language that resonates with a wide range of people, and avoid jargon, while ensuring our imagery, colours fonts reflect positive representation, inclusivity and are accessible.
- Embed inclusive language guidelines into our tone of voice – (principles that prioritise simplicity and clarity) avoid jargon and promote language that resonates with both people affected by arthritis and the wider public.
- Use real-life stories and imagery of adults, young people and children from a broad range of backgrounds who are living with arthritis. We will share these stories on multiple platforms, including our website, social media, newsletters and physical materials (such as brochures and posters) to maximise reach and impact.
- Ensure the website is responsive and optimised for screen readers, with simple navigation, accessible fonts, and large clickable areas for easier interaction. We will make sure all multimedia content is available in alternative formats.

- Ensure we have a range of fundraising products and campaigns that reflect the diverse ways people want to support our cause, covering all nations and regions of the UK.

Planning and delivery – annual EDI priorities

To deliver on our high-level EDI ambitions, we will continue to identify a focused set of annual priorities that will:

- Translate strategic intent into action by focusing attention on where change is most needed or could be most impactful.
- Provide consistency across teams, functions and directorates, giving everyone a shared direction while allowing for local adaptation.
- Guide planning, resource allocation and delivery across the organisation.
- Enable measurement by connecting actions and outcomes to tangible, organisation-wide goals.

We will achieve this by:

- Identify cross-cutting themes (for example, inclusive leadership, accessibility, data and insight, and workforce representation).
- Agree on organisation-wide focus areas that teams can embed into their own annual plans.
- Prioritise resource and effort where it can make the greatest difference to equity and inclusion.

Governance and accountability

Arthritis UK's EDI Framework 2025 to 2028 is owned by the Board of Trustees and progress is reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), Appointments and Remuneration Group (ARG) and EDI Action Group.

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees approved this Framework and will undertake an annual 'deep dive'

into progress, celebrating achievements and challenging gaps and/or delays.

SLT and ARG

The Director of People and Culture will prepare an EDI progress report every six months for review by the SLT and ARG.

EDI Action Group

The EDI Action Group is an internal group, chaired by the Director of People and Culture, and includes representatives from Arthritis UK's Staff Networks, Employee Forum, plus a representative from each of the charity's directorates. The purpose of the group is to review and discuss the operational progress of the Framework and act as the unified employee voice within the governance arrangements.

Risk management

At Arthritis UK, we categorise our risks using one or more of the following seven risk pillars (which are foundational to our approach to risk management): Financial Sustainability, People, Safeguarding, Compliance, Reputation, Cyber, and Data and Impact.

The primary risk for EDI is People. EDI is business critical and if we fail to embed EDI into our organisational activity, we risk not being an inclusive charity reflective of people with

arthritis and our wider society. This would in turn affect our ability to deliver on our core purpose of supporting people with arthritis.

The secondary risk associated with EDI is Reputational. If we don't embed our EDI principles and practices across all areas of our organisation, we risk receiving complaints from individuals associated with the charity that may be shared publicly, undermining trust in our charity and impacting our ability to deliver our core purpose.

All identified risks are interlinked. To reduce the severity of these risks, we will implement this EDI Framework, review EDI risks monthly, implement any audit findings and action our EDI Governance Framework.

Performance monitoring, evaluation and learning

EDI key performance indicators (KPIs) will be developed and used as appropriate to measure how well we're advancing equity, embracing diversity, and fostering an inclusive culture. Our KPI's will include:

- Percentage of direct service provision (for example, information and Helpline service contact) for historically under-represented groups of people with arthritis.
- Increase in engagement with community partners serving diverse communities.
- Diversity demographics for researchers and Research Partners.
- Percentage of employees and volunteers by (for example) race/ethnicity, gender, age, disability and LGBTQ+ in comparison to local labour markets across the UK.
- Percentage of leadership roles (Board, Directors and Heads) by (for example) race/ethnicity, gender, age, disability and LGBTQ+.
- Recruitment, turnover demographics of applicants (shortlisted and appointed individuals) plus leavers by role level and department.
- Gender pay gap analysis.
- Number of EDI-related grievances.
- Participant demographics for training and development opportunities offered.
- People Survey/Investors in People data on Inclusion/Belonging/EDI.



Conclusion

The launch of our **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Framework 2025 to 2028** marks an important step forward in our journey to becoming a truly inclusive organisation. It reflects our deep commitment to understanding and addressing inequality, both within Arthritis UK and across the wider community affected by arthritis.

Building on the progress of our first EDI Strategy, we are now broadening our focus – embedding equity into every part of our work, engaging more voices, and ensuring our services and culture are accessible to all. We recognise that the impact of arthritis are not felt equally, and this Framework sets out our clear intention to challenge those injustices. This is more than a plan. It is a promise to be accountable, listen and learn, and act with purpose. Together, we can create a future where no one is limited by arthritis and where equity, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of everything we do. We will celebrate successes, learn from challenges and share progress with staff, volunteers and the public.

Thank you for joining us on this journey.

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