



Equip Pillar Inclusive Policies

The Inclusive Employers Standard is built upon six pillars of inclusion, which serve as its framework. These pillars—Engage, Equip, Empower, Embed, Evaluate, and Evolve, determine the success and impact of inclusion efforts within the workplace.

To support organisations at all stages of their inclusion journey we host a panel event series focusing on one pillar at a time. Out of these events we have produced a suite of resources sharing insights and experiences on a specific topics.



The equip pillar explores how you upskill and equip your people with the knowledge, experience and understanding to apply inclusive behaviours and practices to their roles and across the organisation. In this resource we will focus on inclusive policies.

Creating strong, inclusive policies is essential for building a workplace where everyone feels respected, valued, and supported. To ensure your policies are effective and contribute to an inclusive culture, consider the following advice on how to approach policy development.

Define your Expectations

A vital first step for any organisation is to ensure you have a clear zero-tolerance stance on bullying and harassment. This might be in a stand alone policy or as part of a wider 'Dignity at Work' policy, but this should be

front and centre in your approach to workplace behavioural expectations. Ensuring this policy has clear definitions and expectations around what constitutes bullying and harassment is important not only for those who apply the policies but for those who need to understand what they are experiencing, and these should be directly relevant to the situations your people will be in. Having ACAS definitions of bullying such as verbal abuse, exclusion, or spreading malicious rumours, or harassment as unwanted physical contact, discriminatory jokes, or offensive comments about someone's race, gender, or disability, is a

good start. But ensuring the example you include are specific to the industry and roles your people have will help everyone involved to understand when behaviour has crossed that important line. Being specific about the types of unacceptable behaviour helps employees understand exactly what is prohibited but also how they are protected.

Clarify Roles and Responsibilities

Some of the strongest policies we see have clear bullet points detailing the expectations of the individual, manager, and organisation when implementing the policy. This helps to ensure all involved know what they can expect and what is expected of them, meaning no one is expecting others to do what they should be doing. Additionally, setting behavioural expectations for managers helps create a fair environment and accountability throughout the organisation.

Ensure Consistency

For fairness and trust, policies must be applied consistently across the organisation. For example, harassment reports should follow the same procedures, regardless of an employee's role or seniority. Good ways to ensure consistency are to provide manager training on inclusive practices, clear guidance documents, and 'ask HR' drop-in sessions to allow managers space to ask questions. Regular policy reviews also help keep them relevant and aligned with legal or workplace changes.

Use Clear and Accessible Language

Write policies in clear, simple language to ensure everyone understands them. Avoiding jargon or overly complex language can make policies easier to engage with. We would also recommend using gender-inclusive language, especially in family policies. To do

this you we recommend using neutral terms like "partner" or "child" instead of "husband/wife" or "son/daughter." Additionally, to enhance inclusivity you can use additive language (e.g., "mother or pregnant parent") or by addressing the reader directly (e.g., "when you get pregnant"). Ensure accessibility by offering policies in multiple formats, such as large print, audio, or translations. Making policies clear, inclusive, and accessible helps create a workplace where all employees feel valued and informed.

Proactively Share Policies with Staff

Clear communication ensures policies are understood and followed. Share them proactively during induction or even before employment. For example, sending new hires a digital copy of the workplace conduct policy before their first day sets expectations early. Policies should be reinforced throughout the employee lifecycle, including appraisals and career development, to help employees understand their evolving relevance. Alongside printed or PDF versions at induction, send regular email reminders or link to policies on the intranet. Easy access allows employees to refer back to policies anytime, increasing adherence and accountability.



Inclusive Policies as the Bedrock of Inclusive Practice



Ghadeer Al-Seragi
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
Manager

At Breast Cancer Now, we're here for anyone affected by breast cancer - we are making a difference to people's lives through our life changing support, world-class research and by leading change. From providing vital information on symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment to offering emotional and practical support, we're dedicated to combining research and care in everything we do.

In late 2024, we were thrilled to receive a Silver accreditation from the Inclusive Employers Standard, a testament to our ongoing work in creating a truly inclusive workplace. Below are just some of the steps we've taken to build strong, inclusive policies and how this accreditation helps us continue our journey forward.

Making Policies Inclusive from the Start

One of the key strengths in our journey to Silver accreditation was reviewing our policies through an equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) lens. We wanted to make sure our policies reflect our values and ensure fairness, consistency, and transparency. For example, the charity's recruitment and selection policy now emphasises the need for fairness and

transparency in every stage of the process, particularly when considering protected characteristics like race, gender, or disability. We also made sure that all our policies are interconnected, meaning that when we update one, we also review related ones to keep everything consistent. We review all policies every two years and if we identify the need for an earlier update, we will make changes right away to stay in line with the latest best practices and legal requirements.

Designing Policies That Are Easy to Understand

Making policies accessible, easy to navigate and understand is a big part of what we call "Inclusion by Design." At Breast Cancer Now, we've worked hard to ensure that all our policies have a clear structure, with simple headers and definitions that everyone can understand. We even created an EDI glossary to support consistency across the organisation, so we're all using the same language when talking about inclusivity. We've focused on using simple, everyday language. For example, we avoid complicated terms or jargon, and opt for words like "give" instead of "provide." We also use a conversational tone and an inbuilt read-aloud function to make sure our policies are user-friendly for everyone, especially people with dyslexia or those whose first language isn't English. The goal is to make sure our policies are easy to read, clear, and empowering so everyone feels confident in following them.

Getting Feedback from Different Voices through Consultation

When drafting a new policy or making changes to an existing one, we make sure to take the time to get input from a wide range of people in the charity. This consultation process starts with key stakeholders within the organisation, like HR, department heads, and specific teams

such as volunteering. Where relevant, we also include people who have been affected by breast cancer to ensure our policies truly meet the needs of the people we support. The draft policy may be reviewed by our Staff Forum and our EDI manager or the EDI working group as well. The final draft then goes through a round of approval by Breast Cancer Now's Management and Leadership teams and in some cases our Board of Trustees before it's rolled out. This process is so important because it ensures our policies are considered, effective, and ready to make a real impact.

Keeping Everyone in the Loop

Once a policy is ready, clear communication with employees is key. We've made all our policies easy to find on our intranet. We also use our weekly all-staff newsletter to keep employees updated whenever a new policy is introduced, or an existing one is updated. If they have any questions, employees can turn to their named HR advisor or staff forum representative for further clarification. Line managers play a key role in making sure policies are applied consistently across the organisation, so we provide them with training and run peer support groups, to help them do this effectively. We also have a regular peer support group where line managers can share experiences and offer advice to each other, ensuring that policies are carried out in the best way possible.

Breast Cancer Now's Top Tips for Creating Strong, Inclusive Policies

- **Keep it simple and clear:** Use language that is easy to understand for everyone, avoiding jargon or complex terms.
- **Be consistent:** Ensure your policies are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect current best practices and legal requirements.

- **Involve your people:** Include a wide range of relevant stakeholders (both internally and externally) to make sure your policies meet real needs, are fit for purpose and legally compliant.
- **Communicate openly:** Make sure policies are easy to find, accessible to all employees and keep everyone informed about any updates.
- **Provide support:** Offer guidance and resources to help employees, especially line managers, implement policies effectively.
- **Bring policies to life:** Make sure your HR team is familiar with any new policies or updates so they can 'bring them to life' when asked by an employee or line manager how they might affect them.

“I conducted a thorough gap analysis in 2023, after joining Breast Cancer Now, to understand where we stood in creating an inclusive workplace and where we needed to improve. It was essential to setting a strong foundation for the future. The Inclusive Employers Standard has been an important opportunity to take a step back, evaluate and celebrate our progress and gain external recognition. The accreditation has been a great way to validate the work we've done so far and highlight the areas where we can keep growing.”

Ghadeer Al-Seragi
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Manager
Breast Cancer Now

Equipping Our Managers to Apply Policies Effectively

Cromwell
Hospital



Jagnisha Chohan
Associate HR Director

At Cromwell Hospital, we recognise that creating an inclusive workplace requires more than well-intentioned policies, it demands that our managers are fully equipped to implement them effectively and consistently. As a private healthcare facility in London and part of the BUPA group, we are committed to fostering an equitable and supportive environment for all our employees and service users. Our recent achievement of Bronze accreditation in the Inclusive Employers Standard reflects the progress we have made. Here's just some of the ways we ensure that our managers feel confident and capable to apply inclusive policies across our organisation.

Engaging Managers in Policy Development

We actively involve our managers in shaping policies from the outset. By including them in the development process, we ensure that our policies are practical, achievable, and aligned with the realities of day-to-day operations. This approach not only increases manager buy-in but also ensures that our policies reflect the needs of our workforce.

Providing Manager Briefing Packs

When policies change, it's essential that our managers have the right information to guide their teams. To support this, we have developed Manager Briefing Packs and toolkits to ensure our leaders can clearly communicate policy updates and expectations to help managers implement policies flexibly while maintaining consistency across the organisation.

Offering Short, Interactive Training Sessions

To reinforce understanding, we introduced 30-minute 'Espresso Sessions,' where managers hear directly from our People Team and members of our D&I Network about policy changes. These short, focused sessions ensure clarity and allow managers to ask questions in a supportive setting. It is also even more impactful when these sessions are delivered collaboratively with the managers who were involved in shaping the policies, as it offers real-world insights and encourages peer learning.

Including Manager-Specific Policy Guidance

One small but powerful addition to our policies is dedicated guidance to support managers to apply policies flexibly but consistently to meet the needs of their team. By outlining best practices, we empower our managers with clear, actionable guidance to apply policies effectively in their day-to-day roles. A great example of this in practice is the support we provided to our managers in applying flexible working within a clinical setting. This approach has had a positive impact, empowering managers to offer their teams the flexibility to attend one-off appointments without requiring a formal flexible working request.

Cromwell Hospital's Top Tips for Engaging Managers with Policies

- **Provide Clear, Accessible Resources** – Equip managers with briefing packs and toolkits to help them communicate and implement policies effectively.
- **Make Training Quick and Interactive** – Offer short, engaging sessions where managers can ask questions and hear from those involved in shaping policies.
- **Highlight Manager Responsibilities** – Include a dedicated section in policies that outlines managers' specific roles and expectations.
- **Involve Managers Early** – Engage managers in the policy development process to ensure policies are practical, relevant, and easier to implement.
- **Encourage Peer Learning** – Facilitate knowledge sharing among managers to reinforce understanding and best practices.



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Jagnisha Chohan
Associate HR Director
Cromwell Hospital

Top Tips from the Inclusive Employers Team



Clare Robertson, Senior I&D Consultant (Global)

Consider how you can build in flexibility to allow your policies to flex to the needs of the different roles in your organisation or countries you operate in.



Laura Summers, Head of Training

Real life examples when sharing the policies with teams can help your people understand how the policy relates to their everyday experience at work and their interactions with colleagues.



Michelle Daltry, Lead I&D Consultant

Ensure your equality impact assessments or other review processes are helping you to challenge your policies and processes to be better, not just a confirmatory check.



Amy Gibbons, Head of Membership

I always like a flow-chart or diagram to map out what good looks like in practice with clear roles and responsibilities. It's also great to reinforce policies with nudges in documentation or practical spot checks.