Frimley Health and Care

NHS Frimley

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

Annual Report

Part A: Public Sector Equality Duty

March 2026

Contents

Foreword

We are pleased to present Frimley Integrated Care Board's Annual Equality Report, which sets out our progress, priorities, and accountability in advancing equality, diversity, and inclusion across our organisation and wider system.

We know that embedding equality is central to delivering high-quality outcomes, improving population health, and ensuring innovative and productive teams. Over the past year, we have taken deliberate steps to strengthen how EDI is governed, embedded, and measured. This includes improving the fairness and transparency of our recruitment and people processes, introducing clearer mechanisms to challenge unacceptable behaviours, and advancing a system-wide anti-racism framework to drive consistent action and accountability.

In addition, a key strategic development this year has been the delivery of Cohort 1 of the Mirror Board Programme. This programme has strengthened our leadership capability by bringing lived experience directly into decision-making and governance. As the first cohort concludes, the learning from this work will be embedded into future leadership and assurance arrangements.

This report sets out work that has been undertaken within the ICB and system partners to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to EDI and we know that while progress has been made, inequalities within our workforce and populations persist. Therefore, as we transition into the Thames Valley ICB, EDI will remain a strategic priority. We will continue to use evidence, partnership, and inclusive leadership to reduce inequalities and build a health and care system that is fair, responsive, and accountable to the people it serves.

Nick Boughton
Chief Executive
Frimley Integrated Care Board

Safina Nadeem
EDI System Lead
Frimley Integrated Care Board

Introduction

Frimley ICS covers five main 'Places': **Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead**, **Slough**, **Bracknell Forest**, **Surrey Heath** and **North East Hampshire and Farnham** (comprising Hart, Rushmoor and Waverley Local Authority Districts).

It enjoys a diverse population and workforce across health and social care. We understand that this brings huge talent and experience into the ICS but also know that there remain inequalities for our people and population that we need to address.

Public Sector Equality Duty

This Annual Report provides an overview through case studies of the work we have delivered this year to meet our Public Sector Equality Duty, which states that we must work to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Part B of this report gives details on the demographics of our ICB workforce and ICS communities.

Within Frimley ICB and the wider ICS, we have delivered this work by embedding our EDI strategy. We continue to use the data contained in our Data Report to understand the lived experiences of our people, and use identified challenges to drive change for equity of outcomes for our staff, volunteers, and the people we serve.

Back to contents page

Our EDI Vision and Ambitions

Our vision is to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of our culture, leadership and service delivery. We are committed to creating an environment where everyone feels respected, valued and able to contribute fully, and where barriers to access, experience and opportunity are actively addressed. By embedding EDI principles across our work, we aim to improve health outcomes, support a diverse and inclusive workforce, encourage innovation and collaboration, and deliver services that better meet the needs of our diverse communities. Our priorities included:

1. Create a Positive and Inclusive Culture
2. Diverse Representation at senior levels
3. Fair and transparent recruitment
4. Promote cultural and behavioural changes to ensure EDI is demonstrated by all

Frimley ICS has continued to take proactive and coordinated action to meet our PSED duties as well as creating inclusive environments. This work has focused on promoting inclusive cultures, increasing awareness and understanding of responsibilities, and ensuring robust processes are in place to respond effectively when concerns arise. Through system-wide collaboration and ongoing engagement, this approach aims to prevent inequalities, improve staff and patient experiences, and support the delivery of equitable and inclusive services.

Some examples of work being undertaken to reduce inequalities is presented below.

Berkshire Health NHS Foundation Trust (BHFT)

Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust continued to challenge inequality and improve understanding of the diverse experiences of its workforce and communities. The annual EDI forum included a keynote session led by Hari Sewell, which encouraged reflection on race-based and intergenerational trauma—helping colleagues recognise how historical and structural inequalities shape present-day experiences and behaviours. The Trust also presented updates on the development of the Skin Tone Bias Assessment Tool, aimed at improving clinical equity by addressing how clinical presentation varies across different skin tones, thereby reducing discriminatory outcomes

Several initiatives highlighted in the event strengthened opportunities for under-represented staff and communities. The Trust shared progress on the Faith Project, including new multifaith resources, badges and e-learning to support staff, students and carers in delivering culturally sensitive care. Presentations also covered Advanced Choices in Mental Health Support and community-led research from TRIYBE into the potential health impacts of chemicals in Black hair-care products—ensuring voices from marginalised communities influence practice and policy. The introduction of the Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showmen and Boater Pledge demonstrated further commitment to addressing inequalities affecting long-excluded groups. In addition, the Trust unveiled the final draft of itself-Advocacy, Cultural Competence and Allyship Guide, co-produced with staff networks, emphasising the development of skills and support mechanisms that enable equitable opportunities for staff across all backgrounds.

The event brought together a diverse mix of clinical and non-clinical colleagues, community members and partners, celebrating shared learning and connection. A central part of the day honoured Windrush and Global South NHS pioneers, with stories captured by ACRE and commemorated through artwork and film, emphasising respect, gratitude and improved cultural understanding across the organisation. The presence of the Mayor of Reading, who personally thanked retired NHS workers from diverse backgrounds, further strengthened community ties and reinforced the Trust's commitment to valuing contribution across generations and cultures. By celebrating lived experience and creating space for dialogue, the Trust continued to foster belonging, connection and positive relationships across its workforce and communities.

Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust (FHFT)

Over the past year, Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust (FHFT) has continued to embed equality, diversity and inclusion as a core enabler of the FHFT Strategy 2025–30. Action to eliminate discrimination and remove barriers has included the implementation of a more consistent and effective approach to Reasonable Adjustments**,** contributing to improved National Staff Survey outcomes, and the introduction of Personal Support Plans (Disability Passports) to ensure individual needs are recognised and supported throughout employment. FHFT has also strengthened its Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process and governance, embedding this more robustly within business planning, and completed a comprehensive EIA to support the Frimley Park Hospital New Hospital Programme across all potential site options.

FHFT has continued to invest in its **'Leader in Me'** programme, supporting colleagues from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds to develop leadership capability and progress into senior roles. This work forms part of the Trust's wider approach to addressing underrepresentation, improving progression outcomes and supporting a more inclusive leadership pipeline.

In addition, it has reconstituted its People Networks with clear executive sponsorship, strengthening their visibility, influence and connection to decision-making. In addition, reciprocal mentoring has been embedded within senior leadership development programmes to support shared learning, improve cultural competence and strengthen engagement between senior leaders and colleagues from underrepresented groups.

Sexual Misconduct ICB

The Worker Protection Act (2024, as an amendment of the Equality Act, 2010) came into effect in October 2024. This amendment introduces a legal duty for all employers to proactively take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment.

During this reporting year, Frimley Integrated Care System has focused on the implementation and assurance of Sexual Safety in the Workplace arrangements, following earlier alignment with the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010). The NHS England Sexual Safety in the Workplace policy has been rolled out consistently, supported by a mandatory sexual safety eLearning module and an anonymous reporting mechanism operating alongside formal reporting and Freedom to Speak Up routes.

This has been supported through clear and accessible processes, resources available on the intranet, regular staff communications, and the inclusion of sexual safety content within the NHS Thames Valley corporate induction from 1 April 2026. A local Equality and Health Inequality Assessment (EHIA) has informed implementation activity to ensure it reflects the needs of the local workforce and geography. Additional support is available through the Employee Assistance Programme and signposted routes to specialist support.

A culture of psychological safety have been promoted through engagement with Staff Networks, EDI stakeholders and Freedom to Speak Up Guardians, strengthening confidence in reporting and support mechanisms. Staff awareness has been further supported through a 'Lunch and Learn' session, organisation-wide communications marking White Ribbon Day, and continued learning through national and system-wide Communities of Practice. Oversight is provided through a task and finish group, meeting quarterly to review learning and themes, with insight escalated to the ICB EDI Working Group to support continuous improvement.

No reports of sexual misconduct were received during the reporting period. Assurance has been strengthened through an NHS England audit completed in September 2025 and participation in a subsequent national audit in February 2026

Hate Crime Awareness ICB

During the reporting year, national and international events both in 2024 and 2025 led to increased concern regarding Islamophobia, antisemitism and other forms of hate crime, including the widespread display of flags and symbols across the country. NHS Frimley acted swiftly to assess risk and coordinate a system-wide response to support staff across health and social care.

Frimley Integrated Care System led by Safina Nadeem EDI System Director completed and implemented its system Anti-Racism Framework, co-produced with colleagues from across the ICS and subsequently adopted by partner organisations within their local governance and workforce arrangements. This has provided a consistent, system-wide approach to preventing and addressing racism.

The ICB engaged promptly with EDI Leads and Freedom to Speak Up Guardians to identify support needs and reinforce reporting routes. An ICS-wide online safe space was facilitated for colleagues across health, social care and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector, supported by written guidance on hate crime definitions, reporting routes and access to local and national support services.

Feedback indicated that this activity reduced feelings of isolation, strengthened peer support and increased confidence to seek help and act as allies. Learning from this work will inform the culture and approach of the new Thames Valley Integrated Care Board, supporting continued action to address hate crime and promote psychological safety. System-level insight into hate crime incidents will continue to be developed, with assurance and learning reported to the Board in 2027 under the new ICB governance arrangements.

Back to contents page

North Hampshire Urgent Care (NHUC)

During 2024/25, North Hampshire Urgent Care (NHUC) strengthened its approach to eliminating discrimination through the revision of its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and the introduction of a Preventing Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Policy. NHUC achieved Disability Confident Employer status, NHS Veteran Aware accreditation, and the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Bronze Award, demonstrating compliance with national standards and strengthened organisational assurance.

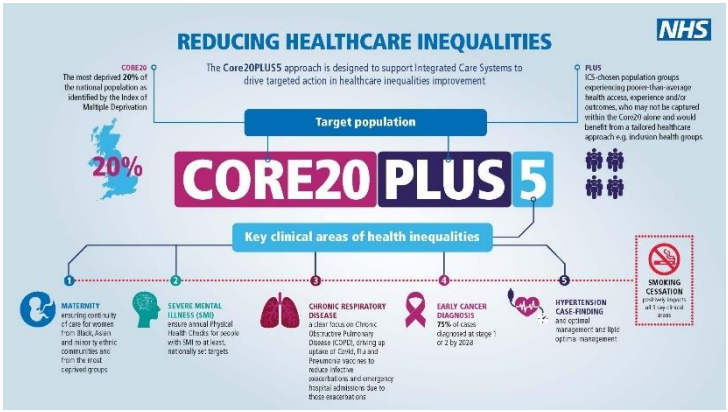
NHUC has taken action to advance equality of opportunity through delivery of an EDI staff survey with resulting improvement actions, increased collection and use of equality data, and targeted learning and engagement activity. Staff are supported through accessible policies, intranet resources, EDI communications, and inclusion of EDI priorities within workforce planning. Work has also progressed to support neurodivergent staff and patients, prepare for Gender Pay Gap reporting, and improve recruitment, onboarding and induction processes.

NHUC has promoted good relations by strengthening staff engagement through its EDI Engagement Group, celebrating cultural and religious events, and delivering awareness activity across the organisation. At system level, NHUC has actively contributed to the Frimley ICS Anti-Racism Alliance, supported delivery of the Frimley ICB EDI Conference, and participated in the Mirror Board Programme. These actions support a culture of respect, inclusion and collaboration across health and social care.

Back to contents page

NHS Frimley Integrated Care Board – Reducing Health Inequalities

Frimley Integrated Care Board recognises health inequalities as unfair and avoidable differences in access to care, experience, and outcomes. Using population health management data and Joint Strategic Needs Assessments, the ICB identifies groups experiencing poorer outcomes, including people living in areas of deprivation, individuals with learning disabilities, unpaid carers, and other underserved communities. Equality impact assessments and health inequalities analyses are routinely applied to key strategies, commissioning decisions and service changes to mitigate adverse impacts and reduce structural disadvantage.



The ICB's approach aligns with the Core20PLUS5 national framework, focusing on the most deprived 20% of the population (deciles 1–4) and locally identified PLUS groups. Targeted actions include embedding health inequalities considerations into commissioning, supporting place-based partnerships to tailor interventions, and working with VCSE partners to improve access, engagement and service uptake. Initiatives delivered through the Core20PLUS5 Community of Practice and the Living Well Ambition include improvements in cardiovascular disease prevention, outreach activity for priority cohorts, co-produced and translated health information, increased access to blood pressure monitoring in community settings, and support for staff wellbeing through BP stations and Making Every Contact Count (MECC) training. Early data indicates reductions in smoking prevalence, increased uptake of weight management and alcohol treatment services, and improved hypertension control.

Good relations have been strengthened through partnership working with VCSE organisations, place-based systems and communities to co-produce interventions and build trust. Progress is monitored through the ICB and Living Well Board, with disaggregated data reported via subgroups and used to inform continuous

quality improvement. This approach demonstrates a commitment to collaboration, transparency and long-term action to reduce inequalities in access, experience and outcomes for Frimley's population.

NHS Frimley Mirror Board Programme

NHS Frimley ICB Mirror Board programme has now been successfully completed, delivering demonstrable impact on leadership development, equality, and inclusion across the system. Designed to strengthen representation from protected characteristic groups, the programme brought together colleagues from across health and social care to develop Board-level skills while influencing ICB decision-making.

The Mirror Board created structured spaces where lived experience was central to Board-level discussion. Through Reciprocal Mentoring, members and senior leaders explored how organisational culture, systems and processes impact different groups, enabling the Board to better identify and address inequities or potential discriminatory practice.

Members' contributions to the System Anti-Racism Framework, as well as reflections on the Frimley Financial Sustainability Plan and Core20PLUS5, strengthened Board awareness of differential impacts on communities and workforces. These discussions resulted in more informed equality impact considerations and improved scrutiny aligned with anti-discriminatory practice.

A core purpose of the programme was to increase progression opportunities for those from protected characteristic groups. The Mirror Board has achieved this by:

- Providing direct exposure to Board-level strategic work and system leadership
- Supporting members to take on senior responsibilities or progress into more advanced roles
- Strengthening participants' confidence, capability and visibility across the system
- Ensuring diverse perspectives shaped strategic areas such as health inequalities, community engagement, and workforce development

These outcomes helped reduce barriers to leadership, diversify the pipeline, and enable fairer access to progression and system influence.

The programme significantly strengthened cross-group understanding and collaboration. Through shared learning, reflective conversations and joint problem-solving:

Members deepened understanding of each other's lived experiences, identities and challenges. Reciprocal mentoring improved relationships and empathy between senior leaders and diverse staff groups. Cross-system collaboration improved relationships across organisations, sectors and communities

This has contributed to a more inclusive leadership culture and strengthened trust across the system.

Throughout the year, the Mirror Board delivered tangible improvements in leadership capability, diversity of thought and system cohesion. Successes include:

- Leadership development and increased readiness for senior roles
- Stronger advocacy for under-represented groups
- Enhanced strategic insight feeding into Board decisions
- More inclusive challenge and reflection within Board discussions
- Greater confidence and visibility of diverse talent across the system

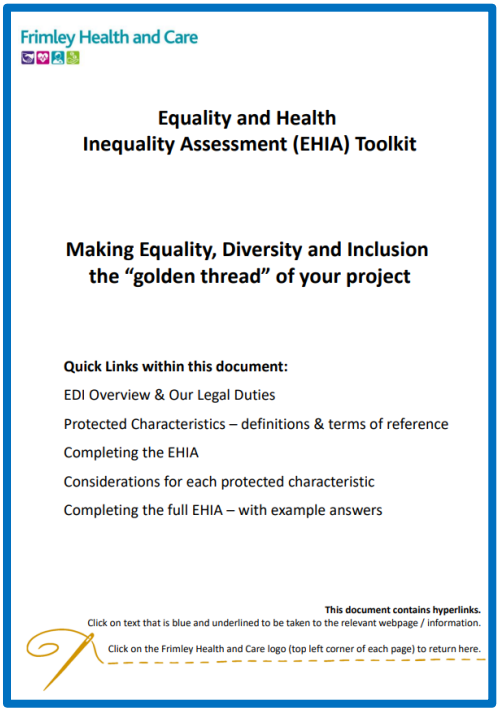
In recognition of its impact and innovation, the Mirror Board programme was nominated for an award at the Asian Professional Network Awards (APNA Awards) and was awarded a Certificate of Excellence. This external recognition reflects the programme's strong contribution to inclusive leadership, equality and system change, and reinforces its value as a model of good practice within and beyond the Frimley system.

As NHS Frimley ICB transitions into the new Thames Valley ICB, the CEO has formally committed to continuing the Mirror Board programme, recognising its significant contribution to advancing the PSED aims and strengthening equality, diversity and inclusion across the system. This commitment ensures continuity, preserves the learning and momentum, and embeds the programme within the leadership culture of the new organisation

Equality and Health Inequality Assessment (EHIA)

In 2025, NHS Frimley ICB strengthened its approach to embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) into decision-making by reviewing and updating its Equality and Health Inequality Assessment (EHIA) process. The previous two-step structure was replaced with a streamlined single-step form following staff feedback.

The new EHIA form was designed collaboratively by the EDI Team and incorporates clear governance: all EHIAs must involve relevant stakeholders, including staff networks, and where a neutral or negative impact is identified, the assessment must be reviewed by the ICB's EDI Working Group and co-signed by an EDI Team member to ensure risks are fully mitigated. A comprehensive toolkit—containing legal duties, definitions of protected characteristics, guidance on completing the form, example answers, and workforce and community data—was launched through an all-staff briefing, supported by six months of training.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Equality and Health Inequality Assessment (EHIA) Toolkit

Making Equality, Diversity and Inclusion the "golden thread" of your project

Quick Links within this document:

EDI Overview & Our Legal Duties

Protected Characteristics – definitions & terms of reference

Completing the EHIA

Considerations for each protected characteristic

Completing the full EHIA – with example answers

This document contains hyperlinks.

Click on text that is blue and underlined to be taken to the relevant webpage / information.

Click on the Frimley Health and Care logo (top left corner of each page) to return here.

For the 2026 reporting year, the EHIA has become fully embedded as a core requirement across all programmes and projects. It is now actively and consistently used throughout the transition from NHS Frimley ICB to the new Thames Valley ICB. The EHIA process is being applied across all major workforce and organisational change programmes, including voluntary redundancy, compulsory redundancy, COSOP processes, organisational design work, and transition planning for the new ICB. This ensures that equality, diversity and health inequality considerations are systematically built into every stage of change, supporting fair, transparent and legally robust decision-making across the system. The widespread adoption of the EHIA demonstrates the organisation's commitment to making EDI the

"golden thread" of its operations and strengthening compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty during a period of significant transformation.

Back to contents page

System Anti-Racism Alliance

Throughout 2025, system partners engaged deeply in the co-design of the system Anti-Racism Framework 'Beyond Boundaries' alongside of a system Anti-Racism Alliance. A chief executives roundtable event was convened with senior leaders from across the system, including the NHS, voluntary sector organisations, local authorities, fire and rescue services, and police, to support collective discussion and action to address race inequalities across the system. The Framework's five pillars, its accompanying maturity model, and the requirement for organisations to set SMART improvement goals created a practical and structured approach for partners to adopt. As a result, by the close of the reporting year, partner organisations had begun not only to embrace the Framework but also to embed its principles into their own internal strategies, governance structures, and cultural development work.

Alongside this Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust through their Unity Against Racism | Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust programme and taskforce, shared openly with the Frimley Integrated Care Partnership, their work enabling senior leaders from across the ICS to understand both the progress achieved and the barriers encountered along the journey. This transparency helped build momentum and trust across partner organisations.

This collective ownership means that the anti-racism agenda is no longer held at ICB level alone. Partner organisations are taking it forward independently, adapting the maturity model to fit their local contexts and building their own programmes of work that support sustained progress. The strong engagement across the ICS in 2025 has ensured that the Anti-Racism Framework is well positioned to continue delivering impact as the system transitions into the new Thames Valley ICB, with organisations committed to driving this work forward as part of their ongoing work.

Back to contents page

Frimley ICS EDI Conference- 'Everyday Action - Meaningful Impact'

In November 2025, Frimley Health & Care in collaboration with Frimley NHS Foundation Trust and system partners delivered their annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Conference.

The conference was opened by Dr Priya Singh (Chair) and Lance McCarthy**,** Chief Executive of Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust**,** who spoke about collective commitment as an Integrated Care System (ICS) to embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) into organisational practices. This was followed by a Keynote by Dr Alice Mpofu-Coles from the University of Reading and the Mayor of Reading**,** who spoke on *Embracing Diversity to Overcome Inequality*.

The conference featured diverse speakers and topics, including lived experience perspectives and senior leadership engagement, which attendees found authentic, relevant, and impactful. Workshops and discussions supported learning, reflection, and the identification of practical actions to promote inclusion within the workplace.

Workshops included:

- Tackling Prejudice and Inequality
- Cultural Intelligence
- Leaders' Question Time
- Confronting Racism with courage
- LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Healthcare
- The Power of Staff Networks

Evaluation feedback from attendees indicated that the conference was highly effective, reporting that increased awareness and understanding of how to embed best practice into their own organisations.

"The conference reflected diversity really well, both in its content and the range of speakers. Each session brought a different lens on equity, diversity and inclusion, whether it was organisational leadership, cultural intelligence, intersectionality, or tackling prejudice across communities. The keynote speakers and workshop leads represented a mix of backgrounds, sectors and lived experiences, which made the discussions feel balanced and authentic. "

Back to contents page

Next steps in 2026: Our EDI Priorities

1. **Inclusive and Compassionate Leadership: Leaders will actively model inclusive behaviours and champion equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of their work.**
2. **Inclusive Culture and Belonging: We will continue to enhance workplace inclusivity and belonging, so all our staff feel valued and respected**
3. **Inclusive Policies and Practices: ensure our policies and practices are fair, transparent and inclusive**

Action	Lead	Updates	Target date	Outcome measures
1. To help achieve this we will: • Embed Inclusive and Compassionate Leadership in board development offers • Deliver Executive workshop on Inclusive Leadership using best practice models • Ensure Line manager development on leading well/managing diverse teams • Deliver a Thames Valley Mirror Board programme	EDI Lead OD Team		April 2026-March 2027	Leaders have attended Inclusive Leadership workshop EDI is built into line manager development Delivery of Thames Valley Mirror Board Programme
2. **This will be done by:** • Continuing to deliver and monitor the NHS workforce race equality standard (WRES) and Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES) • Delivery of the System Anti-Racism Framework • Coaching and mentoring and tools for staff network chairs • Training and workshops for all staff on building inclusive cultures, challenging poor behaviours • EDI build into the new Induction programme and PDR process • Use our learning culture and continuous improvement approach and work in partnership with staff and EDI networks to test these approaches as we deliver them	EDI Team Stakeholders: Staff network, People Team, Organisational Development Team		March 2025 - 2028	By 2029 our workforce will be representative by ethnic diversity at all levels of the organisation Our WRES/WDES scores will show improvements positive experiences Improvement on metrics year on year

3. We will do this by: • Continue to support our equality staff networks to have a voice in decision making and raise issues with senior leaders • Ensure reasonable adjustment policy in place and training for managers • Ensure all people policies are equality impact assessed to highlight any differential impact so it can be addressed • Reviewing and strengthening our policies and practices to ensure they are fair, transparent and inclusive, and by embedding equality impact considerations into decision-making processes	EDI & Organisational Development Teams		March 2025 - 2026	