



Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025



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Introduction and overview

Celebrating the diversity and uniqueness of every child and family we support, lies at the heart of what we do. Here's what some of our Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB) members have to say about what Equality, Diversity and Inclusion means to them:

“Never presume. Always ask. You will get more out of asking than presuming”

(Khalil, FJYPB Member)

“It's important for professionals to ask young people questions. Give them time to explain. No-one likes being rushed. Ask that young person ‘Do you have anything to add?’ and ‘Do you want to explain things in your own words?’. Get to know that person. You can still have a title and be wrong. Supporting children and families is what we're here for.”

(Plam, FJYPB Member)

The importance of families for children as the best place in which to grow up and to thrive is enshrined in the Children Act 1989. This remains the primary legislation that established children's safety and welfare as the most important aspect of any assessment about their future needs.

Understanding what children want and need is only possible when we look closely at their families and how their daily lives work in respect of language, heritage, culture, faith, education and a whole range of unique characteristics that will come together to define a child's lived experiences.

The same can be said for all of us as we go about our daily lives and this strategy hopes to set out how we will afford priority and importance to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion for everyone working for Cafcass and the children and families whom we serve.

We are therefore pleased to introduce our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-25. What you read here is not a fixed position, but very much a live document aimed at guiding our work as it continues to evolve. It's an attempt to set out our immediate priorities in relation to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, as well as to signal our ambitions for the future. This document will be revised each year and a progress report will be

presented to the Cafcass Board. We will take a proactive approach to seeking feedback from children, families, colleagues and partners and ensuring it is used to improve our service.

At Cafcass, our focus on how individuals are treated and how they experience the world around them in respect of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, reflects the value we place on the uniqueness of every person. We are clear in our expectations that everyone is treated with dignity and respect. We are determined to embed a supportive and inclusive culture across our organisation for the benefit of the children, young people and families we support.

We will build on the success of Together – our new practice framework, to ensure that we continue to evolve as a learning organisation and develop further our inclusive strengths-based approach to our work. We'll also explore appropriate benchmarking tools and charter marks to ensure we continuously evaluate and strengthen the impact of new behaviours and working practices as they relate to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

All colleagues involved in the development and review of policies will understand their responsibility for ensuring the full range of 'protected characteristics'¹ have been considered and actions have been taken to address any disproportionate impacts which may cause people to be treated differently.

We acknowledge the importance of visible role models from different backgrounds who can provide inspiration to the children and young people we support as well as colleagues across our organisation. We'll make targeted efforts to improve the diversity of our workforce, especially in relation to roles where particular groups are under-represented and we will renew our efforts to host diverse and inclusive panels when we are recruiting new colleagues.

We recognise that our approach to delivering Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is ambitious and it will take time to realise our ambitions, but with individual and collective commitment we know we'll achieve positive change for the children and families we serve and for our colleagues here at Cafcass.

¹ Under the Equality Act 2010, it is against the law to discriminate against someone due to a protected characteristic: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

What does Equality Diversity and Inclusion mean at Cafcass?



At Cafcass we acknowledge there are various definitions of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and the relationships between them. We have chosen to adopt the working definitions currently promoted by 'Social Work England' – the regulator of social workers in England:

Equality

Equality means making sure that everyone is treated fairly and with dignity and respect. It means challenging discrimination and removing barriers, so that everyone has opportunities to achieve their desired outcomes.

Diversity

Diversity is about recognising the benefits of different values, abilities and perspectives and celebrating people's differences. This means promoting an environment that welcomes and values all backgrounds, thinking, skills and experience.

Inclusion

Inclusion is providing a space where everyone has equal access to opportunities and resources and where everyone feels valued and accepted. Everyone should be able to contribute and have a voice. This means making reasonable adjustments to facilitate participation.

Our vision, values and ambition

Our vision and values will underpin the continued development of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion across the 3 key areas of our work: Our Practice, Our Partners and Our People. Further details can be found in our [Strategic Plan 2019- 2023](#).



Vision

“For every child whose future is decided by the family courts, we provide a service that prioritises their safety, their voices and their needs, taking full account of their families and those connected to them.”

Values

Our ‘Together’ values, set out in our new practice framework are:

- ✓ Always looking for the strengths and risks
- ✓ Believing in respectful relationships
- ✓ Decision making is clear and reasoned
- ✓ Holding children and families at the heart of our practice
- ✓ Wanting to know more about you and what is important in your life



Our ambition

We want all children to feel safe, supported and able to reach their full potential. We want them to have a service which is right for their individual needs and leaves them in a better position than before our involvement.

We want to ensure that the help and support we provide has a positive impact on children and we would like to hear them say that we have helped to make things better than before we entered their lives. We want to provide effective support which reduces the risk of harm to them and helps equip all children with the confidence and skills that will enable them to be the very best they can be.

Embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in our work with children and families as well as the support we provide to our staff is vital in achieving these aspirations.

Our priority Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives 2022-2025

We have four objectives which we will lead and prioritise through this strategy. Each objective is owned by a member of the Senior Leadership Team, including the Chief Executive. Each senior leader is expected to set out a plan to help realise the ambition of each commitment with the advice of the Cafcass Equality, Diversity and Inclusion senior officer.

Our four priority objectives establish the things we want to change and review in the first year of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy. These are the actions that we will monitor and describe clearly through regular updates to the Cafcass Board, the Corporate Management Team and through the organisation.

We are committed to an inclusive and diverse organisational culture and progressive approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. We want children, families and colleagues to feel valued and respected for their uniqueness and our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion to be reflected in all that we do.

Objective 1: Better Data and Insight – Used Well

Director of Strategy

Over the next three years we will

We will increase the proportion of children, families and employees for whom we capture information about their protected characteristics and publish analyses of that information to show whether there are disparities in their experience of us as a service provider or employer, and what action we have taken as a result.

We will make progress by

- Developing and testing the use of local diversity data to explore the gap between community profiles and caseload and staffing profiles – focusing initially on heritage and faith – and identify what action should be taken to address disparities: for example through recruitment or offer more tailored services.

- Ensuring that the options we offer to children, families and staff for telling us about their protected characteristics and other aspects of their identity that are important to them are sensitively asked and meaningful; consistent with best practice, and comparable with national data where possible (e.g. census data).
- Publishing our first Equality, Diversity and Inclusion report alongside or before 2022/3 Annual Report and Accounts.

Objective 2: Leadership and Commitment

Chief Executive



Over the next three years we will

Equip all leaders and managers to be inclusive in their behaviours and styles of leadership. This means respecting the uniqueness of colleagues, ruling out discrimination based on protected characteristics and enabling everyone to feel that their input is valued.

It also means seeking out a range of perspectives on the many issues we face at Cafcass, being ambassadors of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and the significance in our work, accepting our own vulnerabilities and biases and communicating clearly about the need for listening and discussion to find the best solutions.

We will make progress by

- Strengthening our response to feedback from children by reviewing a sample of children's responses to introductory letters every month, to collate the learning themes and to devise a service area action plan in response. The action plans will be collated by Heads of Practice and shared with the National Director and Assistant Directors group for review, oversight and feedback on progress to Corporate Management Team, through the performance accountability framework.
- Recognising the uniqueness of colleagues, we will host two service area 'think ins' every year, the purpose of which is to openly discuss the experiences, hopes and fears of staff in respect of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at Cafcass. We ask that a single priority action in respect of staff in that service area is agreed and then reviewed 6-monthly through a second 'think in'. The priority actions for service

areas should be signed off by the Assistant Directors for the region and submitted as part of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion action plans.

Objective 3: People, Culture and Environment

Director of Resources (Strategic Lead for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion)

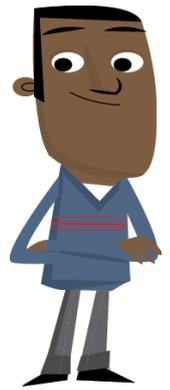
Over the next three years we will

We will improve the recruitment, retention, progression, development and experience of the people who work for Cafcass to achieve greater diversity at all levels of the organisation.

We will make progress by

- Gaining a better understanding of and improving the experience of employees at Cafcass. We will carry out a staff survey and work on employee led solutions through staff action planning groups.
- Gaining a better understanding of and improving external Cafcass employee branding. We will review our external employee branding in terms of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion with particular emphasis on improving our image and better understanding the marketplace to improve our attraction strategies.
- Reviewing and improving our interviewing and selection process in terms of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Objective 4: Skilled and Confident Practitioners and Wider Workforce Director of Operations



Over the next three years we will

Ensure talking to children and families about diversity and uniqueness is a core competency for all frontline staff, supervisors and managers, promoting the development of trusting relationships that prioritise listening, understanding, clear reasoning, respect and integrity.

We will make progress by

- Reviewing and updating our approaches to reflective supervision, practice observations, Practice Learning Reviews and case audits to ensure that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is a consistent priority within them.
- Adopting a proactive approach to seeking feedback from children and families and using it to ensure the support we provide promotes the value of diversity and uniqueness.
- Embedding 'Together with children and families', our relationship-based practice framework.

Our statutory responsibilities

At Cafcass we are not only committed to meeting our statutory responsibilities, but we will strive to exceed them by actively removing barriers and supporting children, families and our colleagues to reach their full potential. This will ensure that we meet our aim of becoming a beacon of best practice in relation to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

As a public sector body, we must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty also referred to as the 'general duty' created under the Equality Act 2010. This requires us to have 'due regard' to:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination harassment and victimisation
- Advancing equality of opportunity between different groups
- Fostering good relations between different groups.

The general duty is supported by 2 'specific duties' which require us to:

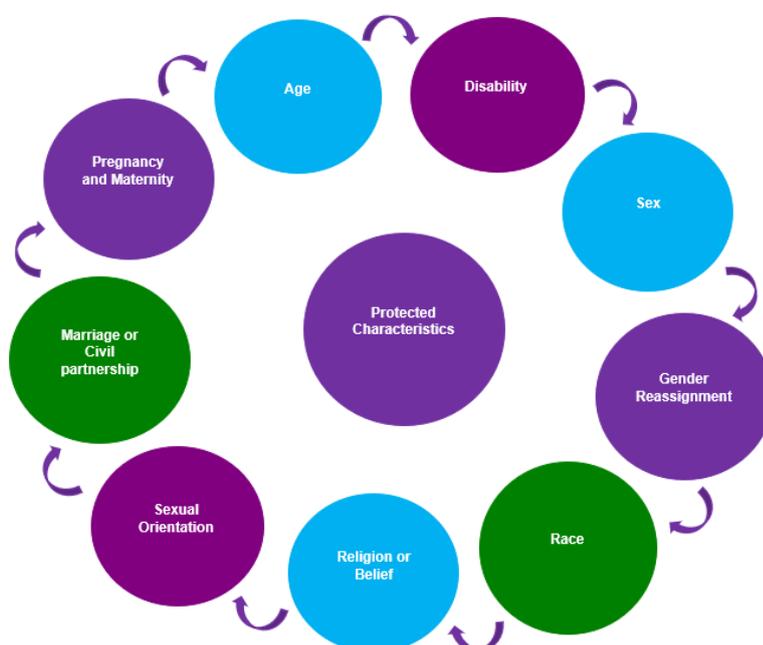
- Publish an annual report to demonstrate compliance with the general duty.
- Publish specific and measurable equality objectives at least every 4 years.

Having 'due regard' means we must consciously think about the aims of the equality duty when we develop strategies, policies and processes. As a public body, consideration of equality issues must also influence our decision making in relation to areas such as:

- Employment
- Policy review and evaluation
- Design, delivery and evaluation of services
- Commissioning and procurement

‘Protected Characteristics’

The general duty provides protection based on certain aspects of identity, known as ‘protected characteristics’. The 9 ‘protected characteristics’ are show below:



At Cafcass we will also consider wider groups, where appropriate, because we understand that they may also experience additional barriers and challenges. This includes people with caring responsibilities. Support for children, families and staff who do not speak English as their first language must also be considered. Whilst speaking a different language is not a protected characteristic, we understand the challenges it can cause. We will be mindful of the way in which we communicate, particularly when using interpretation and translation services. We will embrace linguistic diversity as a strength which reflects uniqueness and individuality.



In addition, we will consider the impact of intersectionality. Intersectionality recognises that we all have multiple aspects of our identity which overlap. In some case this can result in multiple disadvantage and discrimination which we must acknowledge and work hard to address.

Understanding the characteristics of the children and families we support and our workforce

This strategy will support our continued drive to improve performance in relation to collection and analysis of demographic data – both quantitative and qualitative. We understand how data driven approaches to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion can help us set organisational goals and benchmarks and identify trends and areas for improvement. Data gives us a deeper understanding of the lived experience of the children and families we work with and our workforce.

Detailed demographic data in relation to the children we worked with and our workforce during 2020-21 is available here: [Annual Report and Accounts for 2020-21](#)

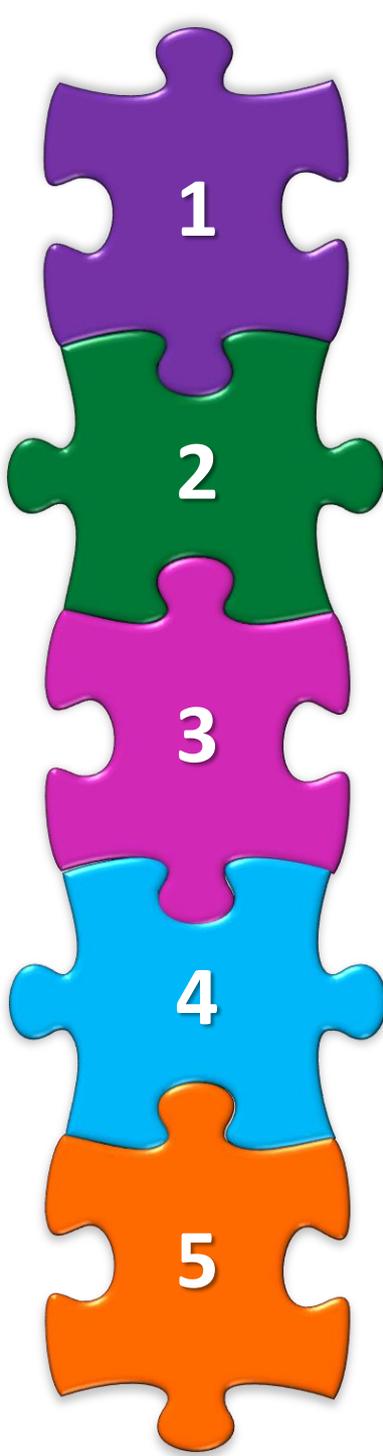
What have we done so far?

In January 2021, we commissioned an independent consultant to undertake an audit of our work in relation to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, to provide a clear view of our position. This involved a comprehensive review of policies, procedures and statutory compliance as well as interviews with senior managers and staff.

The audit identified areas which we are consolidating through the development of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and four overarching objectives. We have already made significant progress in relation to the following key areas:

- Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion delivery principles
- Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion stakeholders and initiatives
- Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion charter marks

Our Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Delivery Principles



1

COMMIT

We'll strengthen our commitment to making EDI a reality by ensuring we are fully compliant with the Public Sector Equality Duty² and striving to improve experiences and outcomes for children, families and staff who experience barriers linked to protected characteristics.

2

BENCHMARK

We'll adopt a consistent, evidence-based approach which enables us to measure and analyse the impact of our EDI interventions, gather the information we need to identify areas for improvement and target our resources effectively.

3

INTEGRATE

We'll ensure EDI is effectively integrated into all our policies and practice to help ensure that decision making is fair and reasoned for the children and families we support as well as our colleagues.

4

ENGAGE

We'll engage regularly with a range of stakeholders, work in partnership with them to progress EDI and learn from the insight and experience of colleagues from under-represented groups to improve our organisation.

5

EMBED

We'll embed EDI into our everyday business as we support a diverse range of children and families and promote an inclusive working environment for our staff where people can be proud of who they are.

² The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) is contained within the Equality Act 2010. The broad purpose of the PSED is to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into the day-to-day business of public bodies.

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion stakeholders and initiatives

The Family Justice Young People's Board

The Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB) is a group of over 50 children and young people aged between 7 and 25 years old from a wide range of backgrounds. They have either had direct experience of the Family Justice System or have an interest in children's rights and the family courts. The children and young people participate in meetings, including Board meetings, projects and initiatives in partnership with Cafcass to ensure all of our work remains child centred and child inclusive. They share our overarching aim to put children and young people first in the family courts.

Staff Diversity Networks

At Cafcass our staff diversity networks play a key role in providing peer support and networking opportunities between staff who may experience additional barriers and challenges and they can also act as important 'critical friends' to the organisation. They enable us as an employer to engage proactively with a wide range of staff, ensure that different voices are heard and help strengthen trust and confidence. Our staff networks are listed below:



- Ability Matters (Staff with Disabilities)
- Carers Network
- Faith Network
- Kaleidoscope (Staff from Black Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds)
- Pride (Staff from the LGBT+ community)
- Mental Health network

Family Forum

The forum was launched in 2021. Its membership is made up of parents and carers who have experienced the service delivered by Cafcass and offer constructive challenge to help us improve. The aim is for them to provide us with feedback so that we can better understand how families

experience our service and use the learning to improve outcomes for children.

Health and Wellbeing Allies, Mental Health Allies and Mental Health First Aiders

At Cafcass we are committed to promoting a working environment which supports the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of all our staff. Our network of Health and Wellbeing Champions act as contact points to signpost staff to relevant health related information and share resources. They take a proactive role in awareness campaigns and enable the workforce to share their views and ideas on health and wellbeing.

Several of our Health and Wellbeing Champions are also trained as Mental Health Allies and Mental Health First Aiders. They are trained to support the mental health needs of colleagues who may be in distress and signpost to relevant professional mental health services.

Diversity Champions

Each Cafcass area has an identified Lead Diversity Champion responsible for the coordination of local activities which will help us achieve our organisational Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives. Their activities help embed our objectives across geographic and service areas effectively. This may include hosting workshops and engaging with community-based organisations to promote awareness raising and mark or celebrate key dates through local Equality, Diversity and Inclusion campaigns – relevant to their area.

Our current Equality, Diversity and Inclusion charter marks

Disability Confident Leader

As a Disability Confident Leader, we have evidenced our commitment to securing retaining and developing disabled staff who are skilled, loyal and hard working. Our Disability Confident Leader self-assessment has been independently verified to confirm the actions we are taking in relation to disability, mental health and wellbeing. A further assessment of our progress will be required in 2023.



Mindful Employer

We are committed to creating a supportive and open culture where colleagues can talk about mental health, confident that they will be given non-judgmental and proactive support and offered reasonable adjustments when required. Our accreditation as a Mindful Employer emphasises our tangible commitment to this area. It is a voluntary charter promoting positive attitudes to mental health – in the workplace, recruitment processes and information and support provided to staff.



Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme

This is a programme for employers. It's aimed at ensuring all LGBTQ+³ staff are free to be themselves in the workplace. Many organisations across the UK are members of the programme which

³ Acronym used by Stonewall to reflect lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, questioning and ace people [About us | Stonewall](#)

demonstrates a shared core belief in developing a workplace that truly welcomes, respects and represents LGBTQ+ employees.



Governance and oversight of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

At Cafcass, promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is everyone’s responsibility. It lies at the heart of our culture, our values and our overarching commitment to putting children and young people first. Progress towards objectives will be overseen by the Cafcass Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group, chaired by our Strategic lead for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. The group includes representation from key stakeholders: Board Member Lead for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Family Justice Young People’s Board, Staff Diversity Networks and Human Resources. Progress will be reported through publication of an annual report to the Cafcass Board. The first progress report will be presented alongside our 2022/23 Annual Report and Accounts.

Who	Key Functions
Corporate Management Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act as role models for the rest of the organisation • Provide long term strategic direction • Ensure diversity remains a high priority • Report on the progress of their individual objectives • Ensure they are up to date with policy and strategy
Practice, Corporate and Business Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure their behaviour promotes a welcoming and supportive environment for all stakeholders: Children and families, colleagues and representatives of partner agencies • Ensure their behaviour reflects organisational values
Equality Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chaired by the Strategic Lead for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion • Responsible for oversight and governance • Ensure Cafcass meets its statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in the Equality Act 2010

- Report to People Committee on People issues, Performance and Quality Committee on data issues
- Report to the Board via Corporate Management Team for overall accountability
- The senior officer for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion will provide day to day coordination of actions supporting implementation of actions supporting implementation of our strategy and statutory obligations