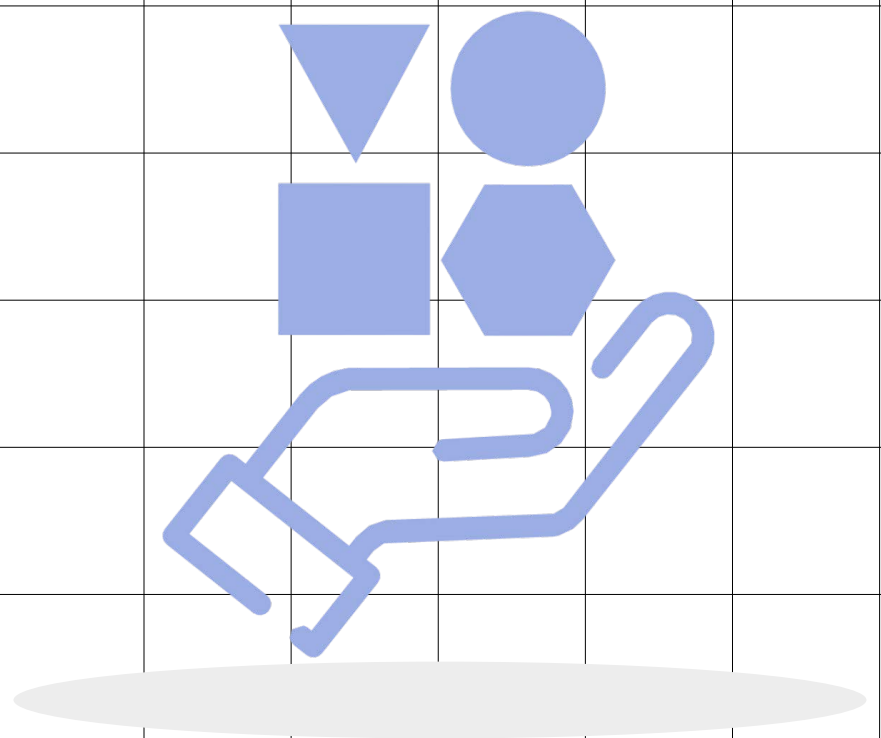


2025
UPDATED
EDITION



GCC Registrant Toolkit
**Equality, Diversity
and Inclusion**
Professionalism in chiropractic

Toolkit



What is Equality, Diversity and Inclusion?

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are at the core of providing affirming, equitable healthcare, ensuring all patients receive fair treatment and opportunity. As primary healthcare providers, chiropractors have a critical role in reducing inequalities, particularly health inequalities, and enhancing inclusion and cohesion within our communities. In the UK, people continue to face widespread health inequalities based on four types of factors:

1. Socioeconomic factors, eg. income;
2. Geographical factors, eg. those living in rural or urban areas;
3. Specific characteristics, including those protected in law, eg. sex and sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender reassignment or disability;
4. Social exclusion factors such as the travelling community or people experiencing homelessness.

As a chiropractor registered with the General Chiropractic Council (GCC), you will already be conscious of the key human rights principles of fairness, respect, equality, dignity and autonomy that are at the heart of providing good healthcare. Discrimination is associated with psychological distress, a greater likelihood of longstanding illness, and even reduced life expectancy. As such, being aware of the impact of EDI on your patients' outcomes from care and the anticipated care chiropractors would provide in light of these clinical considerations is vital. Much of the literature that informs treatment plans and evidence bases were developed on designs and sampling strategies that has traditionally yielded predominantly white, male, well-educated samples. As such, being conscious that the needs and perspectives of marginalised groups may be consistently overlooked in many areas of healthcare and avoiding perpetuating these knowledge gaps is important for all healthcare providers.

With broader awareness and discussion about EDI, a debate has emerged, raising social justice issues and attempting to downplay the importance of EDI as political 'wokeness'.

While this social justice element should not be ignored or overlooked, it is a fact that health inequalities exist and impact health outcomes. Regardless of personal beliefs, theory or philosophy, as a GCC registrant, you should be conscious of your responsibility to ensure that your comments and behaviour regarding healthcare issues remain GCC Code-compliant. Expressing controversial or discriminatory views, even through your own personal channels, can potentially damage the trust and confidence of the chiropractic profession with patients, the public, NHS, other medical professions and the government.

The purpose of this GCC EDI toolkit is to raise awareness of best practice and support chiropractors to meet the requirements in law so that any person who has contact with a registrant of the UK chiropractic profession will be treated fairly, with respect, and without discrimination. Its aim will be to ensure that chiropractors feel empowered to foster positive change, provide inclusive and affirming care, and avoid Fitness to Practise complaints.

This toolkit is not designed to be a 'how-to' guide, nor to encourage EDI to be viewed as a tick-box exercise, but rather to support embedding EDI as part of a cultural approach that is an active and ongoing process.



**Diversity is being invited to the party.
Inclusion is being asked to dance.**

Verna Myers

Defining EDI

“Diversity is a fact, but inclusion is a choice we make every day. As leaders, we have to put out the message that we embrace and not just tolerate diversity.”

Nellie Borrero

**Managing Director, Senior Strategic Advisor
– Global Inclusion & Diversity at Accenture**

Although EDI has some universal norms, its definition varies depending on national and cultural beliefs and values. However, a simple explanation of EDI as it applies to this toolkit is:

Equality

At its core, equality means fairness: ensuring that individuals, or groups of individuals, are not treated less favourably because of their protected characteristics. Equality relates to the legal obligations in which organisations must not unlawfully discriminate.



Equality does not mean treating everyone ‘the same’ but recognising that everyone is an individual with different needs that need meeting.

Diversity

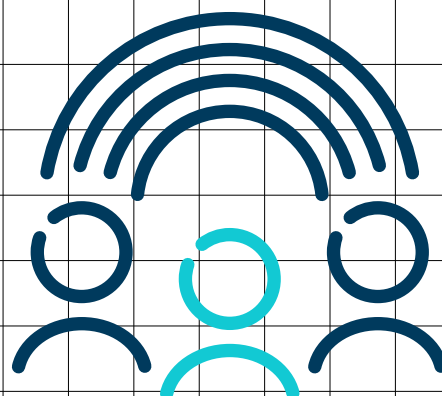
Diversity is about recognising and celebrating visible and non-visible differences. It acknowledges the benefits of having a range of perspectives in an organisation’s operations and decision-making and taking steps to aid and encourage that diversity.

Inclusion

Inclusion is where people’s differences are valued and used to enable everyone to thrive in that organisation. An inclusive organisation is one in which everyone feels they belong without conforming. Everyone’s contribution matters, and they have the opportunity to perform to their full potential, no matter their characteristics, background, identity, or circumstances.

The overarching premise of EDI is to create environments where individuals do not simply receive the same treatment but receive treatment that meets their individual needs. From a healthcare perspective, providing equitable care does not mean providing the same great care for all. It means providing bespoke care for individuals based on their own health needs. It is being aware of these needs, recognising what they are and how chiropractors might strive to meet them.

When presented with a patient with specific health needs, it’s your responsibility to ensure you feel confident and capable of addressing these specific concerns and, ideally, be able to signpost for further support should this be required.



The GCC Code of Professional Practice and EDI

A&C

A: You must put the interests of patients first and **C:** You must act with honesty and integrity, and maintain the highest standards of professional and personal conduct. A chiropractor is expected to treat everyone fairly, promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, and to take an active role in tackling inequality and discrimination.

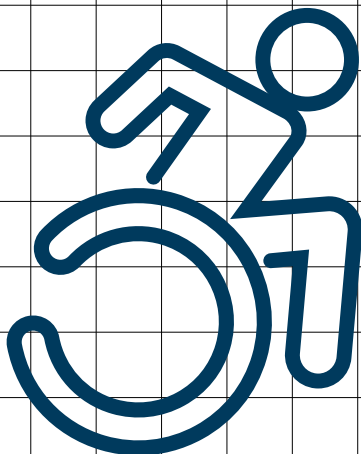
Standards in the Code of Professional Practice that reinforce and link to the above:

A5 treat the patient fairly and without discrimination, interacting in a way that respects their choices, diversity and culture.

C12 ensure your personal biases, values and beliefs do not prejudice the care that you provide to the patient, your personal interactions, or your professional reputation.

C13 promote equality, diversity and inclusion, challenge discrimination and seek to tackle inequalities. You must raise concerns about colleagues if you believe they are treating people unfairly, have discriminated against someone or if their personal biases have prejudiced the care they provide. For registrants to comply with these principles, they must recognise the importance of embedding principles of equality, diversity and inclusion into their practices.

EDI is often seen as a problem, not a solution, and yet there are numerous reasons why chiropractors should consider EDI to be of core importance in their clinics.



‘Dignity is concerned with how people feel, think and behave in relation to the worth of value of themselves and others. To treat someone with dignity is to treat them as a being of worth, in a way that is respectful of them as valued individuals.’

(Royal College of Nursing, 2008)

The UK legal landscape

Human Rights

Human rights should form an integral part of your business, as the Human Rights Act 1998 gives all people in the UK the right to be treated with dignity, respect and fairness. The United Nations Guiding Principles for business and human rights make it clear that all businesses, regardless of size, sector, location, ownership and structure, should respect human rights.

The Equality Act

The 2010 Equality Act requires us all to have due regard for advancing equality and specifically covers nine protected characteristics. Importantly, it states that complying with the duties set out by the Act may involve treating some people more favourably than others, provided there is a good enough reason for doing so.

Protected Characteristics Under the Equality Act:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

For a regulated profession such as chiropractic, compliance with the Human Rights Act and the Equality Act is paramount in maintaining public trust and confidence in the profession.

Provision of reasonable adjustments

As a requirement of the Equality Act 2010, chiropractors must ensure that reasonable adjustments are made as part of access to services. These specifically relate to impairments, but whether or not someone self-identifies as having a disability or impairment, they are still entitled to these protections if they have a:

- Physical impairment
- Sensory impairment (eg. visual, hearing)
- Long-term mental health condition
- Long-term health conditions (including dementia)
- Learning disability

Examples of reasonable adjustments could include:

- Making sure there is wheelchair access or an alternative arrangement in place.
- Providing easy-read patient communications.
- Providing longer appointments if someone needs more time to understand the information they are given.

TOP TIP:

You could consider including a section on your intake forms that asks if a patient requires any reasonable adjustments to be made for their appointment.

How EDI impacts chiropractors

Ethical impact

Providing care that pays attention to equality, diversity, inclusion and associated human rights will improve outcomes for those seeing chiropractors.

EDI is one of the founding principles of the NHS, highlighting its importance for all healthcare providers.

To provide person-centred care is to provide equitable care, ensuring individual needs are met based on people's equality characteristics such as disability, language, religion, sexual orientation and culture.

Business impact

Many patients who belong to groups that face health inequalities will look for visual signposting within a clinic to determine if it is a safe space for them to receive care. A lack of signposting may mean these patients do not attend your clinic. Developing your awareness and understanding of EDI will ensure your clinic is equipped to provide equitable care to every patient who enters your practice and may mean your patient base expands and diversifies as a result of this public commitment.

Clinical impact

Research shows that patients who do not feel heard or understood do not share important clinical information. Numerous studies have linked empathy with patient outcomes, indicating that the more empathic practitioners are towards their patients, the better their satisfaction with care and resulting clinical outcomes.

It is difficult for patients to feel included and empathised with if an environment is not inclusive or, worse, is stigmatising. Adopting principles of equality, diversity and inclusion within healthcare clinics can ensure chiropractors provide patient-centred care and create a respectful and affirming environment for all patients.

Did you know:

Two of the most common barriers that prevent LGBTQ+ people from seeking care are poor experiences with healthcare providers, and lack of knowledge or experience in providing care to LGBTQ+ people.

These barriers can be overcome through providing affirming, equitable care and ensuring you have developed skills and understanding to provide specific care.

EDI in practice: clinical case studies

Case study: Patient with a disability

Debbie is a wheelchair user who seeks to book an appointment at your clinic. She states that she uses a wheelchair and is booked in for a standard new patient consultation. Debbie takes longer to change and access the treatment room, and as such, the chiropractor does not complete all of the usual examinations and has to ask Debbie to return for another appointment, which delays Debbie from receiving care and disadvantages her.

Suggested remedy: You may wish to provide wheelchair users and people with disabilities more time in your consultations. This would be considered a reasonable adjustment as they may take longer to change their clothes for the appointment or access the treatment room. This positive action ensures they receive the same care as everyone else.

Case study: Patient with an intellectual disability

Emily is a young woman with a learning disability who seeks care at a local chiropractic clinic for debilitating headaches. While providing a report of findings, the chiropractor uses idioms to discuss Emily's pain, saying "I can tell you're struggling with this blinding headache." When Emily gets home that evening, she tells her mother that she has been told her headaches are going to cause blindness.

Suggested remedy: Chiropractors often use metaphorical language to improve the impact of some of our communication. For people with learning disabilities, this can be non-inclusive as they may interpret our words literally. Consider using clean language examples and avoiding too many metaphors or idioms.

Case study: A patient who is transgender

Ryan attends a chiropractic clinic and, while completing his intake forms, is asked to tick a box to mark whether he is male or female, with no opportunity to provide details on gender identity. He notices a section that says "Women only: What was the date of your last menstrual period? Is there a chance you could be pregnant?" Due to the non-inclusive language on the intake forms, Ryan feels afraid to disclose that he is transgender and is experiencing lower abdominal pain. As such, he leaves these sections blank. The chiropractor is, therefore, unaware that crucial questions should be asked surrounding menstruation, pregnancy status, cervical screening history and similar, and cannot eliminate gender-specific diagnostic differentials.

Suggested remedy: Review your intake forms for inclusive language. Ensure your forms do not have sections that state "Men only/women only" or similar. Free text boxes can be helpful for people to self-describe gender identity.

Tips for EDI best practice

- 1** Take the time to review your marketing materials, website and other clinic documents to see if there are modifications to be made to elements such as the language, formatting and imagery. These can be a simple first place to start embedding more inclusivity in your practice.
- 2** Who is not seeking care with you? Suppose you see a disproportionately low amount of, for example, female patients. In that case, it can be helpful to conduct an audit to identify any reasons for this or ask for feedback on how you could improve the care you provide to these groups.
- 3** Clean communication: For patients with learning disabilities or those for whom English is not their first language, communicating through metaphors and similes can be confusing. Developing your knowledge of clean language can help support these patients.
- 4** Consider signing up for schemes such as Dementia Friends or Purple Tuesday, which can help you review your clinic space and make positive changes to create more inclusive spaces for your patients.
- 5** If you work in an area with a large population of non-native English speakers, consider whether your clinic information could be more inclusive, perhaps providing it in a choice of languages.
- 6** Consider utilising visual signposting. For example, using pronouns on name badges and websites can help indicate to the LGBTQ+ community that you are an inclusive business.
- 7** It is not uncommon to see businesses boost their marketing on important cultural calendar dates, such as Black History Month or Pride Month. Chiropractors must recognise that EDI is not a tick-box exercise but something deeply embedded within the culture of all clinics. Consider how you can ensure you are 'inclusive' all year round, perhaps by supporting community groups.
- 8** Flexibility within your appointment structures can help accommodate patients with specific requirements and ensure reasonable adjustments can be made.
- 9** Focus groups with your patients can be a helpful way to gain feedback from underrepresented groups and further your understanding of their specific health needs.
- 10** Developing and implementing a robust, public-facing EDI policy can help embed EDI within your clinic and ensure all those connected to your practice (such as associates, front-of-house, stakeholders and suppliers) also comply with your requirements and embrace the key principles of EDI.



How would you rate this document?



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