EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Reviewed: February 2026

Next review: February 2027

Reviewed by: Laurence Clark

Responsible Officer: CEO

Author: Vicki Hornby

Approved by: CEO

Any queries please contact: info@pathwaysassociates.co.uk

1. Introduction

Pathways Associates CIC is dedicated to supporting disabled people to live the lives they choose as equals in their local communities. Our commitment to equality and diversity is rooted in our vision, mission, and values, and it underpins every aspect of our work. This policy outlines our approach to promoting equality and diversity for all individuals, ensuring compliance with legal frameworks and embracing an intersectional approach that recognises the multiple and overlapping forms of discrimination people may face.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all activities undertaken by Pathways Associates CIC and encompasses our Experts by Experience, partners, colleagues, and members of the public. It includes recruitment and retention of staff and associates, as well as our interactions with stakeholders and the wider community.

3. Vision, Mission, and Values Alignment

Vision: Disabled people live the lives they choose as equals in their local communities.

Mission: We support the inclusion of disabled people in community life through partnerships with disabled people, families, and organisations.

Values:

- We are led by the experiences and expertise of disabled people and families.
- We are committed to working in partnership with organizations and communities.
- We respect and nurture the diversity in our team and communities.
- We innovate in search of solutions to break down barriers faced by disabled people.
- We show integrity in all our dealings with our team, our partners, and our communities.

4. Legal Framework

Pathways Associates CIC is committed to adhering to all relevant equality and diversity legislation, including but not limited to:

- The **Equality Act 2010** (which prohibits discrimination, harassment, and victimisation on the grounds of the nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation)
- The **Human Rights Act 1998**

We will promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

5. Key Principles

- **Inclusion:** Ensure that all individuals, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic, have equal access to our services and opportunities.
- **Respect:** Foster a culture of respect and dignity for all individuals, valuing their unique contributions and perspectives.
- **Collaboration:** Work in partnership with diverse stakeholders to promote equality and diversity.
- **Accountability:** Maintain transparency and accountability in our processes, regularly evaluating and reporting on our progress.
- **Intersectionality:** Recognise and address the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as age, disability, race, gender, sex, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, and socioeconomic status in our approach to equality and diversity.

6. Our Greatest Asset

At Pathways Associates CIC, we recognise that our greatest asset is the people within our organisation and networks. The diversity of skills, knowledge, and experience—including across all protected characteristics—that our team, Experts by Experience, and partners bring

enables us to uniquely build improved outcomes in communities. By valuing and leveraging this diversity, we create innovative solutions that break down barriers and promote inclusion.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Management Team:** Lead and support equality and diversity initiatives, ensuring resources and training are available to staff and stakeholders to address all protected characteristics.
- **Staff and Volunteers:** Actively participate in promoting equality and diversity across all protected characteristics, providing feedback and suggestions for improvement.
- **Experts by Experience:** Share their lived experiences and insights (including those intersecting with any protected characteristics), contributing to the development and implementation of inclusive policies and practices.
- **Partners and Stakeholders:** Collaborate with Pathways Associates CIC in promoting equality and diversity across all protected characteristics, contributing their expertise and resources.

8. Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment:

- Implement fair and inclusive recruitment practices that attract a diverse pool of candidates reflecting the full range of protected characteristics.
- Ensure job descriptions, person specifications, and selection processes are free from bias and reflect the skills and competencies required.
- Use diverse recruitment channels to reach underrepresented groups, including those sharing protected characteristics such as disability, race, age, sex, and sexual orientation.

Retention:

- Provide ongoing training and development opportunities to support the growth and advancement of all staff and associates.
- Foster an inclusive and supportive working environment where all individuals, regardless of protected characteristics, feel valued and respected.

- Implement policies and practices that support work-life balance, accommodate individual needs (including reasonable adjustments for disability, support during pregnancy/maternity, and considerations for gender reassignment or other protected characteristics), and prevent discrimination.

9. Working with Experts by Experience in Co-Production Networks

- **Inclusion:** Ensure that Experts by Experience, including individuals with learning disabilities, autistic people, and their families—and those with any other protected characteristics—are actively involved in all stages of co-production.
- **Empowerment:** Empower Experts by Experience to contribute their expertise and experiences, recognising their unique insights as invaluable assets to our work.
- **Collaboration:** Foster strong partnerships with Experts by Experience to co-produce effective and inclusive solutions.
- **Support:** Provide necessary support, reasonable adjustments, and accommodations to enable meaningful participation of Experts by Experience in our activities.
- **Recognition:** Acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of Experts by Experience, ensuring they feel valued and respected within our co-production networks.

10. Equality and Diversity Processes

- **Assessment and Evaluation:** Regularly assess and evaluate our services, policies, and practices (including through equality impact assessments) to identify and address potential disadvantages or discrimination related to any protected characteristic.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Implement mechanisms to gather feedback from stakeholders, including Experts by Experience, partners, colleagues, and members of the public, on experiences related to equality and diversity.
- **Action Plans:** Develop and implement action plans to address identified areas for improvement, with clear timelines and responsibilities.
- **Monitoring and Reporting:** Monitor the implementation of action plans and report on progress to stakeholders, including data where

appropriate on representation and outcomes across protected characteristics.

11. Training and Development

Provide ongoing training and development opportunities for staff, volunteers, and stakeholders to enhance their skills and knowledge in quality and diversity, including understanding all protected characteristics, unconscious bias, intersectionality, and inclusive practices. Encourage a culture of continuous learning and improvement, promoting best practices in equality and diversity.

12. Review and Revision

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant and effective. Revisions will be made as necessary, based on feedback, evaluations, changes in legislation, and developments in the external environment.

13. Conclusion

Pathways Associates CIC is dedicated to promoting equality and diversity in all aspects of our work, with a particular focus on enabling disabled people to live as equals while upholding protections for everyone across all protected characteristics. By adhering to this Equality and Diversity Policy, we will ensure that our services and activities are inclusive, respectful, and effective, reflecting the values and insights of our diverse community.