

# Psychological Professions Network

## Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Position Statement and Call to Action

### Summary

In February 2022 an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) working group was formed with membership from across all 7 Psychological Professions Network (PPN) regions. The group consisted of staff in a number of roles including assistant psychologists, graduate research assistants, programme managers and chairs with an interest in promoting and progressing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Initially the group came together to network and share information and resources and its activity then extended to consulting with the wider PPN teams to inform the development of an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion position statement. The group reviewed several psychological professional bodies' EDI position statements to inform this process. A draft was shared for consultation with a range of stakeholders including the PPN regional teams, Experts by Experience (EbEs), a third sector organisation and an EDI lead on a psychological professions training programme. It was discussed at a PPN development meeting and a chairs and programme managers' meeting to gather feedback and amendments made. The paper was taken to the national Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP) in May 2023 for feedback on content and accessibility and returned to the PPNs development meeting in June 2023. Progress and LEAP feedback was shared, and it was agreed that a final version would be published on the PPN website and disseminated through regional workforce councils and steering groups. The position statement represents the PPN's values, stance and commitment to progressing and meaningfully implementing EDI for the communities we serve. It will inform EDI activity in the national and regional PPN workplans and actively support the implementation of the national Psychological Professions Vision and Workforce Plans.

### Context

The cumulative influence of direct and indirect discrimination, marginalisation and othering has profound consequences for the mental health and wellbeing of minoritised<sup>1</sup> communities and

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<sup>1</sup> provides a social constructionist approach to understanding that people are actively minoritised by others rather than naturally existing as a minority (Yasmin Gunaratnum, 2003)

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this may contribute to other inter-sectional life contexts and events, compounding the impact of psychological trauma. The specific needs of minoritised communities have historically been poorly understood, under-researched and under-theorised. This has resulted in guidance and strategies that often do not reflect the specific needs of these populations.

As the Psychological professions serve diverse communities, the PPN's commitment and work to embed EDI initiatives is anchored in the duties set out in the Equality Act (2010). Research<sup>2</sup> and feedback from those accessing or attempting to access services has shown that there are a number of barriers to access for some people who have characteristics identified within the Equality Act that led to further exclusion and poorer experiences and outcomes. Indeed, in some cases not being able to access meaningful psychological and physical health care services at all. The PPN stands against marginalising practices and oppression in all forms including racism of all kinds, misogyny, homophobia, ageism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, ableism and transphobia. There is propensity in all of us to hold prejudice and we make a commitment to working to challenge it everywhere we find it, including in ourselves.

It is noted that that careful consideration must be given to how discriminatory discourses within the training and practice of the Psychological Professions can be identified and challenged. Awareness raising and thoughtful dialogue requires space, and this responsibility should not lie solely with those in marginalised and minoritised communities. Developing an understanding of true 'allyship' will be key to ensuring that improving equity is core NHS business, and everyone's responsibility. It is likely that discomfort and anxiety will be an inherent and understandable part of this important process – and the need for brave spaces in which people feel safe enough to sit with and work through discomfort is a key requirement.

## Stance

The PPN is committed to holding equity and social justice centre-stage in our thinking in order that these principles guide our relationships with our members, service users and carers, the public, commissioners, professional bodies and policy makers.

Many colleagues work to support others in psychological distress whilst carrying their own pain from their lived experience of discrimination and marginalisation. Training providers, supervisors and services have struggled to provide minoritised trainee and qualified practitioners with the support they need to thrive in inequitable and sometimes hostile working environments, and there is a need to listen to the voices of those who have direct experience of this. The PPN

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/what-are-health-inequalities>  
White Paper: Levelling Up (2022) Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

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supports action to change and improve conditions for trainees and qualified psychological professionals through the provision of meaningful support and reflective spaces.

Positive efforts are being made to widen the diversity of the psychological professions workforce for aspiring professionals from minoritised backgrounds via a range of initiatives. It is important to also consider the needs of qualified professionals from diverse backgrounds. This includes supervision being a truly safe space to explore the impact of the work from: a cultural/diversity perspective, through the lens of past harm, considering cultural humility, and through education provision, within the framework of a trauma-informed approach. Like all skills sets, cultural competency skills require training and development, reflective practice, support, resources and strategic planning in order to be maximally effective and drive system-wide change. This will require support and funding to be effective. The PPN aims to support its members to expect and contribute to this change.

The PPN stands with colleagues in psychological professional bodies in our belief that we must ensure all practitioners have the competence to meet with all clients and service users, carers and families at any and all stages of their personal journey, and to find support from us in so doing, with awareness of the discrimination and bias that can complicate and impede the ability to thrive. The PPN recognises its responsibility under the Equality Act (2010) to uphold the interests and needs of all those with protected characteristics.

Taking a passive stance against inequality and oppression does not result in lasting eradication of harmful differences in opportunity.

## Commitments

The PPN commits to supporting programmes of work to embed the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion in our policies, practices and actions and enhance the equality of opportunity in our activities, underpinning all areas of the professions. The PPN will measure, assess and reflect on our progress regularly and with transparency. The PPN will update members and the public on its progress to ensure equity for all and seek out up-to-date advice and guidance from those who have first-hand experience to share.

The PPN has some specific goals in relation to equity, diversity, and inclusion:

- To consider the impact of difference, oppression, trauma, power and power imbalances which disproportionately impact minoritised groups in all areas of activity
- To ensure involvement from those who struggle to have their voices heard because of discrimination and oppression including service users, carers, trainees, qualified clinicians and aspiring professionals.

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- To recognise the harmful impact that has arisen from psychological professions being involved in processes which have contributed to minoritised and marginalised groups being pathologised<sup>3</sup> and make concerted efforts to listen deeply and repair trust.
- We recognise that service users and carers from minoritised communities and those who need services and are unable to access them can offer us invaluable insights into how psychological professionals and services could be improved.
- When thinking about widening access to minoritised groups, we acknowledge the importance of listening to the voice of minoritised professionals who are already working in the NHS and could help us to link in with staff forums and share their perspectives.
- To promote the monitoring across health care systems of the demographics of people accessing services, current staff and new entrants into the psychological professions.
- To acknowledge that the barriers that some groups face to accessing services means they are less well represented in services and less able to offer constructive feedback due to experiences of historical and current marginalisation.
- To ensure all PPN projects involving professionals, EbEs and other stakeholders consider whether they are truly representative in terms of whom they involve and the expertise that they bring.
- We will ask questions to guide our activity such as: Who is not in the room? Who are we excluding? How could we be more inclusive? What is our work doing to dismantle oppression; could it be reinforcing of it? What action can we take in the direction of inclusivity and belonging?

### Learning opportunities and good practice

The PPNs aspire and work towards a better knowledge of, and relationships with NHS and community groups that reflect our diverse population. It is recognised that many minoritised and marginalised groups, who have been discriminated against, might not approach NHS commissioned services due to lack of trust and poor experiences. The PPN therefore seeks partnership with third sector, voluntary and community organisations who have developed trusted relationships with under-served communities and work with these populations effectively. The aim is that liaising and collaborating with third sector organisations may provide

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<sup>3</sup> Communities have been pathologized by exclusionary and discriminatory harmful practices including the LGBTQ+ communities, racialised minorities, those with disabilities and older people.

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opportunities to learn and to engage with under-served populations and to create opportunities to ensure that all voices are heard.

**PPN EDI Group (Version 1.0, October 2023)**