

## **Equality, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy**

### **Our promise**

In carrying out our functions as a statutory organisation we will ensure that the values of equality, diversity, equity, and inclusion are embedded into everything we do. We are committed to creating the right culture, skills, and priorities to ensure that no individual is discriminated against in the planning and delivery of any of our activities.

Our Vision: Bristol, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire is a place where people's experiences help to improve health and care.

Our mission: By offering all people of Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire a strong voice we will improve the quality of health and social care.

Healthwatch BNSSG's recruitment, selection, and support practices, our communication and engagement processes ensure equal access and the promotion of equality of opportunity. This policy clarifies our commitment and practice around eliminating discrimination and encouraging and valuing diversity among staff, volunteers, trustees, associates, collaborating partners, members of the public and all other stakeholders.

### **Our responsibilities**

We recognise our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 to tackle harassment, victimisation and discrimination and are committed to meeting them in full. We believe that a culture that embraces equality and values diversity will ensure that everyone feels involved and included in our plans, programmes, and activities.

We uphold the fundamental human rights of people in the UK embodied in the 1998 Human Rights Act, especially Article 14, the right to be protected from discrimination. Employees are protected by law around their terms and conditions, minimum wage, holidays, payslips, protection from whistleblowing, and discrimination due to part-time working or any other reason. Our Staff Handbook sets out agreements around sick pay, parental leave, bereavement, grievance, performance, maternity, paternity, and adoption pay.

We aim to create an environment which respects and welcomes everyone, and in which processes are in place to address bullying, harassment, and disrespectful or

discriminatory behaviour in all its direct and indirect forms. (see appendix) This particularly applies to those with 'protected characteristics' ; age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion, or belief (including lack of religion), sex and sexual orientation. (see appendix for more detail).

We also acknowledge that equality, diversity, equity, and inclusion is much bigger than this and we recognise that people face discrimination, marginalisation, and reduced opportunities due to other factors e.g. homelessness, poverty, cost of living rises and social background. Equity aims to reduce health inequalities by promoting access for a range of vulnerable groups in the population to services by prioritising available resource.

All staff, volunteers, Trustees, and partners ensure that their own language and actions are consistent with the spirit and the contents of this policy.

Overall responsibility for the implementation of this this policy lies with the Healthwatch Chief officer and Board of Trustees.

## **Our commitments**

Healthwatch BNSSG as an organisation has embraced a set of values.

- Being inclusive
- Being transparent
- Being non-judgemental
- Being independent
- Working in co-production
- Following the Nolan Principles of public life
- Continually improving
- Having integrity

Equality, Diversity, Equity and Discrimination awareness is mandatory training for all staff and volunteers. Our Trustees adhere to Healthwatch England's Code of Conduct and populate a Quality Framework document on 'Leadership' 'People' 'Engagement, Involvement & Reach' and 'Collaboration' which reflect our commitment to Equality Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion across our organisation. We invest in continual improvement through training, and co-production.

## **Putting our policy into practice**

We will ensure that all our volunteers, staff members, trustees, associates or sessional workers, collaboration partners, members of the public and contributors are aware

of the inclusive values of the organisation. This is part of our communication strategy and engagement strategy, <https://www.healthwatchbristol.co.uk/report/2023-12-21/healthwatch-bnssgs-engagement-strategy-2023-2028>

It is included in our staff handbook and is provided to our volunteers as part of the induction process. Staff and volunteers are actively consulted and involved in policy development.

Our Board of Trustees has an elected EDEI Champion who links into Healthwatch England's objectives in their EDI Roadmap via a Peer support network, as does a staff member. We are part of the Diverse Research Engagement Network Development of the ICB.

## **Recruitment**

We have a transparent and fair recruitment practice that seeks a diverse staff, Board, and volunteering team. Under-represented groups are encouraged to apply by recruitment emphasis on seldom heard communities through outreach via social media, websites, & voluntary sector networks. Monitoring protected characteristics of applicants for roles in the organisation is used to understand how to improve our recruitment processes.

Recruitment of staff uses a blind selection process to ensure there is no unconscious bias. We enquire into the needs of our candidates for the interview process and provide reasonable adjustments. We adhere to the accessible information standard.

Board of Trustee and volunteer role descriptions are available in printed form. Role descriptions are regularly reviewed. We endeavor to recruit Board of Trustees, staff, volunteers from diverse backgrounds through a range of newsletters, media outlets and targeted geographical advertising, sharing on social media with organisations or groups and via public engagement with diverse communities.

Annually we collate responses to an anonymous internal survey to understand how our staff team, volunteer team and Board are representative of our communities. This information is assessed to inform future recruitment and give us a clear picture of representation.

Prospective volunteers are invited to take part in an informal interview to share their aspirations and experiences. This is not a competitive process. It ascertains whether a person is suitable for the role and whether Healthwatch is the right fit for them. During this conversation we discuss whether the volunteer has needs, adaptations or support they'd need to carry out their role, as well as any personal interests or knowledge.

## **Induction and training**

Staff and volunteers receive an introduction to equality, diversity, equity, and inclusion as part of their induction. This is an opportunity for volunteers and staff to discuss aspects of EDEI and how the values of Healthwatch BNSSG relate to this.

We encourage Healthwatch staff, volunteers to have open conversations about equality, diversity, equity, and inclusion and raise awareness of this in meetings and communications. All staff and volunteers are encouraged to develop and progress. We work actively to identify barriers faced by specific groups or individuals via informal chats, 1:1 Annual reviews, use of Development Plans, and internal training such as at Volunteer Connect meetings or other events, or through our annual volunteer survey. We take action to address any issues.

We endeavour to provide development opportunities for networking including through the Healthwatch England Black Staff Network. We encourage mentoring so that volunteers can support one another.

In 2023 our Investors-In-Volunteers accreditation was coproduced and awarded. The tendering process was informed by our EDEI culture and volunteers, staff and Trustees were all involved.

## **Support**

We are committed to building a diverse organisation that is responsive to the needs of all members of our local community and hears from them regularly.

We collaborate with people to understand and remove barriers to volunteering by reviewing our volunteering involvement practices ensuring people from all sections of the community can volunteer. Our staff handbook outlines our zero tolerance towards any acts of discrimination or harassment by or against Board of Trustees, staff or volunteers, or any other stakeholders including the public. Our Complaints Policy aims to resolve disagreement and conflict informally where possible everywhere.

## **Communicating**

We commit to using accessible venues for events and meetings and offering where possible alternative means of communication e.g. by post, phone, face-to-face and online meetings, materials are translated into languages other than English, in large type, with the benefit of a sign language interpreter, or other interpreter, or in EasyRead. We endeavour to record online meetings where possible and email a summary of what has been discussed.

We commit to using plain English tools, explaining acronyms, and offering accessible forms of communication in our emails, letters, reports, surveys, and publicity materials as it is within our means to do so.

## Engagement and working with partners.

Our desktop research helps to focus our engagement and equalities projects and Equality Impact Assessments and Theory of Change tools focus us on working towards outcomes for those who experience health inequalities. We identify relevant equalities groups and support them to be involved in change to services.

It is important to us that we work with partners and use stakeholder mapping. Our principles of coproduction and equality, diversity, equity, and inclusion policy are part of this agreement.

## Impact review

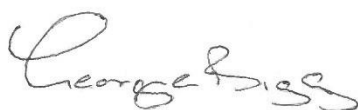
We will monitor the impact of our equality, diversity, equity and inclusion policy and its practical outcomes by;

- Undertaking monitoring of the equality profile of our engagement contacts, especially those with lived experience.
- Addressing this in our Annual Reports, Annual Volunteer Survey and 1:1 reviews.
- Reviewing recruitment – looking at who joined Healthwatch as a staff member, associate or sessional worker, or volunteer and where they found out about Healthwatch BNSSG
- Undertaking monitoring of the equality profile of the groups and individuals who have engaged with us, or we have engaged with.
- Reporting of any examples of good or bad EDEI practice and their outcomes. Reviewing our complaints processes if issues occur.

## Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed on a 2 yearly basis by the Healthwatch BNSSG Board of Trustees.

Date Approved: Feb 2024



Signed.....  
(Chair of the Healthwatch Board of Directors)

| Date of previous Review: | Actual review               | Next review | Notes |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|-------|
| April 2022               | 12 <sup>th</sup> March 2024 | March 2026  |       |

I have read, and understand this Policy, and will adhere to its terms and conditions.

Signed by Healthwatch staff member or volunteer.....

Print

Name.....

Date.....

## **Appendix 1:**

### **Definitions of Protected Characteristics - Equality Act 2010**

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/4>

## **Age**

Where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32-year-olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18 - 30-year-olds).

## **Disability**

A person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

## **Gender reassignment**

The process of transitioning from one gender to another. This may be attributed to someone proposing to undergo, undergoing, or has undergone a process.

## **Marriage and civil partnership**

A person is legally married if the union is recognised as a marriage under UK law. Same-sex couples can have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must be treated the same as married couples on a wide range of legal matters.

## **Pregnancy and maternity**

Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

## **Race**

Refers to the protected characteristic of Race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

## **Religion and belief**

Religion has the meaning usually given to it, but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

## **Sex**

A man or a woman.

## **Sexual Orientation**

Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex, both sexes, no sexes.

You are also protected if you are discriminated against because you are perceived to have, or are associated with someone who has, a protected characteristic, for example, protecting carers from discrimination. The Equality Act will protect people

who are, for example, caring for a disabled child or relative. They will be protected by virtue of their association to that person.

### The Equality and Human Rights Act 1998

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/human-rights/human-rights-act>

The Human Rights Act 1998 sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone in the UK is entitled to. It incorporates the rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into domestic British law. The Human Rights Act came into force in the UK in October 2000.

The Act sets out human rights in a series of 'Articles'. Each Article deals with a different right. These are all taken from the ECHR and are commonly known as 'the Convention Rights'. Article 14 is the right to protection from discrimination.

- [Article 2: Right to life](#)
- [Article 3: Freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment](#)
- [Article 4: Freedom from slavery and forced labour](#)
- [Article 5: Right to liberty and security](#)
- [Article 6: Right to a fair trial](#)
- [Article 7: No punishment without law](#)
- [Article 8: Respect for your private and family life, home, and correspondence](#)
- [Article 9: Freedom of thought, belief, and religion](#)
- [Article 10: Freedom of expression](#)
- [Article 11: Freedom of assembly and association](#)
- [Article 12: Right to marry and start a family](#)
- [Article 14: Protection from discrimination in respect of these rights and freedoms](#)
- [Protocol 1, Article 1: Right to peaceful enjoyment of your property](#)
- [Protocol 1, Article 2: Right to education](#)
- [Protocol 1, Article 3: Right to participate in free elections](#)
- [Protocol 13, Article 1: Abolition of the death penalty](#)

### Forms of discrimination and the law

<https://www.acas.org.uk/discrimination-and-the-law/direct-and-indirect-discrimination>

The Health and Race Observatory

<https://www.nhsrho.org/>

Employers Forum on Disability

<http://www.efd.org.uk/>

Age Positive

<http://www.agepositive.gov.uk/>

Employers Forum on Religion and Belief

<http://www.efbelief.org.uk/>



Stonewall – Campaign Group for the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community  
<http://www.stonewall.org.uk/>

Beaumont Trust – Registered Charity working for Transgender Equality  
<http://www.beaumont-trust.org.uk/>

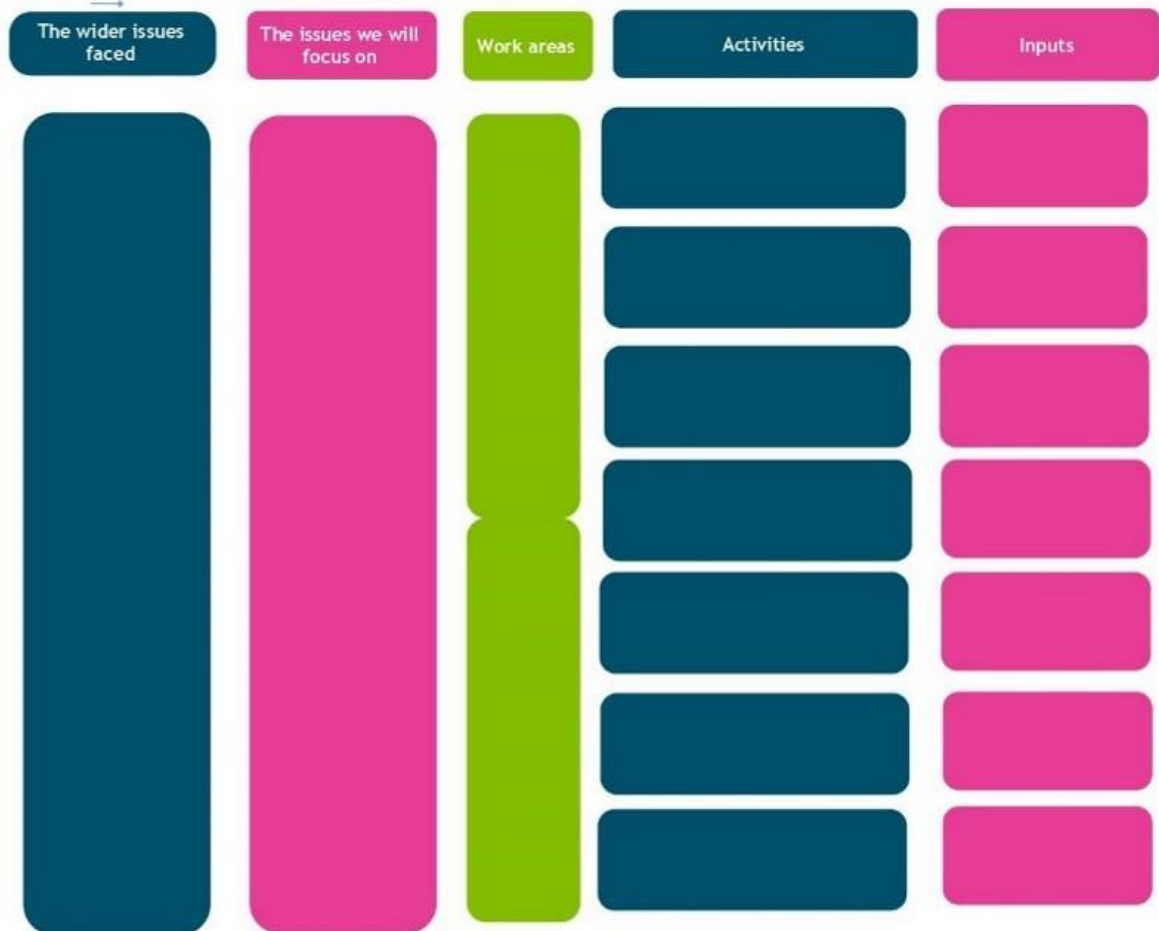
Gender Trust – Registered Charity working for those with gender identity issues.  
<http://www.gendertrust.org.uk/>

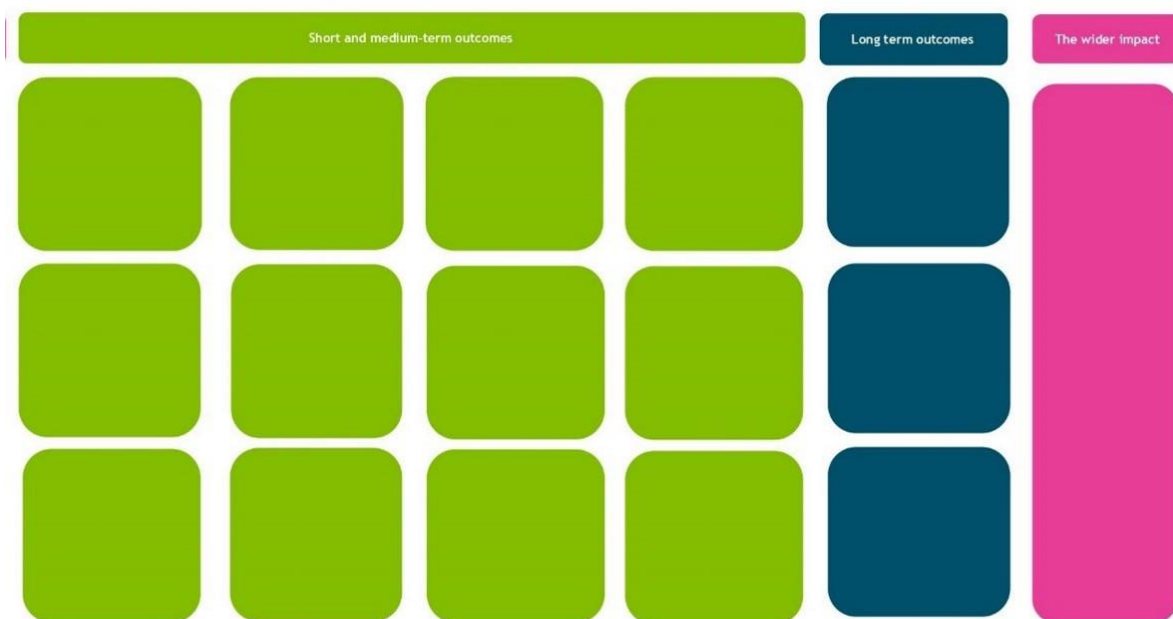
Fawcett Society – Working to eliminate discrimination between women and men.  
<http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/>

The Diversity Trust  
<https://www.diversitytrust.org.uk/>

## Appendix 2. Theory of Change:

Theory of Change template provided by Healthwatch Islington





[Appendix 3. Equality Impact Assessment template:](#)

**Equality Impact Assessment**

**Project Name:**

**Project Description:**

**Project Justification** *(with any details that relate to inequalities):*

|  |
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|  |

**Assessor:**

**Date of Assessment:**

Undertaking an equality impact assessment helps us understand how the project issue is experienced by different groups of people. Firstly, ensuring we give people who find it hardest to be heard an opportunity to influence the design and delivery of health and care services and secondly so we can ensure the recommendations made do not discriminate against anyone and focus on improving outcomes for those who have the biggest health need.

Please chose option **a** or **b** based on your project and the available data. For example, if your project is already clear it is looking at a specific group (i.e., young mothers from black and ethnic minorities) it might be hard to find exact data so option **a**

might be more suitable. If your project is covering the whole population then option **b** might be more suitable to ensure you are properly representing the population.

a. Specific Population

**Difference in experience or outcomes:** *is there any indication or evidence (locally or nationally) that different groups will have unique needs, experiences, issues, or priorities in relation to perinatal care?*

| Group                          | Indication or evidence of unique needs or experiences regarding this project? | Indication or evidence of different participation levels, satisfaction levels or outcomes in relation this project? |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Age                            |   |   |
| Disability                     |   |   |
| Gender reassignment            |   |   |
| Marriage and civil partnership |   |   |
| Pregnancy and maternity        |   |   |
| Race                           |   |   |
| Religion or belief             |   |   |
| Sex                            |   |   |
| Sexual orientation             |   |   |

b. General Population

A statistical breakdown of the protected characteristic populations in Bristol/North Somerset/South Gloucestershire.

| Characteristic            | Bristol Population 2021 | North Somerset Population 2021 | South Gloucestershire Population 2021 | Project Participants |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Female                    |                         |                                |                                       |                      |
| Male                      |                         |                                |                                       |                      |
| <b>Disability</b>         |                         |                                |                                       |                      |
| Disabled                  |                         |                                |                                       |                      |
| Non-disabled              |                         |                                |                                       |                      |
| <b>Sexual Orientation</b> |                         |                                |                                       |                      |
| Bisexual                  |                         |                                |                                       |                      |
| Gay Man                   |                         |                                |                                       |                      |
| Gay Woman/Lesbian         |                         |                                |                                       |                      |
| Heterosexual              |                         |                                |                                       |                      |
| Other                     |                         |                                |                                       |                      |
| <b>Age</b>                |                         |                                |                                       |                      |
| Under 45                  |                         |                                |                                       |                      |
| 46 to 64                  |                         |                                |                                       |                      |
| Over 65                   |                         |                                |                                       |                      |

|                    |  |  |  |  |
|--------------------|--|--|--|--|
| White British      |  |  |  |  |
| Ethnic Minority    |  |  |  |  |
|                    |  |  |  |  |
| Transgender Yes    |  |  |  |  |
| Transgender No     |  |  |  |  |
|                    |  |  |  |  |
| Buddhist           |  |  |  |  |
| Christian          |  |  |  |  |
| Hindu              |  |  |  |  |
| Jewish             |  |  |  |  |
| Muslim             |  |  |  |  |
| Sikh               |  |  |  |  |
| Any other religion |  |  |  |  |
| No Religion        |  |  |  |  |
| Not Stated         |  |  |  |  |

| <b>Characteristic:</b><br><i>Nine as per The Equality Act<sup>1</sup> plus three extras Healthwatch BNSSG frequently encounter</i>  | <b>Literature review:</b> <i>is there existing or ongoing research related to this characteristic and your project topic?</i> | <b>Methodology:</b> <i>does the projects method of engagement need to be adjusted based on characteristics?</i> |  | <b>Outcome:</b> <i>does the projects outcomes/recommendations need to consider characteristics?</i> |                       |
|---|---|---|--|---|-----------------------|
|   |   | Yes, or no?   | What adaptations would you need to make? | Yes, or no?   | How will you do this? |
| <b>Age</b><br><i>A person belonging to a particular age (for example 32-year-olds) or range of ages (for example 18- to 30-year-olds).</i>  |   |   |  |   |                       |
| <b>Disability</b><br><i>A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to conduct normal day-to-day activities.</i> |   |   |  |   |                       |
| <b>Gender Reassignment</b>  |   |   |  |   |                       |

|   |  |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| <p>The process of transitioning from one sex to another.</p>  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <p><b>Marriage and Civil Partnership</b><br/> <i>Marriage is a union between a man and a woman or between a same-sex couple. Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act).</i></p>   |  |  |  |  |  |
| <p><b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b><br/> <i>Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.</i></p> |  |  |  |  |  |
| <p><b>Race</b><br/> <i>Refers to the protected characteristic of race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.</i></p>  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <p><b>Religion or Belief</b></p>  |  |  |  |  |  |

|   |  |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| <p>Religion refers to any religion, including a lack of religion. Belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief and includes a lack of belief. A belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.</p>                                       |  |  |  |  |  |
| <p><b>Sex</b><br/>A man or a woman.</p>   |  |  |  |  |  |
| <p><b>Sexual Orientation</b><br/>Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.</p>  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <p><b>Carer</b><br/>A carer is anyone, including children and adults, who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid.</p> |  |  |  |  |  |
| <p><b>Socio-economic Deprivation</b><br/>This covers seven different domains of deprivation: Income Deprivation, Employment Deprivation, Education, Skills and Training Deprivation, Health Deprivation and Disability, Crime, Barriers to Housing and Services, Living Environment Deprivation</p>     |  |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| <p><b>Long Term Health Condition</b></p> <p><i>These are conditions for which there is currently no cure, and which are managed with drugs and other treatment, for example: diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, arthritis, and hypertension.</i></p> |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|

This guide may be helpful in terms of understanding the Equality Act and the three elements of the Public Sector Equality duty, our duties as providers of public functions and how this applies to each of the protected characteristics: [Equality and Human Rights Commission Guide](#)