Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy

Introduction

Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) is a key focus for akt. Inclusivity is one of our core values. We commit to valuing and celebrating diversity, creating an equitable and inclusive organisation so that akt and its people thrive.

We aim to feed EDI through all areas of our work so we can:
- positively impact on every person we engage with;
- become known as a charity that stands for EDI good practice in all that we do; and
- become a positive EDI role model within our sector.

We are setting out a three-year EDI strategy to achieve this, created through consultation, learning and reflection across akt.

EDI is a complex area of work and we are committed to getting it right. We want EDI to be central to all that we do and we understand the need to create space and time to do this. We will continue to reflect and learn, making changes where needed. This is vital to create a real culture of inclusion and to make sure that this work has a long-lasting, far-reaching impact.
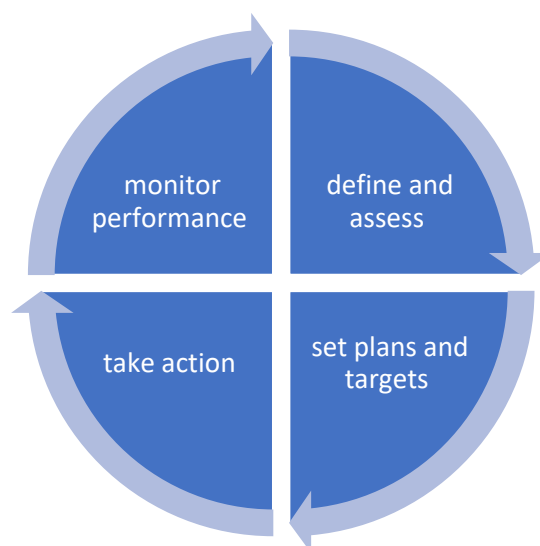
Key Terms

The language we use is important. This is what the key terms used in this strategy mean to us. We will add to these definitions over time as we continue to learn and progress work in this area.

Equity	Giving all people fair access to opportunities. This might mean treating people differently to give them the same access to opportunities. For example, providing an interpreter for someone whose first language is British Sign Language.
Equality	Making sure that everyone has the same opportunities and is treated in the same way. As an organisation we have opted to use 'equity' instead of 'equality', as treating people the same despite their individual needs and circumstances does not provide fair access to opportunities.
Diversity	Knowing the value of difference. Considering and valuing all the unique traits that make people who they are. This includes (but is not limited to) gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity, disability, age, religion, language, social class, family structure, caring responsibilities, diversity of thought and life experiences.
Inclusion	Everyone feels welcome and valued. Everyone has a sense of belonging and the freedom to be their authentic selves. This happens when we have taken active steps to achieve it.
Authentic self / selves	An inclusive culture creates an environment where people feel like they belong. People feel safe to share aspects of themselves and be more open about their life experiences and the intersections of their identity and culture etc. This is done professionally when appropriate and relevant to their work.
Intersectionality / Intersectional / Intersections	The ways different identities overlap to create unique experiences and inequalities. For example, an Asian non-binary person's race and gender overlap to create a type of inequality that couldn't be explained by either race or gender alone.
Representation	Diverse people and their viewpoints can be found or are seen across all departments, seniority levels and in other areas of akt. For example, in marketing images. People are more likely to feel like they belong if they see themselves reflected in the organisations they are involved with.
Reasonable adjustments	Changes an employer makes to remove or reduce barriers or disadvantages related to someone's disability or other inclusion need. This could involve making changes to the workplace, changing someone's working arrangements, finding a different way to do something or providing equipment, services or support.

Discrimination	Treating someone less favourably (in a different or worse way) due to their individual characteristics. Discrimination can be: • direct or indirect; • carried out by individuals or organisations; and • intentional or not intentional. Discrimination can cause harm regardless of whether it was intentional or not. Discrimination can have serious negative effects on someone's mental health and wellbeing. It has been linked with trauma, depression, anxiety and low self-esteem, and significantly impacts overall quality of life. The Equality Act 2010 sets out legal protection against discrimination for nine characteristics. These are: age, disability (including mental health), sex (gender), gender reassignment (including non-binary people), race and ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity.
Barriers	Attitudes, policies, practices or systems that result in people from certain groups receiving unequitable access to or being excluded from opportunities. Barriers are systemic in nature, meaning they come from individual, societal or institutional practices, policies, traditions and/or values. These may be "unintended" or "unseen" to those who do not experience them. While barriers can result in discrimination, not all barriers would be classed as discrimination.

Developing akt's EDI Strategy

We have developed this strategy using The Charity Governance Code recommended four-stage approach to rolling out an effective, people led approach to EDI. Shown below as an ongoing cycle, this approach represents how EDI work is a constant process of learning and improvement: as one cycle ends another cycle begins.

Here is a summary of what each of the four stages used in this approach involves.

Stage	Detail
Define and assess	Assess and learn about akt's systems and culture. This is done via consultation to gain feedback. For example, at Staff Away Days, Staff Surveys, EDI Group or young person consultation. Research and identify opportunities for learning and improvement. For example, training and webinars, EDI research and good practice, learning from what other organisations are doing.
Set plans and targets	Using the reflection, information gathering and planning from 'define and assess' to set SMART, context-specific, realistic plans and targets. This includes setting how progress will be measured, timeframes and who is accountable for actions.
Take action	Doing the actions within the agreed timeframes. This is the practical 'doing' part of the process.
Monitor performance	Checking progress against the monitoring measures associated with actions. For example, are there improved scores on EDI related questions in future Staff Surveys? We can then start the cycle again. Learnings from monitoring will be used to re-define and assess before updating or setting new targets and plans.

EDI Strategic Aims

Our EDI Strategic Aims are our roadmap to success. We have three core themes and eight aims showing us what good EDI looks like. Our EDI Strategic Aims provide a clear vision for what we want to achieve and the akt we want to create.

Access	• People understand what is being said or written. • People can access or use what is provided. • Reasonable adjustments are made without judgement to cater to individual needs.
Respect	• People's diversity is valued and considered with respect. This includes their identities, beliefs, histories, points of view and backgrounds. • People feel safe to be their authentic selves.
Opportunity	• People are given opportunities and support to fulfil their potential. • People can contribute, are valued and fairly heard. • People can see themselves fairly and equitably represented.

Our EDI Strategic Aims are informed by the following principles:

- **Intersectional and whole person focus:** We recognise that there are lots of parts that make up a person and that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression.
- **Removing barriers and sources of disadvantage:** Barriers and disadvantages are created by the failure to meet the needs of people, rather than because of someone's identity. If we remove barriers, we will create an inclusive akt for all our people. A similar idea is used in the Social Model of Disability.
- **Flexibility for individual needs:** We consider the individual needs of different groups of people, focusing activity to meet their needs as and when it's needed.
- **Anti-racist approach:** We recognise the specific challenges that we have with racial equity at akt. For example, with underrepresentation of Black, Brown and People of Colour colleagues. We're committed to actively confronting and fighting racism across all areas of our work. We're committed to learning from mistakes at akt and ensuring that we become a charity that better supports all of our staff and reflects the young people we're proud to work with.

- **Practical:** We will use our Strategic Aims to inform all areas of akt's work to ensure EDI is actively thought about. For example, in decision making, service design, policies and procedures.
- **Credible:** Based on research and good practice.

Our EDI Strategic Aims inform how we view EDI and what we want to achieve. However, they do not tell us practically how we will achieve this. Therefore, we will create EDI Action Plans to sit alongside these Strategic Aims. Spanning the next three-years, EDI Action Plans will provide more detail on how targets will be actioned, timeframes and who is accountable for achieving them.

EDI is everyone's responsibility. We will split EDI activity into five areas of responsibility:

People and Culture	Focused internally on staff and volunteer experiences.
Service Delivery	Focused on our core young person facing case work and youth engagement activity.
External Facing	Focused on everything else external facing. For example, campaigning, policy, research, fundraising, partnerships.
Leadership	Including Senior Management Team and Trustees. Focused on accountability and facilitating EDI work.
EDI Group	Focused on supporting EDI work and monitoring progress.

The focus of Year One of the EDI Strategy is 'define and assess', taking time to assess EDI needs and issues in all areas of akt's work and conducting consultation with key stakeholders.

We will use this insight and the EDI Strategic Aims to 'set plans and targets' for our Year Two and Year Three EDI Action Plans.

This strategy is seen as a 'living document'. Some of our EDI actions will need to be tested to see if they are the right actions for us. Some actions may evolve, change or develop over the years. This will allow us to reflect and adapt based on our learning over the life of the strategy so we can respond to the needs of our staff, volunteers and young people.

We recognise that we will not always have the answers and won't be the experts every time when it comes to EDI. We will ask for help when we need it and will continue to learn through experience, feedback, research and talking to other organisations.

Accountability

Accountability is one of akt's core values. We are committed to taking ownership and responsibility for this strategy to make sure that plans turn into reality and positive change is created.

This strategy was shaped by colleagues at akt using feedback from staff surveys, staff away days, Staff Network Groups and the EDI Group. We researched good EDI practice and approaches used by other organisations to inform our approach.

This strategy is owned by the Board and Senior Management Team, with support from the EDI Group. They will review the strategy yearly to:
- monitor progress;
- set success criteria; and
- agree major changes or additions to the strategy.

EDI Strategy progress will be reported on in the following way:
- Quarterly – light touch review by the EDI Group to check that sufficient progress is being made against all EDI Action Plans. Any additional support or guidance needed to further EDI Action Plans will be provided. Staff will be updated on progress.
- Six monthly – formal review of EDI Action Plans against the EDI Strategy. The process for this will involve:

Who	What	When
EDI Group	• People and Culture Coordinator collates EDI Action Plan updates. • EDI Group review EDI Action Plan updates and make any recommendations. • Summary report written on EDI progress by People and Culture Coordinator and / or Director of People & Operations.	4-6 weeks before main Board meeting
People & Culture Committee	• Trustees review EDI Group report and make any recommendations. • Overview Board paper written on EDI progress by Director of People & Operations.	2 weeks before main Board meeting
Board meeting	• Trustees review People & Culture Committee report and make any recommendations.	During main Board meeting.
EDI Group	• Director of People & Operations gives an update from the Board meetings. • EDI Group discuss and make any recommendations. • People and Culture Coordinator shares feedback to relevant staff and teams to action. • General update provided to staff.	First EDI Group meeting following main Board meeting.