



## Inclusivity Guides: Terminology, Definitions & Sources

### 1. Purpose

This document offers a range of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) terminology to support shared understanding across NSCD. The definitions included here are intended as a helpful starting point rather than a definitive or exhaustive list, there are many other terms and definitions in use, and people may prefer alternative language that better reflects their own identity and experience.

Where relevant, statutory definitions are aligned to the [Equality Act 2010](#) and guidance from the [Equality and Human Rights Commission \(EHRC\)](#). Practice-based and community-led terminology is also included to support understanding and inclusive practice.

It is important to be considerate about the language we use, and as a community we should take every opportunity to learn with grace and humility. For some people, finding a definition or label they identify with is an important part of understanding and feeling comfortable in their own identity; for others, labels may feel unhelpful or unnecessary. Whether and how someone chooses to define themselves may also change over time, and it is important to respect that. We encourage everyone to follow the lead of the individuals and communities they are engaging with.

For a wider range of terminology and alternative definitions, please refer to the reference resources in section 11.

### 2. Statutory Framework

#### **Equality Act 2010**

Primary legislation governing equality, discrimination and harassment in England, Scotland and Wales.

Source: Equality Act 2010 ([legislation.gov.uk](http://legislation.gov.uk))

#### **3. Protected Characteristics (Equality Act 2010)**

The following characteristics are protected under the Equality Act 2010:

Age; Disability; Gender reassignment; Marriage and civil partnership (employment only); Pregnancy and maternity; Race; Religion or belief; Sex; Sexual orientation.

Source: Equality and Human Rights Commission – Protected characteristics.

## 4. Core Legal Concepts

### **Discrimination**

Treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic.

Source: EHRC – Types of discrimination.

### **Direct discrimination**

Less favourable treatment explicitly because of a protected characteristic.

Source: EHRC – Direct and indirect discrimination.

### **Indirect discrimination**

A provision, criterion or practice that disadvantages a protected group and cannot be justified.

Source: EHRC – Indirect discrimination.

### **Positive Action**

The lawful use of targeted support or opportunities to reduce disadvantage or increase participation for groups who are under-represented or face barriers.

Source: Equality Act 2010, Sections 158 and 159.

### **Harassment**

Unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that violates dignity or creates a hostile environment.

Source: EHRC – Harassment and victimisation.

### **Victimisation**

Unfavourable treatment because someone has made or supported a complaint.

Source: EHRC – Victimisation.

### **Reasonable adjustments**

A legal duty to remove or reduce disadvantage for disabled people.

Source: EHRC – Reasonable adjustments.

## 5. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (Practice-Based)

### **Equality**

Ensuring equal rights and protections under the law.

Source: EHRC – What is equality?

### **Equity**

Fairness through recognising and addressing different barriers.

Source: Advance HE – Equality, diversity and inclusion explained.

### **Diversity**

The presence of difference within a community.

Source: Advance HE.

### **Inclusion**

Active creation of environments where all can participate fully.

Source: Advance HE – Inclusive cultures.

## 6. Bias, Behaviour and Culture

### **Unconscious bias**

Automatic attitudes that can influence behaviour without intent.

Source: Advance HE – Unconscious bias.

### **Microaggressions**

Everyday comments or actions that may reinforce stereotypes.

Source: University of Oxford; University of Leeds EDI glossaries.

### **Allyship**

Consistent action to support equity and challenge discrimination.

Source: Advance HE; Stonewall.

### **Active bystander**

A person who recognises harm or risk and acts to prevent or reduce it.

Source: [Universities UK – Changing the Culture](#).

### **Class**

Social class refers to the presence or lack of inherited wealth and privilege and can impact an individual's life chances. Class disadvantage tends to endure across generations. Higher education has been the pre-eminent avenue for social mobility.

Source: [EDI Literacy Glossary \(Advance HE\)](#)

### **Intersectionality**

A way of understanding how different aspects of a person's identity such as race, gender, disability, or socio-economic background overlap and interact to shape their experiences of advantage or disadvantage.

Source: Crenshaw, K. (1989). *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex*. University of Chicago Legal Forum.

***The sections below include high-level definitions to support understanding of the Inclusivity guides, more detailed terms are available in the resources as listed in section 11.***

## 7. Sex, Gender and Sexual Orientation

### **Sex**

Sex refers to the designation of a person at birth as male or female based on their anatomy (genitalia and/or reproductive organs) or biology (chromosomes and/or hormones). Assigned sex may differ from gender identity. Additionally, in the case of intersex individuals it is not always possible to assign sex at birth.

Source: [EDI Literacy Glossary \(Advance HE\)](#)

### **Gender reassignment**

Protection for people proposing to undergo, undergoing or having undergone transition.

Source: Equality Act 2010; EHRC.

**Gender identity**

A person's internal sense of gender.

Source: Stonewall (community-led terminology).

**Sexual orientation**

A protected characteristic referring to attraction.

Source: Equality Act 2010; EHRC.

**8. Disability**

**Disability**

A physical or mental impairment with substantial and long-term adverse effect.

Source: Equality Act 2010; EHRC.

**Social model of disability**

The view that barriers in society disable people, not impairments alone.

Source: [Disability Rights UK](#).

**deaf**

This refers to hearing loss as a medical condition.

Source: One Dance UK Inclusive Language Guide

**Deaf**

A linguistic minority, people who identify themselves as 'Deaf' with a capital 'D' identify with being part of the Deaf culture and community.

Source: One Dance UK Inclusive Language Guide

**Neurodivergent**

A person whose style of thinking and learning might be considered as significantly different to those that are 'typical'.

Source: One Dance UK Inclusive Language Guide

**9. Race**

**People of the Global Majority (PoGM)**

Refers to people who are racially and ethnically marginalised in predominantly White societies but who collectively represent the majority of the world's population.

Source: Campbell-Stephens, R. (2020). *Educational Leadership and the Global Majority*.

**People of Colour**

A collective term used to describe people who are not considered White, particularly in societies where Whiteness is socially and structurally dominant. More commonly used in the US.

Source: Oxford English Dictionary (OED)

**BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic)**

An acronym historically used in the UK to group people who are Black, Asian, or from other minority ethnic backgrounds.

Source: UK Government guidance (Cabinet Office, Race Disparity Audit, 2017).

NSCD and the UK Government and many public bodies now **advise against use** of BAME due to its lack of precision and the way it obscures distinct experiences<sup>1</sup>.

### **Ethnicity**

Refers to a shared cultural background or identity based on factors such as ancestry, culture, language, religion, traditions, or national origin.

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS).

### **Race**

A group of people defined by their colour, nationality (including citizenship) ethnicity or national origins. A racial group can be made up of more than one distinct racial group, such as Black British.

Source: Equality Act 2010; EHRC.

### **White Privilege**

Refers to the unearned advantages and systemic benefits that White people experience in societies structured by racial inequality, often without conscious awareness.

Source: McIntosh, P. (1989). *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*.

### **Institutional Racism**

The collective failure of an organisation to provide appropriate and professional services to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin, through processes, attitudes, and behaviours that disadvantage ethnic groups.

Source Macpherson, W. (1999). *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry*. UK Home Office.

### **Decolonisation**

The process of identifying, challenging, and changing the dominance of colonial narratives, power structures, and knowledge systems within institutions, including education.

Source: [Advance HE \(2021\). Embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the Curriculum.](#)

## **10. Religion**

### **Religion**

Religion means any religion, including lack of religion.

### **Belief**

Belief means any religious or philosophical belief, including lack of belief

### **Anti-Semitism**

Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

Source: [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance \(IHRA\)](#)

### **Islamophobia**

Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/writing-about-ethnicity/>

Source: [All-Party Parliamentary Group \(APPG\)](#)

## 11. Sector References

The following resources include up to date, detailed information about inclusive language and terminology:

- [EDI Literacy Glossary \(Advance HE\)](#)
- [One Dance UK: Inclusive Language Guide](#)
- [The Stonewall Glossary of Terms](#)
- [A practical guide to gender-neutral writing \(gov.uk\)](#)
- [Equality Act 2020 \(Equality and Human Rights Commission\)](#)
- [Religion and Belief \(Advance HE\)](#)
- [Social Model of Disability: Language \(Disability Rights UK\)](#)
- [The usefulness of gender neutral language \(gendered intelligence\)](#)
- [Use of language race and ethnicity \(Advance HE\)](#)
- [Words to use and avoid when writing about disability \(Gov.uk\)](#)