



# EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

## February 2026

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## DOCUMENT CONTROL

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| <b>Document Owner</b>   | Director of HR   |
| <b>Prepared by</b>      | Director of HR   |
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## DOCUMENT HISTORY – AMENDMENTS

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| 1.0     | New Issue   | 07/10/2024 | EC     |
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## 1. Key principles and policy purpose

Mater-Christi Multi Academy Trust actively encourages equality, diversity and inclusion across our family of schools. Our Trust is committed to developing, maintaining, and supporting an inclusive culture for the benefit of all our employees, pupils and the wider communities we serve.

Mater-Christi is committed to promoting equal treatment within the Trust for all members of the Trust community, creating and maintaining an open and supportive environment which is free from discrimination. Our family of Catholic schools are welcoming places to all members of the Trust community across all religions and beliefs.

This policy recognises the authority of the Bishop in relation to the provision of education in the diocese. The Trust commits to work within the school and parish community to create and promote educational vision and values which take account of the Catholic mission and of the diversity, values and experiences the school and the community they serve.

The Trust abides at all times with the core principles that underpin our Diocesan Catholic Schools, as outlined in The Scheme of Delegation:

- The search for excellence
- The uniqueness of the individual made in God's image and loved by him.
- The education of the whole person based on the belief that the human and divine are inseparable.
- The education of all with the particular duty to care for the poor and disadvantaged
- Moral Principles put into practice within a Christian community.

The purpose of this policy is to communicate our commitment to Equality and Diversity, outlining clear guidelines to ensure our commitment is embedded and all legal and ethical considerations are met.

## 2. Who is this policy for?

This policy applies to all employees and prospective employees of the Mater-Christi Multi Academy Trust. This policy also applies to all directors, volunteers, governors and pupils. All these groups are expected to follow the principles set out in this policy.

## 3. Related policies and legal frameworks

**Equality Act 2010:** This policy aligns with the provision of the Equality Act 2010, which gives legal protection to people from discrimination in the workplace and in society. The Act identifies nine 'protected characteristics' which qualify for protection from discrimination under the Act. These characteristics are as follows:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender reassignment
4. Marriage and civil partnership
5. Pregnancy and maternity
6. Race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin)

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7. Religion or belief
8. Sex
9. Sexual Orientation

We recognise our duties under the Equality Act and that these duties reflect international human rights standards as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and the Human Rights Act 1998

In addition to the above, the Trust will not discriminate on the grounds of Trade Union membership or activities as set out in the **Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992**.

**Additional key terms under the Equality Act are as follows:**

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Direct discrimination                | When an individual is treated less favourably due to a protected characteristic.  |
| Direct Discrimination by association | When an individual does not have a protected characteristic themselves, however they are treated less favourably due to their link to another individual with a protected characteristic. For example, a spouse who is disabled.  |
| Indirect Discrimination              | Occurs when a provision, criterion or practice which is applied to all employees puts an individual with a protected characteristic at a disadvantage, and the employer is not able to justify the course of action. For example, a job advert stating candidates must have 10 years' experience could indirectly discriminate on the basis of age. |
| Belief                               | Any religious or philosophical belief or lack of belief.  |
| Perceptive Discrimination            | Where someone is treated less favourably because they are mistakenly perceived to have a protected characteristic, even if they don't. An example being someone is mistaken for being a Muslim when they are of a different faith or no faith.  |

This policy aligns with the provisions of the **Data Protection Act 2018** and **UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)** in the secure processing and storing of all personal data. Schedule 1(8) Data Protection Act 2018 allows for special data collection for diversity and inclusion monitoring.

This policy aligns with the **Duty to Prevent Sexual Harassment at Work**. Under the **Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023**, all UK employers must take *reasonable steps* to prevent sexual harassment of their workers.

**The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)** applies to all public bodies, ensuring that they act in a way which is fair, non-discriminatory, and do not put individuals or groups at a disadvantage. Under the Equality Duty across all protected characteristics, our Trust must:

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- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation or any other unlawful conduct in the Equality Act 2010.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

The equalities impact in respect of each of these elements should be recorded, monitored and kept under constant review.

The specific duties require our Trust to publish relevant, proportionate information demonstrating their compliance with the equality duty, and to specific, measurable equality objectives. Schools and colleges must:

- Publish information on how they are complying with the equality duty.
- Devise and publish their own equality objectives.

**Wider Policy application:** Equality and Inclusion is central to all policies across our Trust family, which includes our schools and central teams. The commitments detailed within this policy apply consistently across the Trust policies to ensure that equality and inclusion is part of our everyday lives.

#### 4. Planning to eliminate discrimination and promote equality

The Trust complies with the PSED by publishing Equality Objectives every 4 years. For the Trust's Equality Objectives, please see Appendix 1.

Each of our schools have their own Equality Objectives Action Plan which identifies what they will be doing over the coming year and beyond to make each school more accessible to the whole community, irrespective of background or need. Each school prepares this plan through consultation with key stakeholders including pupils, parents & carers, governors, staff, and others in the school community.

In addition, in order for us to assess and make reasonable adjustments and proportionate steps to overcome barriers that may impede some people, each school also has an Accessibility Plan (published on the school website) which specifically focuses on how each school will improve equality of access to:

- education for pupils with disabilities.
- work for employees with disabilities.
- work or a family life for visitors and other members of our school community.
- other user groups who access our building.

We publish them together because they overlap and we want to make sure we are meeting our duties to promote positive outcomes in relation to disability, and actions to address other social identities.

**Tracking our progress:** The Trusts progress towards our Equality Objectives and our Accessibility Plan is reported to the Trust Board of Directors on an annual basis in our Trust Equality Information report. In addition, each school reviews their progress against their

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Equality Objectives and Accessibility plan on an annual basis with the Governing board. Each school publishes their own Equality Information Report annually about diversity within each school and how they are doing against their Equality Objectives.

The Trust and each school takes steps to ensure that their Equality Information Report and our Equality Objectives are understood and implemented by all staff and are published on the school and Trust websites. They will be made available in different formats and in different languages on request to the school office.

We also publish anonymous information about our workforce in line with the PSED as follows:

- the race, disability, gender, and age distribution of our workforce at different grades, and whether they are full or part time,
- an indication of the likely representation on sexual orientation and religion and belief, provided that no-one can be identified as a result,
- an indication of any issues for transgender staff, based on engagement with those staff or equality organisations,
- gender pay gap information,
- information about occupational segregation,
- grievance and dismissal information for people with relevant protected characteristics,
- complaints about discrimination and other prohibited conduct from staff,
- details and feedback of engagement with staff and trade unions,
- quantitative and qualitative research with employees e.g. staff surveys,
- records of how we have had due regard to the aims of the duty in decision making with regard to our employment, including any assessments of impact on equality and any evidence used,
- details of policies and programmes that have been put into place to address equality concerns raised by staff and trade unions.

## 5. Our commitments to Equality and Diversity within our Employment Practices

Our Trust is committed to the implementation of equal opportunities principles and the monitoring and active promotion of equality in all aspects of staffing and employment. As an employer we strive to ensure that we eliminate discrimination and harassment in our employment practice and actively promote equality across all groups within our workforce.

Our commitments within our key employment practices are detailed as follows:

### 5.1 Recruitment

- All job adverts will include a reference to the Trusts commitment to actively promoting diversity, unity and community cohesion.
- All job descriptions and advertisements will be written to ensure that they do not discriminate or exclude any potential candidates due to any protected characteristics, except in the case of the genuine occupational requirements outlined below.
- Our schools have been designated by the Secretary of State as schools with a religious character. It is therefore necessary that identified key positions have the

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genuine occupational requirement that the position is held by a practicing Catholic. This proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim to ensure that the Trust continues to follow the Bishop’s vision of Catholic schools through “The preservation and development of the quality and distinctive nature of Catholic schools.” Those roles which have been identified as requiring a practising Catholic are listed below:

1. Trust CEO
  2. Headteacher – including Executive Head
  3. Deputy Headteacher
  4. Head of Religious Education
- Any vacancy will identify the key criteria for the role and be open to application from all candidates that meet the criteria.
  - Teacher job descriptions and assessment criteria will be based on the key areas identified in the Teaching Standards (2012).
  - Any candidate applying for roles will have the opportunity to request reasonable adjustments during recruitment process. All requests by candidates who have declared that they have a disability will be considered and accommodated where possible.
  - Any appointment is by the recruiting line manager in line with the Trust recruitment policy. A decision to recruit will be based solely on the merits of the individual and how they perform during assessment against identified criteria.

**5.2 Employee Development and Promotion**

- All employees will receive training on Inclusion and Diversity via the Mater Christi online training platform. Senior employees including Directors, Headteachers and HR will be expected to have a good awareness of equality legislation.
- All employees are encouraged to grow and develop their skills. All employees will receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development and advancement based on their performance, aspirations and the Trust's needs.
- All promotions will be based on merit and in compliance with all legal requirements.

**5.3 Reasonable Adjustments**

- Where a member of staff has declared a disability, the Trust will work with the employee to consider and accommodate all reasonable adjustments. The Trust will take advice from a medical professional and/or Occupational Health where required. Further details can be found in the Trust’s Absence Management Policy.

**5.4 Absence Management**

- When managing employee absence, the Trust will take into consideration individual circumstances including the consideration of any underlying health conditions and/or disability.
- The Trust will take all appropriate and reasonable steps to support an employee to return to work after a period of absence, taking into consideration any additional needs relating to disability.

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- The Trust will consider all reasonable adjustments when looking at absence levels for a member of staff and as part of the formal absence review process may consider adjustments to absence triggers as part of the later stages of formal review.
- Further details can be found in the Trust's Absence Management Policy.

### 5.5 Policies and Procedures

- We ensure that policies and procedures benefit all employees and potential employees in all aspects of their work, including in recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development.

### 5.6 Conditions of service and pay

- The Trust incorporates the Conditions of Service for School Teachers in England and Wales (The Burgundy book) for all teachers in the Trust employment. This ensures that there is consistent and fair application of conditions across the Trust.
- The Trust incorporates the National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service (The Green book) for all support staff, ensuring consistent and fair application of conditions for our staff.
- The Trust is committed to a fair, transparent and consistent pay policy which is outlined in the Mater Christi Teachers Pay Policy. Any decisions relating to Teacher pay awards is made in accordance with this policy.

### 5.7 Scheme of delegation

- The roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the governance of the Trust are set out in in the Scheme of delegation. This incorporates core competencies, specific duties and a code of conduct for all directors and governors. These specifically include holding leadership to account and ensuring staff wellbeing, ensuring a rigorous structure of accountability and responsibility across the Trust management structure.
- The Trust recognises and abides by the Seven Principles of Public Life as outlined in the scheme of delegation.

### 5.8 Protection from redundancy

- The Trust recognises the Maternity Leave; Adoption Leave and Shared Parental Leave (Amendment) Regulations 2024 which extend Redundancy protection for pregnancy and new parents and came into force from 6<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

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- This provision gives priority protection to employees on maternity, adoption and shared parental leave (SPL). The changes from 6 April mean that the period of priority protection will extend to 18 months and will also apply to pregnant employees from the day they notify their employer of their pregnancy.

## 6. Our commitments to Equality and Diversity within our Trust

Our Trust Family, which includes our schools and central team is fully inclusive, focusing on the wellbeing of every individual within our care. The principles of equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of our trust, and the Mater-Christi Trust expects all employees, pupils, parents/carers and members of the wider school and Trust community to be treated equitably and with respect.

Our recognised Equality commitments within our Trust are as follows:

### 6.1 Pregnancy and maternity equality

- Our schools will work to ensure that pupils who are pregnant or have recently given birth or have experienced a still birth are protected from discriminatory practices. Our schools will not exclude them purely on the grounds of pregnancy and will provide up to 18 calendar weeks of authorised absence immediately before and after the birth to help reintegrated the pupil into education as quickly as possible. Our schools will follow advice as outlined in Section 11 of [KAHSC Safety Series G24: Managing New and Expectant Mothers](#) to help formulate a support plan for any pregnant pupil or pupil returning to school following absence linked to pregnancy.
- We are committed to ensuring that all staff who are pregnant or have recently given birth are protected from both direct and indirect discriminatory practices, disadvantage and unfavourable treatment.
- We are also committed to ensuring pupils and staff are protected from discrimination as entitled if they:
  - are or have been pregnant.
  - have given birth and unfavourable treatment occurred within 26 weeks of and including the day of the birth.
  - are breastfeeding and unfavourable treatment occurs within 26 weeks of the birth as above.
  - experienced a still birth, as long as the pregnancy reached 24 weeks.

### 6.2 Disability equality

- Our commitment to achieving equality of opportunity for all individuals within our Trust, including pupils with disabilities, their families, our staff, and other school users has a number of objectives:

We will promote equality for people with disabilities by:

- removing barriers to the accessibility of education, employment, services, information and buildings.
- encouraging good practice by our partners by giving relevant advice or instructions.

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- ensuring we take their needs into account when procuring goods and services from our providers.
- promoting positive images of people with disabilities.
- challenging patronising or discriminating attitudes.
- making the environment as safe as possible for and challenging antisocial or bullying behaviour against, or harassment of pupils, staff or other school users with disabilities.

We plan to increase access to education for disabled pupils by:

- increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school curriculum.
- increasing the inclusion of positive images of disabled people across the curriculum.
- improving the environment of the school to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can take advantage of education and associated services.
- improving the delivery of information to disabled pupils, to the standard of which is provided in writing for pupils who are not disabled.

We welcome the requirements of the disability equality duty, and this section sets out our commitment to meeting the duty. Our Policy shows how we promote disability equality across all areas of our Trust, to disabled pupils, staff, parents, carers and other school users.

### 6.3 Racial equality and community cohesion

We recognise that people of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) origin experience discrimination based on colour, race, nationality, religion, and ethnic origin. Racial harassment and violence are the most serious consequences of racism, damaging people emotionally and physically and limiting life choices and opportunities.

To ensure our Trust takes all necessary steps to prevent and tackle racial harassment and to help people of BAME origin live free from harassment, feel safe and enjoy and achieve throughout their education or working life, we will take steps to:

- keep accurate records of all groups of faith or ethnicity, their backgrounds and needs and how we respond to them.
- encourage dialogue between different racial groups on the suitability of our educational provision.
- prevent racial discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good relations between members of different racial, cultural and religious groups.
- encourage pupils and their families of all ethnic groups to participate fully in all aspects of school life.
- use our support for the voluntary and community sector to promote good race relations.
- counter myths and misinformation that may undermine good community relations.
- ensure our staff and other adults working in our Trust, pupils and their families, as well as our partners and the wider community fully understand the principles of good race relations.

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**6.4 Sex and gender reassignment equality**

- We are committed to combating sex discrimination and sexism and promoting the equality of women, men, boys and girls.
- We are also committed to ensuring the rights under the Equality Act of people undergoing gender reassignment (defined as applying to anyone who is proposing to undergo, is undergoing, or has undergone a process or part-process, for the purpose of reassigning their sex by changing physiological or other attributes). This means that in order to be protected under the Act, pupils or staff will not necessarily have to be undertaking a medical procedure to change their sex but must be taking steps to live in the opposite gender or proposing to do so. So far, the law has not acknowledged non-binary or genderless individuals, but we want to act appropriately to safeguard and include all members of our communities.

We will give due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation on the grounds of sex or gender reassignment, including domestic violence, sexual violence, bullying, and exploitation.
- Promote equality of opportunity between women and men in all our functions.

For any transgender young person or employee, our approach will be focused on the individual, by ensuring that they are at the centre of any decision-making regarding appropriate support mechanisms. We encourage our schools and our offices to ensure that the culture is inclusive of and responsive to transgender identities, and that managers are responsive to the wishes of the individual in regard to their transition journey.

**6.5 Religion and belief equality**

This Trust recognises that people can face discrimination because of attitudes in society towards the religion, faith, or belief they hold or faith community they belong to. Faith-based hate crime has a character that is distinct from race-based hate crime. We also recognise that a person’s religious (or similar) beliefs may mean that they have different needs, demands and expectations, which require flexibility. We understand this means we must assess the impact that our policies, functions and procedures have on promoting equality for people based on their religion, belief or non-belief.

As a family of Catholic schools we recognise the exemptions under equality law for schools with a religious character in admissions; freedom to provide collective acts of worship for one religion and not another; or to include all pupils regardless of faith in learning about a religious celebration without unlawfully discriminating. Following this guidance we actively promote our Catholic faith across our schools.

**6.6 Sexual orientation equality**

Our Trust is committed to combatting unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation faced by people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ+) and we aim to ensure equality of opportunity in education, services, and employment.

We will respect the rights of individuals to be open about their sexual orientation, tackle homophobia, challenge stereotyping and improve knowledge about LGBTQ communities, both inside the community and across wider society.

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We are committed to taking a proactive approach to preventing all forms of homophobia in the school and wider Trust community and will assess the impact of our policies, functions and procedures on promoting sexual orientation equality as part of the Equality Impact Assessment process.

## 7. Managing complaints

If a member of the public feels that they have suffered discrimination, harassment, or victimisation from a school within the Trust because of their protected characteristic i.e. race (including nationality, ethnic group, regional or national origin), sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, age, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, disability, or religion or belief (including lack of belief), they should report it using the relevant School's Complaints Procedure as published on the school website.

Complaints by staff will be dealt with under the Grievance Procedure, as appropriate.

The Trust has a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, any act that is found to be discriminatory has the potential to be considered as gross misconduct under the disciplinary policy.

We take all complaints seriously and will take appropriate action to eliminate discriminatory behaviour.

## 8. Additional Policy and reporting requirements within our schools

In addition to this policy, evidence of our schools commitment to their responsibilities under the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty can be seen across the following documents at each school – Admissions procedures, Behaviour Policy, Equality impact assessment procedures, Equality training materials, Governing body minutes, Parent and pupil surveys, Child Protection Policy and procedures, School performance data, School prospectus, School website and newsletters, Self-evaluation reviews, SEND Policy, School development plans, School Equality Objectives and Accessibility Plans.

Each school also collects information regarding, School admissions and Pupil attainment and progress broken down by race, religion or belief, sex, disability and, where relevant, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, and age.

For more information on these areas, please refer to each individual school's website.

The reporting requirements for our Trust is covered in section 4.

## 9. Roles and responsibilities

The following roles and responsibilities have been identified under this policy:

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| <p>Headteacher / Senior Leaders</p>                                     | <p>Ensure the implementation of this policy within their school or area.</p> <p>Champion diversity and inclusion</p> <p>Actively challenge and take appropriate action in any cases of discriminatory practice</p> <p>Ensure that all visitors and contractors are aware of, and comply with, the Trust’s Equality policy.</p> <p>Keep up to date with equality legislation by completing all identified Equality training.</p>      |
| <p>The Trust Board of Directors</p>                                     | <p>To ratify the Trust Equality Policy, ensuring this aligns with the vision of the Trust.</p> <p>To review Equality Information as required identifying any opportunity for improvement.</p> <p>Champion diversity and inclusion</p> <p>Actively challenge and take appropriate action in any cases of discriminatory practice</p> <p>Keep up to date with equality legislation by completing all identified Equality training.</p> |
| <p>The Governing Body</p>   | <p>Ensure the implementation of this policy within their school.</p> <p>Champion diversity and inclusion.</p> <p>Be involved in dealing with serious breaches of the policy.</p> <p>Keep up to date with equality legislation by completing all identified Equality training.</p>  |
| <p>All Employees and other adults involved in our schools and Trust</p> | <p>Champion diversity and inclusion within their area.</p> <p>Keep up to date with equality legislation by completing all identified Equality training.</p> <p>Be aware of this policy and its recommendations</p> <p>Speak up if they witness any actions that contravene this policy.</p>  |
| <p>Human Resources</p>  | <p>Ensure the implementation of this policy across the Trust.</p> <p>Identify appropriate Equality training across the different roles.</p> <p>Support Line Managers in dealing with breaches of this policy.</p> <p>Ensure the regular review of this policy</p>  |

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|        | Monitor any complaints to help establish whether we are meeting our equality duties and report regularly to the Trust Board of Directors about the nature of complaints made and action taken.   |
| Pupils | <p>Act in accordance with any relevant part of the Policy</p> <p>Experience a curriculum and environment which is respectful of diversity and difference and prepares them well for life in a diverse society.</p> <p>Understand the importance of reporting discriminatory bullying and racially motivated incidents.</p> <p>Help us ensure our peer support programme promotes understanding and supports pupils who are experiencing discrimination.</p> <p>Pupils will be supported in their responsibilities under this policy.</p> |

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## APPENDIX 1 – Mater Christi Trust Equality Objectives

**Protected Characteristics:** Age (A) Disability (D) Gender reassignment (GR) Marriage and civil partnership (MCP) Pregnancy and maternity (PM) Race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin) (R) Religion or belief (RB) Sex (S)

Date: February 2026

Review Date: Annually

| Equality Objective  | Action/s  | Protected Characteristic | Responsible person/s        | Due date   |
|---|---|--------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|
| For all members of the Mater-Christi community (staff, teachers, governors, directors) to understand the importance of equality and inclusion across our trust, and to have a working knowledge of the Equality Act and its application across the Trust. | 1) To re-communicate our Equality policy and Equality Objectives across the Trust.  | All                      | HR Consultant               | April 2026 |
|   | 2) To deliver diversity training to all employees, directors and governors through the National College and to monitor completion.  | All                      | HR Consultant/ Headteachers | Annually   |
| To reinforce our commitment to equality and diversity across all key policies and procedures, ensuring a consistent message of inclusion across our trust.  | 3) To create, implement and embed a robust Dignity at Work Policy that promotes respect, inclusion and professional conduct, provides clear routes for reporting and addressing concerns, and strengthens our | All                      | Director of HR              | April 2026 |

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|  | commitment to preventing bullying, harassment and discrimination for all staff across the Trust.   |     |               |               |
| Ensure accurate data collection to enable equality monitoring across key characteristics using a secure and robust system. | 4) To systematically monitor, analyse and act upon Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) data collected through our online recruitment platform, ensuring recruitment processes promote equity, identify and reduce barriers, address underrepresentation and support the Trust's commitment to fair, inclusive and transparent workforce practices. | All | HR Department | December 2026 |

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