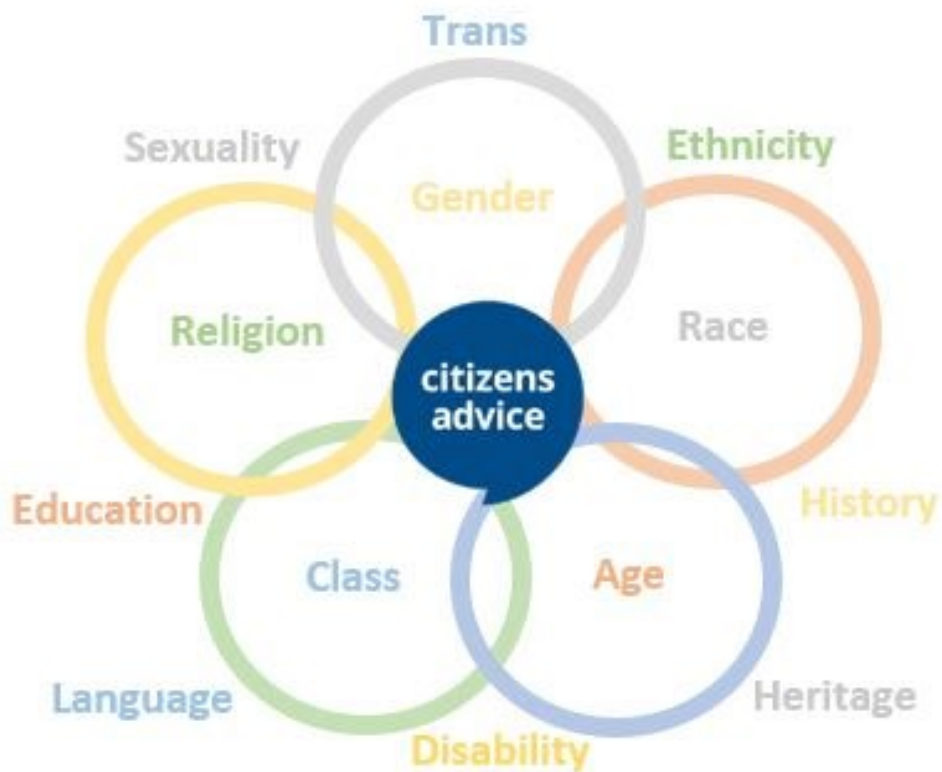


# Citizens Advice Exeter Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy plan 01/04/2022 – 31/03/2025



# Foreword

Citizens Advice Exeter aims:

- to provide the advice people need for the problems they face, and
- to improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives

We provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. We value diversity, promote equality and challenge discrimination.

By integrating our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion work throughout all of our services, we ensure that this area of our work, and the associated learning, is mainstreamed and embedded across the whole of our organisation.

As the charity's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion group, we are delighted to write this foreword to our three-year development plan. Our planning aims to be both strategic and agile in order to ensure that we can be flexible where emerging issues are identified, whilst at the same time being clear what we aim to achieve through our equity, diversity and inclusion work.

The members of this group include:

Gordon Richardson	Lead Trustee
Halle Fowler	Lead Trustee
Kathy Underwood	Lead Team Leader
Karen Devaraj	Operations manager

Plus 2 Volunteer representatives

## Introduction

### What is the purpose of this plan?

This development plan has been created to provide a summary about the future direction of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion work over the next 3 years by Citizens Advice Exeter, supported by a more detailed one-year work plan.

### Citizens Advice Exeter

Citizens Advice Exeter is an independent local charity. We provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone who lives or works in Exeter on their rights and responsibilities on a wide variety of issues, including: welfare benefits, debt, money advice, employment, housing and homelessness, immigration, consumer, relationship breakdown and other legal matters.

## **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion**

Equity, diversity and inclusion are a key part of Citizens Advice aims and principles, both for our clients and our staff (including ensuring that our recruitment process encourages applications from diverse communities). We wish to ensure that no-one is disadvantaged due to their protected characteristics. While we aim to embed good practice, we also want to remain vigilant to areas for improvement.

We will aim to do this via the use of

- Workplace and morning briefings to raise an awareness of EDI issues.
- Campaigning for change through use of evidence forms to highlight social inequalities faced by marginalised groups.
- Analysis of our advice issue codes (AIC) and detailed examination of all cases where a discrimination AIC code has been used
- Providing ongoing training to paid staff and volunteers.
- Providing information to volunteers in the form of regular speakers from other groups and agencies.
- Provide a voice for our paid staff and volunteers to share their lived experiences in relation to EDI issues.

Citizens Advice Exeter EDI group aim to increase understanding of EDI issues that are faced by our clients and our workforce, while also ensuring that we keep abreast of developments in the general EDI arena.

## **How we work**

Strategic oversight of our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion work is provided by our Strategy Group. This Group reports to the Operations and Policy Committee of the Trustee Board each quarter, which in turn reports to the full Board.

## **The EDI Group meets bi-monthly and considers**

- Best practice methods to ensure we fulfill our aims and principles
- How best to raise awareness
- Training needs and how to deliver
- Reporting on discrimination issues through use of AIC codes
- Latest figures and data around EDI issues
- Impact of the fact we are a Hate Crime Reporting Centre
- Any other ways to implement best practice.

We have a Delivery Plan which gives an overview of our key campaigning issues for each year. Day-to-day efforts are led by Team Leader, Kathy Underwood, who has a specific responsibility for this area of our work, supported by The Operations Manager.

# Aims and priorities

## Aims

Citizens Advice Exeter aims to exercise a responsible influence on the development of policies and practices both locally and nationally and champions equity, diversity and inclusion in all areas of our work.

## Objectives

Our priorities over the next 3 years are set out through the following objectives.

- **Objective 1: Advice** - Improve the client experience and ensure that we remain accessible to a diverse range of people, consider areas for improvement.
- **Objective 2: Advocacy** - Speak up about issues raised by clients – including liaising with other agencies to achieve this.
- **Objective 3: Technology** - Improve access for clients via the use of technology and consider the use of digital platforms for advice giving.
- **Objective 4: Sustainability** - Ensure continued funding and focus in order to provide appropriate support.
- **Objective 5: Culture** - Create a culture of open discussion and respect for where others are in respect of their EDI journey. While embedding EDI into our advice practice, in order to create an inclusive service for clients, volunteers and employees.
- **Objective 6:** In line with the national Citizens Advice Future of Advice strategic framework goals for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, play a key role in helping us truly live our core values of challenging discrimination, promoting equality and valuing diversity.

## During the year 2022 -2023 we will be working on the following 5 keys events:

- Ensure that our work is visible on our website with a statement about equality with a long-term goal of an EDI page as part of our website
- Monitor the impact and uptake of our new status as a hate crime reporting centre, and provide appropriate ongoing training and support to volunteers
- Engage with at least one local minority group to develop a stronger relationship and understanding of the service we offer.
- Actively promote and engage with 2 key dates in our diversity calendar to raise awareness within our CitA and wider community, including ensuring a presence at both Pride and Respect festivals
- Analyze the results of our EDI survey of staff and volunteers and respond to any training/information needs identified including mandatory EDI training on Skillbook

## Delivering priorities and timeline

Our plans for achieving our EDI objectives, together with our planned timeline, are contained in our EDI delivery plan. It is only sensible to plan specific activity on an annual basis to ensure that our priorities are grounded in real experiences and to ensure that we are agile when opportunities and new issues are identified. The delivery plan is reviewed each quarter by the Strategy Group in order to ensure that our plans are adjusted to reflect emerging trends.

In developing our EDI work plan, we aim to track each item to our over-arching Objectives and, where possible, adopt a SMART approach to objective setting using the following definition:

**Specific**

**Measurable**

**Achievable**

**Relevant**

**Time-bound**

KU/KD 14.6.22

KD amended 14.11.22 -