



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement of Intent 2025 -26

Theme: Depression Therapeutics

1. Commitment to EDI Principles

Depression is a leading cause of disability across the population, with even higher prevalence among marginalised groups. The Depression Therapeutics Theme is dedicated to working with and involving people from marginalised groups—across our workforce, research participants, and PPIEP—to ensure our research is relevant to their needs and experiences. We are committed to embedding EDI throughout every stage of our experimental medicine studies, to further our goal of bridging the translational gap between pre-clinical models and clinical trials.

2. Our challenges and priorities for EDI in research culture and our workforce

We recognise the importance of inclusive partnerships, equitable career progression, and a supportive workplace. A healthy and supportive research culture is vital for all members of staff, but can be particularly so for those from marginalised groups for ensuring equity of support, career progression etc. Our collaboration with Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Trust is central to increasing diversity in our workforce and research participants.

2.1 Key achievements for EDI in research culture and workforce

- Established a training and travel budget to support staff in Birmingham, enabling effective partnership and participation in BRC-wide EDI/PPIEP workshops.
- Core theme staff lead departmental EDI initiatives (as Associate Head of People and Culture, and co-chair of the Race Equality Working Group), including lab handbooks, race equality action plans, celebration of diverse cultural events, a careers workshop for staff and students of colour, piloting monitoring of departmental speaker diversity, and reflective practice for PIs. The Race Equality Working Group won a 2025 Vice-Chancellors Award for Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Award.
- Core theme staff serve as Bullying and Harassment advisors and are Bullying and Harassment representatives for the department
- Supported career progression through inclusive access to pump-priming awards, fellowships, and studentships.



- Core theme staff co-organise the OxCIN Global Scholars programme, supporting MRI researchers in the Global South, as well as a transfer of their knowledge and skills to their local research environment

2.2 Objectives and ongoing plans for EDI in research culture and workforce

- Continue monthly EDI discussions among core theme staff to identify opportunities for increasing inclusivity.
- Monitor diversity across workforce using NIHR protected characteristics and deprivation indices
- Disseminate best practices and learning across the theme via newsletters, meetings, and Away Days.

3. Our challenges and priorities for inclusive research practices and PPIEP

We aim to embed diverse perspectives from those with various lived experience of depression across all work packages, ensuring that research priorities, methodologies, and outcomes reflect the needs of marginalised communities. This is a neglected area within experimental medicine studies, and we aspire to lead the way in this regard.

3.1 Key achievements for inclusive research practices and PPIEP

- Embedded diverse PPIEP across all work packages, including:
 - **TRD Patient Advisory Group (PAG):** 20% identify as Black/Black British/Caribbean/African; 40% as LGBTQ+.
 - **Young Person's Advisory Group (YPAG):** 90% new to PPI; 25% from South Asian, African, Arab, or mixed ethnic backgrounds.
 - **A theme Depression Therapeutics PPI group** who have consulted with over 10 study teams (many of whom are new to PPIEP) to advise on PPIEP strategy
- PPIEP input has shaped recruitment strategies, ethics applications, cognitive task design, and outcome assessments.
- Developed inclusive participant information sheets with visual and easy-to-read formats, in collaboration with our PPIEP group, to facilitate more inclusive recruitment and help achieve more diverse participant populations



- Core theme staff were involved in organising the [Oxford Health BRC Neurodiversity conference](#) in September 2025, with a focus on advancing mental health research and support for neurodivergent individuals
- Created online cognitive task batteries which enabled remote participation in studies like OxSTEP and PAX-D, increasing geographical and socio-economic diversity, and allow national and international collaborations (e.g. Manchester and Toronto).
- Reduced barriers to participation in pharmacological studies by switching to use vegan, egg-free and halal-friendly capsules as default (with changes made on a case-by-case basis, as required)
- Provided pump-priming funding for a DPhil student to complete collaborative project with the Africa Health Research Institute involving a sub-Saharan participant cohort

3.2 Objectives and ongoing plans for inclusive research practices and PPIEP

- Monitor diversity across participants and PPIEP using NIHR protected characteristics and/or deprivation indices, where appropriate
- Complete a project (funded by the University's PCER fund) to explore diverse lived experience perspectives on self-report questionnaires used in depression, and co-produce pragmatic guidance for researchers on selecting appropriate and meaningful outcome measures
- Review our processes for including neurodiverse participants in our research, ensuring accessibility and removing unnecessary barriers or exclusion criteria, and co-produce guidelines for theme researchers (involving appropriate PPIEP)
- Review our screening and randomisation processes for transgender or non-binary study participants, ensuring accessibility and removing unnecessary barriers or exclusion criteria, and co-produce guidelines for theme researchers (involving appropriate PPIEP)
- Continue identifying and reducing barriers to study participation, and ensure inclusive recruitment and study design remains central to all experimental medicine research
- Develop a cohort study within the Treatment Resistant Depression (TRD) clinic to capture sociodemographic data using NIHR diversity data questions.



- Collaborate with the NIHR Oxford Health Clinical Research Facility (OH CRF) on EDI best practice and projects
- Share and learn from PPIEP practices within the theme and with external collaborators.