



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement of Intent 2025 - 26

Theme: Molecular Targets

1. Commitment to EDI Principles

The Molecular Targets Theme is committed to all aspects of the Oxford Health BRC EDI Strategy. We aim to contribute fully to achieving its four EDI objectives and actively participate in its governance processes. EDI is a standing item in our theme meetings, and we are working to ensure that our biomarker and discovery science research is inclusive and representative of the populations most in need.

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

Our priority is to foster an inclusive, supportive, and equitable working environment that enables all staff and students to thrive. We recognise that this involves more than inclusive research design: it requires sustained action to promote career development, fair recruitment, and a healthy, collaborative culture.

2.1 Key achievements for EDI in research culture and workforce

- Established an **EDI Ambassador** for the Molecular Targets Theme, who links into the wider Department of Psychiatry EDI Network to share best practice and collaborate across themes.
- Provided time and resources for development and training of early and mid-career researchers, including access to NIHR OH BRC Training programmes on inclusive leadership, mentoring, and writing successful applications
- Promoted inclusive hiring practices in line with University of Oxford guidance, ensuring fair shortlisting, trained interview panels, and consideration of flexible working.

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

- Strengthen support for early and middle-career academics, with targeted training on team leadership and research management.
- Continue to embed and review inclusive recruitment practices, ensuring equity at all stages of hiring.



- Expand mentorship opportunities within the Department, matching junior and mid-career staff with senior colleagues across different disciplines.
- Ensure that all Theme activities consider and reflect the diversity of our workforce, including accessibility of meetings and events.
- Contribute actively to the Department of Psychiatry's seminars and training sessions, encouraging all staff to engage in continuous learning about equity and inclusion.
- Organise theme social and networking activities (away days, informal gatherings) to build a collegial and inclusive staff culture.

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

Much of our work is based on existing biosamples and datasets, many of which were collected without attention to EDI or the collection of EDI-relevant information. This presents challenges in ensuring representation and inclusivity in our analyses and outputs.

We aim to ensure that our research practices are inclusive and that our findings are relevant to diverse populations. This includes co-designing engagement strategies and developing tools that reflect the needs of underrepresented groups.

3.1 Key achievements for inclusive research practices and PPIEP

- Reported all available EDI characteristics in existing datasets, including sex at birth and ancestry of donors.
- Conducted subgroup analyses and balanced samples where appropriate.
- Recorded how EDI characteristics are reported in all outputs.
- In newly collected cohorts, routinely gathered data on age, ethnicity, place of birth, sex, and gender.
- Engaged in projects aimed at improving access to research for underserved communities, particularly through partnerships in Birmingham—a superdiverse city with high levels of youth and poverty, and a collaboration with the joint Oxford and Oxford Health BRC Diversity in Research Group.
- **ADEPP trial:** Recruited participants with severe mental illness from across the UK, with over 60% from Black and Asian heritage.



- **PPiP2 study:** Included nearly 30% non-white participants out of more than 5,000.
- **CELEBRATE project:** Co-designed a toolkit for engaging young people in biomedical research; protocol paper published and full report in final draft.
- Supported recruitment for the Mental Health Mission Early Psychosis cohort, aiming to recruit 2,000 representative participants with extensive clinical and biomarker data.
- Collaborated with the Oxford and Oxford Health BRC's Diversity in Research Group to improve our strategy to recruit underrepresented populations into our ongoing research projects.

3.2 Objectives and ongoing plans for inclusive research practices and PPIEP

- Continue supporting projects that increase inclusion from underserved communities.
- Facilitate development of novel treatments that are relevant to the populations most in need.
- Work toward collecting all nine NIHR protected characteristics in future projects, especially where applicable in young populations.
- Ensure EDI considerations are fully incorporated into all cohorts and datasets used for biomarker and discovery science.
- Continue building partnerships with diverse communities to improve access and representation in research.
- Make findings more generalisable by increasing inclusion from previously underserved groups.