

Become Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Annual Report 2023/24

BECOME.

**THE CHARITY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE
AND YOUNG CARE LEAVERS**



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Introduction

Here at Become we know that Equity, Diversity and Inclusion is key to achieving our mission. We are committed to creating a culture where everyone feels valued, respected and empowered to achieve their full potential.

Inclusion is an ongoing process that requires constant learning, reflection and action, and therefore this is our first annual report on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) – it is our intention to publish this in the spring each year. This report is about transparency and accountability. It highlights the initiatives and actions we have taken as well as where we have faced challenges or not made the progress we hoped. We always welcome feedback and collaboration from internal and external stakeholders and partners to help us learn and grow as an equitable, diverse and inclusive organisation.

Our Journey

The principles of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion underpin and weave through our current five year strategy as an important focus of our work. However, in the wake of the murder of George Floyd in 2020, we committed to taking a deeper look at how racism and other forms of oppression might be apparent in Become and to develop a more intentional approach to this work.

Over the past few years we have undertaken a range of work on EDI but this was sometimes siloed in individual departments rather than a clear cross-organisational approach. What's more, whilst we reported and discussed our progress internally with our staff team and trustees until now we lacked transparency and accountability externally.

Moving into 2023/24, we committed to greater transparency and to a clearer plan with clear, measurable targets - this report is one way in which we hope to be held to account by ourselves and others.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katharine Sacks-Jones". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Katharine Sacks-Jones (Chief Executive)



Our EDI Vision

Our EDI vision is the guiding force for how we approach EDI at Become:

Become seeks to challenge and disrupt the power systems and structures that marginalise care-experienced children and young people. Become's work is led and shaped by care-experienced people from diverse backgrounds and communities, with care-experienced young people at the heart of all its decision-making. Become is relentless in creating an inclusive culture where everyone feels they are valued and belong, and in breaking down barriers that stand in the way of equity, diversity and inclusion.

This vision is clear, but in order to progress from an ambition into meaningful action we have developed specific objectives for each of the communities of people that we come into contact with. These communities make up the subheadings of our EDI action plan. Below we set out the progress we've made, what we've learnt and what we plan to do next.



Our Action Plan

Community we exist for

Care-experienced young people of diverse backgrounds are at the heart of Become's work - they hold a strong and critical voice in Become's decision-making and strategy development and enjoy transparency from Become.

We did: We developed a new approach to participation in terms of how young people get involved in what we do and how they have a say in how we run the organisation, for example young people helped to shape our service development, redesign our complaints process and have been integral to recruitment interviews. More young people are involved in what we are doing and we are capturing more data about who they are to help us monitor diversity.

We learned: The Senior Leadership Team and the Board don't hear directly from young people enough – we need to consider how we create more opportunities for young people to speak to Become's leadership team and shape our plans and priorities.

We intend to: In the coming months, young people are contributing to the development of our new strategy through focus groups and surveys. We are seeking to further diversify who gets involved in participation opportunities to ensure that we are hearing the views of a diverse and varied group of young people, and we need to consider whether we are missing any particular groups. We also need to think more deeply about how young people can exercise power in Become – currently their influence is often framed by the organisation rather than being driven by young people themselves.

Become supports care-experienced young people in challenging the power systems that marginalise them.

We did: We have grown 'Become the Movement' - young people who want to challenge the care system and campaign for change - with over 300 young people now in this group. There have been lots of opportunities for young people to have their voices heard, whether that's shaping campaigns, speaking to decision makers or sharing their views on public platforms.

We intend to: We will continue to grow the range of ways that young people can get involved and to increase the number of opportunities we provide for young people to do this.

Become understands and engages with those care-experienced young people who are most marginalised and whose voices are least heard.

We did: We have formed new partnerships to reach particularly marginalised groups, such as young people who are unaccompanied asylum seekers and those who are in custody.

We learned: We have further to go to reach young people who may not know about us. Given the nature of our work, it can be challenging to capture data on the backgrounds of young people

We intend to: We plan to improve our data collection and to understand the anecdotal evidence we already hold better. We are also looking at which groups we aren't reaching and will think about how we address this.

Team

The staff team is inclusive of people from diverse communities and reflects the diversity of young people in care. Care-experienced people from diverse backgrounds are represented at all levels of seniority within the organisation.

We did: The introduction of a new HR system allowed the more systematic collection of diversity data for the staff team.

We learned: We know we have much further to go to improve our team diversity and are clear that the current situation is not good enough. We want to be better representative of the care-experienced community; for example, we do not currently employ enough people from racially marginalised communities and we would like to continue to increase the number of care-experienced colleagues within the team. We need to understand and be clear about what we are aiming for - it is only by being explicit and focussed that we can begin to address these challenges.

We intend to: We will set out our aims for what diversity should look like for Become's staff team and collect better data in order to be more targeted in our recruitment; our current processes do not allow us to understand where we are falling short in our approach. We will use this to review our approach to recruitment to attract candidates from a greater diversity of backgrounds. We also need to consider how we can make ourselves a more attractive workplace to people from marginalised backgrounds and how we can improve retention. We know that equity, diversity and inclusion is important and we do a lot in this sphere already – we should be clearer about this work internally and externally to underline its importance.

All marginalised staff feel a sense of belonging, that they can thrive, progress and have the power to shape and influence Become's culture and work.

We did: We undertook training on topics such as mental health awareness, neurodiversity, and trauma. We conducted an annual staff survey and quarterly pulse surveys to track team member wellbeing and sentiment. This has shown significant positive improvement over the past 12 months and shows a much greater sense of belonging than previously.

We learned: We need to continue to provide training and support to our managers so that they feel well supported, equipped and enabled to manage in an inclusive and equitable way.

We intend to: We will encourage all team members to be actively involved in the development of our new strategy. We will look at how to develop our training offer for managers .

Staff develop a shared language, understanding and approach to EDI and anti-oppression that recognises intersectional identities and experiences, including of care-experienced people.

We did: We launched a new Equity, Diversity and Inclusion policy during the year. We held regular discussions on EDI topics as part of team meetings and wider time together. We also relaunched our 'Understanding Care' sessions which are where team members provide training for the rest of the organisation on specific aspects of the care system. We held externally-facilitated trauma and neurodiversity training, and we started gathering resources relating to EDI into a knowledge bank, which helps us to build further understanding amongst the team.

We learned: Sometimes we postponed discussions on equity, diversity and inclusion, not because they weren't important but because they were occasionally pushed out by other urgent matters. It is vital that we ensure that we have enough time and space to discuss these important topics regularly and that they are embedded across our work.

We intend to: We will shortly be launching a rolling training programme on a variety of EDI topics. These bi-monthly training sessions will be followed up in team meetings in order to embed the learning within our everyday practice. We are also intending to develop a language guide to ensure a shared understanding of inclusive language.

Become operates with clear, robust policies and processes that promote inclusive, equitable treatment.

We did: We have reviewed all of our existing policies from an equity, diversity and inclusion perspective – we recognise that they may not be perfect, but the language contained is carefully-chosen to reflect the inclusive environment that we are striving for. We have also developed a Team Member Handbook which is available to everyone within the organisation on our intranet homepage – this handbook sets out our expectations in relation to our core values, EDI, and our code of conduct and points team members to where to find more information on our key policies and processes.

We intend to: We need to consider how best we seek feedback from the Care-Experienced Committee and the Managers' Group to help ensure that our policies are inclusive. We are also developing a more detailed induction process to ensure that all team members have a solid foundation for their time at Become, including an understanding of what our expectations are with respect to creating an inclusive culture.

Structures and resources are in place to support care-experienced staff and are co-created by them.

We did: A revised Care-Experienced Colleagues Policy was introduced in late 2023, developed in collaboration with care-experienced colleagues. As part of this, there is a new offer of support to Care-experienced colleagues which includes a new Care-Experienced Committee; the aim of this committee is to contribute towards creating the best working environment possible for care-experienced team members and to learn from their perspectives and experiences to improve our work across Become.

We learnt: Working in an environment that deals with matters close to personal experiences can at times be inherently draining emotionally and particular topics or conversations may be specifically triggering. We need to make sure we do everything possible to support colleagues to navigate this and to ensure that care-experienced colleagues' voices and views are actively sought and listened to.

We intend to: We need to ensure that the feedback from the Care-Experienced Committee is actively sought and captured in a timely manner to help inform and shape decision making.

Trustees

Board members are from diverse communities and at least 50% are care-experienced, of diverse backgrounds and experiences.

We did: We are proud that 50% of our Board are care-experienced – this means that they have lived experience of the issues we are addressing each day and are passionate about seeing systemic change for care-experienced young people

We intend to: During 2024 we will recruit new Trustees and we need to be mindful of the diversity of our Board when this recruitment is conducted, alongside giving due consideration to any skills gaps.

All Board members are equally respected and valued. Trustees feel able and confident to challenge each other when needed.

We did: We developed our Trustee Commitment which is a code of conduct setting out the parameters for how Board members engage with each other and the organisation to help create an inclusive environment where everyone's views and voices can be heard.

Board members engage meaningfully with staff and each other, adopting a partnership approach and noticing and challenging oppressive behaviours and power dynamics.

We did: We have provided the Board of Trustees with a quarterly reporting pack, which includes regular monitoring on equity, diversity and inclusion issues. Board members are encouraged to raise questions and provide feedback on EDI issues throughout the year.

External partners and stakeholders

Become challenges and addresses oppressive systems and behaviours from external partners and stakeholders.

We did: We have developed principles regarding what platforms our Team Members will appear on and have declined speaking invitations where we felt that these did not align with our values.

We intend to: We are looking at our external communications and considering how we can use the platform that we have to challenge and address systemic injustices and inequalities and amplify voices which are less heard.

Measurement and Accountability

We are clear and transparent in progress made and challenges we encounter

We did: We have prepared this, our first Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report, in order to take stock and review where we are as an organisation and to be open and transparent about what we have done well and what could be better.

We learnt: Measuring progress is not always straightforward for an organisation of our size and needs careful consideration to ensure we are focussed on the right things.

We intend to: We need to continue to clearly identify the challenges we face and be able to evidence that we are making active progress; we will be clearer on how we measure this.



Conclusion

As an organisation, Become has made significant progress in establishing an equity, diversity and inclusion framework and commitment. We have a team that are passionate about creating an inclusive culture and ensuring that care-experienced young people are valued, respected and empowered. We should be proud of the progress we have made, but we also need to recognise that there is much more to be done, and we must be relentless in our pursuit of a fairer society for all.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion is core to the delivery of our mission and we need to make sure that it is embedded in all of our work and given sufficient time and focus. We have identified that we need to improve our team's diversity and ensure that all voices are heard and valued. It is our ambition to create more opportunities to hear from care-experienced team members and young people to shape our organisation and decision making. We know that one of our key areas for improvement is data collection – this is so important because we need accurate data about the young people that we reach and don't reach, and our team members, to be able to effectively measure progress and to track where we could do better.

We are committed to transparency and welcome all feedback as we continue with our equity, diversity and inclusion work.