



How to Include Me

A toolkit for creating
an inclusive environment



Acknowledgements

This toolkit was developed by the Boost Project at Leeds Mind.

It was co-produced with Zara Siddiqui, a Boost Project Volunteer.



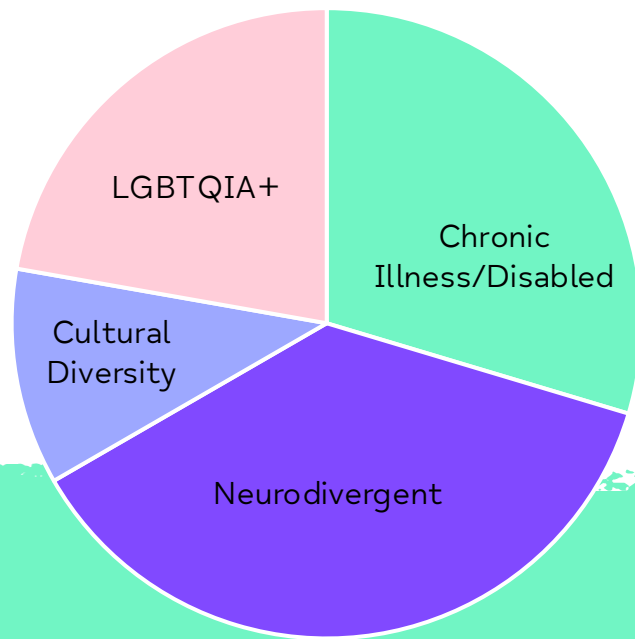
Many thanks to Zara and all the Boost volunteers who contributed their insight and lived experience to bring this toolkit to life.

Who are the Boost volunteers?

The Boost project recruited and trained volunteers from diverse and marginalised backgrounds to co-facilitate peer support groups.

100% of Boost volunteers have lived experience of mental health struggles

80% of Boost volunteers have a mental health condition or mental health difficulty



Boost volunteers represent various, often marginalised, groups

Contents

- How to use this Toolkit
- Simon's Story
- Inclusive Communication
- Inclusive Support
- Inclusive Culture
- Inclusivity Checklist for Organisations



How to use this Toolkit



This Toolkit was developed to help organisations integrate more inclusive practices in their work.

Employing people from diverse backgrounds does not guarantee equal experiences or opportunities for every volunteer or employee. Inclusion is what's needed to give diversity real impact and create an environment where everyone is empowered to thrive. At its core, inclusion is about valuing every individual and fostering a sense of belonging within an organisation.

We have divided inclusive practices into **Inclusive Communication**, **Inclusive Support** and **Inclusive Culture**. We have also developed an **Inclusivity Checklist** to help you get started.

Simon's Story

Simon's previous workplace culture encouraged being “normal”. He heard colleagues describe people seeking mental health support as “nutters”.

When he shared his struggles with mental health he was told “that's crazy”. When he raised concerns, he was told it was his “own perception”.

This led to him masking, which led to taking time off sick. When he tried to explain his “bad days” to colleagues, he was told “everyone has bad days.”



Simon has now joined a workplace that is much more inclusive.



My new role has felt more inclusive. There is an acknowledgement that I can share my lived experiences. I need to rebuild my trust with people, but I have felt comfortable...I think I'm in the right environment to flourish.



Inclusive Communication



Take the Initiative

- ✓ Open conversations around illnesses, mental health and supportive strategies without judgement
- ✓ Offer opportunities to discuss reasonable adjustments prior to someone beginning work or volunteering
- ✓ Routinely ask about wellbeing and mental health in 1-1s with line managers
- ✓ Schedule regular check-ins around challenging/new tasks or changing personal circumstances
- ✓ Communicate expectations from the start and provide clear structure and boundaries for roles
- ✓ Include pronouns, preferred names and name pronunciations in email signatures
- ✓ State your preferred name and pronouns to normalise this and signal to others that they can share theirs if they wish
- ✓ Offer different forms of contact such as email, in-person, online, telephone communication where possible

Respond Supportively

- ✓ Listen calmly when someone is telling you their needs/feelings without judgement or unsolicited advice
- ✓ Treat individuals as not just their condition or illness and be mindful not to patronise or talk down. Get to know more about them as people
- ✓ Give individuals time to think and formulate responses and reassure them this is okay
- ✓ Provide reassurance when someone is explaining an illness and is concerned it will jeopardise their career
- ✓ Destigmatise sick leave and taking time off for mental health by being reassuring, open and supportive with transitions
- ✓ Don't require people to share pronouns if they are not willing or ready to do so
- ✓ Maintain confidentiality around wellbeing or personal circumstances and communicate that you will do this



For me, it's the thought of having to bring things up yourself that makes things daunting. If the organisation brings up the conversation, it removes that stressful element.



Inclusive Support

Take the Initiative

- ✓ Offer reasonable accommodations or adjustments consistently at all stages of work including application, interview, induction, working, disciplinarys and sick leave
- ✓ Have documents in place to support staff to have conversations around wellbeing and support such as action plans, 1-1 forms and guidelines on reasonable adjustments
- ✓ Offer different working patterns such as flexible/compressed hours and hybrid working where possible
- ✓ Provide a quiet room that will be available if needed and not used for meetings (e.g. a zen room, prayer room)
- ✓ Consider introducing a “Social Story” to support access to your venue and services
- ✓ Have a Buddy System with support in place for both the buddy and new starter in their roles
- ✓ Consider the environment (e.g. bright lights, temperature, noise) and offer choice and variety to create a calm working environment

Respond Supportively

- ✓ Acknowledge individual difficulties and recognise people can perform with different solutions in place (E.g. don't expect neurodivergent people to work at neurotypical expectations)
- ✓ Be open to adapting based on peoples' needs - don't assume they should/can adapt to whatever environment confronts them
- ✓ Believe people when they say they need additional support and avoid comments suggesting they're being difficult (especially if they are awaiting a diagnosis or suspect they have a condition)
- ✓ Approach a reduction in performance with curiosity and ask openly about adjustments and support that could help
- ✓ Respond positively to requests for considerations around religious, cultural holidays, medical appointments
- ✓ Welcome stress/fidget toys and normalise their use
- ✓ Ensure the accessibility of your venue is clearly and honestly communicated and work toward increasing accessibility



**Just ask me what kind of
Reasonable Adjustments I need,
instead of making assumptions.**



Inclusive Culture



Take the Initiative

- ✓ Show your organisations commitment to the inclusion of different groups at all levels of communication and strategy
- ✓ Provide training and support for leadership staff on how to have conversations around wellbeing E.g. how to frame questions to encourage sharing
- ✓ Provide training to staff to understand the barriers faced by different groups such as neurodivergent, disabled, LGBTQIA+, culturally/ethnically diverse people
- ✓ Support the development of equity and diversity groups and networks that represent different groups and their allies
- ✓ Observe relevant awareness days within the organisation through hosting discussions, special events and opportunities for people to openly share their questions and experiences
- ✓ Ensure accurate monitoring of diversity using forms that capture this information sensitively and appropriately. Ensure terminology is appropriate

Respond Supportively

- ✓ Respond seriously to feedback on things like office noise levels, bright lights, inappropriate banter that can make people feel isolated or excluded
- ✓ Listen to criticism about the inclusivity of your workplace's culture without being defensive as it can take time to get things right
- ✓ Support through informed allyship if people from diverse groups are exclusively carrying the burden of creating change and providing education to others
- ✓ Accommodate different dietary needs (vegan, halal, kosher, non-alcoholic, allergies) if providing food for events
- ✓ Consider different types of social events including quieter activities and activities in different venues (e.g. not everyone is comfortable in a pub or in loud venues) so everyone has opportunities to be involved
- ✓ Notice if the same individuals are not attending social events and determine if barriers can be addressed.



Be open about wanting to be more inclusive. Being proactive by holding events, raising awareness and hosting discussions can make people feel able to come forward and bring their concerns because they know they will be taken seriously.



Organisation Checklist

Am I open to changing the way I do things?



Is my organisation open to changing the way it does things?



Does my organisation:

1	Support staff to be more culturally competent?	
2	Support staff to understand how to be more inclusive of different groups?	
3	Support staff to use inclusive language?	
4	Have a budget to implement practical support for reasonable adjustments?	
5	Use inclusive language in forms and documentation?	
6	Discuss wellbeing, equity, diversity, inclusivity and belonging in an open and authentic way?	

Organisation Checklist

Does my organisation:

7	Provide accessibility options in communications where relevant? (e.g. sensory-friendly spaces, ramps, lifts, low lighting)?	
8	Offer flexible working and reasonable adjustments for staff and volunteers?	
9	Openly discuss wellbeing and have measures in place to support the wellbeing of staff, volunteers and service users?	
10	Try to find creative solutions to support individual circumstances?	
11	Have regular check-ins with staff/volunteers?	
12	Normalise asking and giving pronouns and preferred names?	

Organisation Checklist

Does my organisation:

13	Take the initiative to provide information on accessibility and support?	
14	Organise social events and meetings that include people with different needs?	
15	Support staff to do all the above through training, open discussions and 1-1s?	
16	Have flexible policies to aid in inclusivity? (sickness, religious/cultural holidays, menopause, maternity/paternity, mental health support)	
17	Consider wellbeing in disciplinary meetings or try to avoid reaching disciplinaries?	
18	Avoid creating a culture of shame around sick leave, mental health and wellbeing	

Leeds Mind

Clarence House
11 Clarence Road
Horsforth
Leeds
LS18 4LB

T: 0113 305 5800

leedsmind.org.uk

Registered charity number 1007625

