



## BASL Inclusiveness Project

# Equality, Diversity and Inclusiveness Strategy 2021-2024

*(This document is currently under review and may be updated. The latest version of this document will be available on our website. Please refer to the website for the most up-to-date policies.)*

### Mission Statement

To foster an environment where all existing and potential members of BASL have a sense of belonging regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, religion, sexual orientation, profession, training level or place of work.

To use our diversity to positively enhance BASL's activities, creating opportunities for all members to contribute to all of our association's activities.

To ensure that BASL's leadership represents the diverse membership, advocates for the diversity of our patient population and our members and strives to reduce inequality in all our activities.

### Why a strategy is needed

BASL is an organisation that represents healthcare professionals working in the field of liver disease. Just like our patient population, we come from a diverse range of backgrounds; and we recognise that for our organisation to be successful we must understand and embrace this diversity. Only if our members have a sense of belonging will we achieve a supportive and collaborative environment, which is critical for the purposes that BASL was created - to provide learning, disseminate best practice, develop best research, and achieve best possible outcomes for patients. Everyone should feel included, and no-one should feel excluded. The culture should be neither bullying nor discriminatory; and wherever people work, BASL should be relevant. Furthermore, BASL should use the diversity of its membership in a positive way to enhance its professional activities by providing mentorship and promoting opportunities for equal access for both healthcare professionals at all levels in the UK, as well as patients regardless of their backgrounds. The latter should include access to clinical trials to combat what has been termed as 'academic racism' in clinical research.

BASL is not the only organisation reviewing its policies in this area. It has become crucial for organisations to be open and transparent in how they are run, and in the opportunities offered to contribute to this. Increasingly other agencies ask the BASL governing board to demonstrate BASL's inclusiveness. In the NHS as a whole there is evidence that healthcare professionals of Black and Asian ethnicity have poorer work experiences and opportunities for progression, and that experience can impact on patient satisfaction. Women comprise an increasing proportion of our

medical and nursing workforce, yet are also under-represented in leadership positions. Thus other professional medical organisations are also undertaking such reviews and making changes to improve equity.

Knowledge of the diversity of our membership and how inclusive we are considered to be as an organisation should provide a driver to ensuring BASL represents its members' views and offers equal opportunities, regardless of ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, age or gender. As hepatology as a speciality rapidly expands outside transplant units and large tertiary centres, it is equally important to be attractive to, welcoming and inclusive of all new members, to ensure the voices of these members are heard and that we serve all members.

At present, we do not know if we are an inclusive, non-discriminatory, diverse society. Our available data provides knowledge as to what professional groups we belong to and where we work, but this is not regularly analysed. We have no other demographic data. Thus we are currently unable to demonstrate our equal opportunities policy achievements and we cannot make recommendations for improving membership/employees representations.

We believe that understanding our diversity and our experiences, and ensuring we represent and include all our members will make BASL a stronger association.

To quote Dame Clare Marx, outgoing Chair of the GMC in her final July 2021 communication:

*"In my happiest moments, I felt respected, valued and listened to. I felt I belonged".*

## Strategy aims and development

In 2021 the President of BASL, Professor Guruprasand Aithal, requested the formation of a working party to focus on equality and diversity and to provide assurances that BASL can demonstrate that it is an inclusive organisation. The President-elect, Dr Rebecca Jones, was tasked with leading the project.

An invitation to join the working party was sent to all members via email and newsletter communication in April 2021. The working party has since met at regular intervals, and acknowledges Professor Mala Rao for her advice. It was immediately apparent that BASL cannot at present provide evidence of its inclusiveness, and the initial focus of the working party has been to develop and work on a strategy to start rectifying this.

## Executive summary

The working party have identified five main areas that are needed to achieve the goals laid out this strategy.

1. Members need to be engaged with the strategy to implement it effectively.
2. Data is crucial to inform our equality, diversity and inclusiveness policy.
3. Reporting is needed to evidence our policy, with the expectation that we can demonstrate diversity, equality of opportunity and inclusiveness in our business e.g. committees, meetings.

4. Promotion and support of equality, diversity and inclusiveness should be a core guiding element of the work of our association.
5. The association should advocate for inclusiveness in the wider healthcare sphere, especially for our patients.

The table that follows describes the key areas that BASL needs to work on in the first three years for the strategy to be implemented and outlines how the work could continue in the future.

The initial indicators for demonstrating our policy in action will include

1. An inclusivity statement with each invitation for participation in BASL activities, contribution to its work, or applications for its official support.
2. Engagement with personal data provision, reported as completed forms/total membership.
3. Annual reports of membership diversity data, provided in anonymous format.
4. Annual reports of diversity data from previous 3 years of committee nominations/applications and award nomination/applications related to successful appointment/award, provided in an anonymous format.

### Strategy Key Areas

Key Area	Rationale and Implementation Requirements
Working Party	<p>An E&amp;D working party is needed to have oversight of the policies and procedures to develop and implement the strategy for the initial 3 years. The invitation to join this group will be extended with the aim of 10 members from a diverse background ensuring BAME members, women and all types of hepatology services are represented.</p> <p>The BASL President will be responsible for the Association's inclusiveness. This role will be delegated to an independent chairperson.</p> <p>The working party chairperson will represent the group in advising the BASL executive on equality, diversity and inclusiveness and will contribute to the programme for the Annual Meeting.</p>
Benchmarking	<p>BASL does not routinely collect personal data relevant to an equality and diversity policy, therefore:</p> <p>We shall obtain available data from other sources in order to compare and contrast BASL's membership and use this to explore areas in which BASL may need to develop.</p> <p>We shall conduct member surveys relevant to our E&amp;D policy.</p>

Data	<p>BASL does not routinely collect personal data relevant to an equality and diversity policy. These categories relate to race, gender, beliefs, age etc. and are fundamental to an E&amp;D policy.</p> <p>We shall ask members to provide data on categories relevant to equality and diversity, and start to routinely collect this.</p> <p>Some of these are special category personal data as defined in the Data Protection Act 2018 and therefore subject to the GDPR. It is lawful to request and collect for purposes such as E&amp;D monitoring. BASL will work with its partners in EBS and its website provider to assure members of the confidentiality of such data. Data will be anonymised for reporting purposes.</p>
Policies	<p>In order to collect personal data, our E&amp;D and Privacy (Fair Notice) policies will need to be updated. A suite of policies relevant to confidential data handling will be provided.</p> <p>Our policies and strategy will be available on the BASL website and updates will be communicated to members through their communication preferences and links provided via the BASL newsletter.</p> <p>Initially for annual review, after the first annual review they will then require review at an interval determined by the E&amp;D working party</p>
Ensuring equality and diversity policy is transparent	<p>It is important that BASL is fair to all members in its activities and invitations for contributions and participation.</p> <p>Thus invitations to apply for BASL committees, working parties and special interest groups will be communicated to all members, without exception. The role description will outline a person-specification relating to role and eligibility to apply. This will not discriminate by ethnicity, age, gender, religion, sexuality or disability.</p> <p>An inclusiveness statement, welcoming applications from all eligible members, will be built into our advertisements and invitations as “business as usual.”</p> <p>We shall expect the same from the extended BASL family ie the BLTG, BLNA, BVHG etc.</p>
Ensuring inclusiveness can be evidenced	<p>Inclusivity metrics will be required to evidence our policy and to assess our strategy.</p> <p>The BASL secretariat will report on our compliance with the transparency descriptors above.</p> <p>Routinely collected data will be reported annually through anonymised reports. As this will be voluntary, the percentage of members completing data will be used as an indicator of</p>

	<p>engagement with the project. Initial indicators have been outlined in the previous section. Other indicators of inclusiveness, fairness, equal opportunity and non-discriminatory practice may be added.</p> <p>We shall seek means to provide assurance of equality and diversity within our committees. We shall expect that applicants for BASL committees and successfully appointed members will consent to providing data relevant to the E&amp;D policy. A reporting interval of 3 years will be set to ensure anonymity can be preserved with the data. This will be clear to candidates at the time of application. This data will be processed in line with a clear data protection policy by our data processors</p> <p>Similarly, external agencies now request evidence of inclusiveness as part of BASL’s business. Examples include national clinical excellence awards. A reporting interval of 3 years will be set to ensure anonymity can be preserved with the data.</p> <p>Commercial partners sponsoring BASL activities will be required to provide evidence that they have an E&amp;D policy and share that with us.</p>
Promoting inclusiveness	<p>We shall develop means to ensure that the BASL membership is aware of this project and its aims. This may include for example, newsletter items, tweets, conference posters and invited lectures.</p> <p>In keeping with one of our purposes, we shall explore the provision of evidence-based education in E&amp;D relevant areas, also relevant to hepatology and to our organisation.</p> <p>We shall look for evidence of inclusiveness in projects and events that BASL is asked to support or endorse.</p> <p>We shall expect our sponsors and affiliated partners to promote and support inclusiveness.</p>
Supporting inclusiveness	<p>We shall develop inclusiveness champions within the membership.</p> <p>We shall tie into a mentorship scheme within the organisation.</p> <p>We shall from time to time ask members to “Have Your Say.” We shall develop means to ensure that the BASL membership is consulted about their experience of and ideas for inclusiveness. This may be for example, through webinars or member surveys. We shall inform the membership of outcomes from feedback, for example using a “You Said, We Did” format. We shall seek to ensure that our conferences invite clinical experts that demonstrate the diversity of our membership and patient populations.</p> <p>We shall use conference feedback to develop future programmes.</p>

	<p>We shall engage the next generation, utilising our trainee networks, to develop our inclusiveness policies and strategies for the future.</p> <p>We shall endeavour to avoid scheduling BASL events on religious holidays or in the first week of the new school year.</p> <p>We shall endeavour to use venues that can provide the option of facilities that support an inclusive environment, for example breast-feeding facilities and gender neutral toilets</p>
Raising concerns	<p>BASL's policies do not clearly articulate the process by which someone can raise a concern should they feel subject to discrimination or bullying within the work of the organisation. This needs clarifying and a written policy needs developing.</p>
Advocacy	<p>BASL will advocate for equality and diversity in all its activities.</p> <p>It will share its policies with relevant agencies.</p> <p>It will champion liver services to reflect the needs of local populations in all their diversity and inequalities.</p> <p>It will promote and support initiatives to reduce inequality in the distribution of liver services in the UK and Northern Ireland, access to services specific to the needs of patients with liver disease and variation in the clinical outcomes of people with liver disease.</p> <p>It will promote diversity in liver services workforce development.</p> <p>Where aligned with BASL's remit, it will support the endeavour of other organisations in promoting and developing equality and diversity. It will join with partner organisations as needed to support equality and diversity as widely as possible within health services.</p>

**This strategy was approved by the BASL Committee 3rd Dec 2021**

**BASL Inclusiveness Project Working Group**

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