

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Embedding EDI
into leadership,
people strategy, and
operational practice:
A best practice guide
for HR professionals

Introduction

Offshore wind is critical to the UK’s transition to net zero, and its workforce needs to be just as future-fit as its infrastructure. As the industry expands, so too should the approach to building inclusive, equitable, and diverse workplaces. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) are not merely moral or legal obligations, they are strategic enablers for long-term sector sustainability. This guide offers practical, evidence-based best practices to help businesses in the offshore wind sector entrench EDI into everyday operations, policies, and culture. It begins by clarifying core EDI concepts and terminology, followed by a clear business case for why EDI matters.

This HR-focused guide is designed to support those working in people, culture, and operational roles to embed EDI into core people practices across the employee lifecycle: from attraction and recruitment, through onboarding, development, progression, and retention. It avoids generic advice and instead offers adaptable, context-specific guidance relevant to HR teams whether you’re a small supplier or a major developer, operating onshore or offshore. You will find tools to help you design inclusive job adverts, review and refine your policies, track progress beyond compliance, and foster everyday behaviours that shape a culture of inclusion. Key legislative considerations are summarised, alongside metrics for evaluating what is working, and what is not.

Whether you are building HR systems from scratch or looking to enhance what is already in place, this guide is a springboard for turning EDI principles into daily action. It is not about perfection, it is about progress.

HR leaders: building inclusive structures

From default owner to informed leader: EDI starts with you

EDI is often handed to HR by default. However, it is not always the case that a HR leader is automatically equipped to drive change within this sphere. Just as financial literacy is essential for managing budgets, a foundational understanding of EDI is key for leading inclusion work effectively.

Options to consider:

- Educate yourself through credible sources. There is a plethora of information of varying depths online.
 - The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) have an accredited programme that focuses on inclusion and culture. Search their website for the latest guides.
 - The Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion (enei) have membership resources, practical training, policy advice and benchmarking tools for inclusive HR practice.
- Hire or train EDI practitioners with industry credibility
- Fund internal secondments for team members from underrepresented backgrounds to co-lead on inclusion efforts. Ensure this is fully integrated with adequate support, time, and recognition to avoid tokenism or placing an unfair burden on underrepresented voices. This should be lead in partnership with allies, leadership and experts.
- Create EDI champions across HR disciplines (L&D, rewards, wellbeing etc) that are trained.
- Use expert support:
 - External consultants can be valuable partners in mapping risks and opportunities, but it is important to tailor their advice to your specific operational context so it is practical and impactful.
 - ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) has a workplace inclusion guide, a free equality diversity and inclusion policy template. They can offer free confidential advice on employment rights, rules and best practice. **ACAS Helpline: 0300 123 1100**

Why is EDI so important?

Embedding EDI into HR practice ensures the organisation attracts, develops, and retains the best talent from the widest possible pool. Diverse and inclusive teams are proven to be more innovative, adaptable, and productive. These qualities are critical for competitiveness and sustainability in today’s market. By removing barriers and supporting all employees to thrive, HR reduces costly turnover, widens access to scarce skills, and enriches workplace culture.

Compliance with EDI best practice also reduces legal risk by meeting statutory obligations and minimising the likelihood of discrimination claims, grievances, or reputational harm. Furthermore, organisations recognised for fair and inclusive cultures are more attractive to high-calibre candidates and business partners, improving employer brand and customer trust.

For HR, championing EDI translates to better outcomes in:

- Attracting talent where candidate shortages are acute
- Improving engagement and productivity through a sense of belonging
- Lowering absence and turnover rates by supporting wellbeing and inclusive management
- Meeting regulatory and customer requirements for fairness, transparency, and pay reporting

Essentially, an EDI-focused HR approach not only builds a robust, future-ready workforce but also directly contributes to the organisation’s bottom line and long-term success.

Tailoring EDI to different work environments

In recent years, many organisations have shifted from a broad “equality and diversity” framing to one rooted in equity and inclusion. This change reflects a more mature understanding that treating everyone the same is not enough in environments where some groups face systemic barriers or exclusion from the outset. The approach of equity means actively redistributing access, opportunity, and support, tailoring EDI depending on particular and intersectional needs.

This is the case for different working environments too, offshore and site-based workforces, often male-dominated, rotational, and hierarchical, require specific, targeted approaches to equity. That might include:

- Reviewing offshore allowance and travel policies for fairness
- Ensuring access to dignity-enhancing welfare facilities (e.g. inclusive toilets and PPE)
- Recognising how site culture and shift patterns can reinforce exclusionary norms
- Ensure safety communications are inclusive. For example, visual alarms alongside audible ones, and written safety briefings for deaf or hard-of-hearing workers.

EDI cannot be a one-size-fits-all strategy. What inclusion looks like in a corporate office is not the same as what it requires in a port-side warehouse, fabrication yard, or offshore substation. If EDI policies are to be meaningful, and not just symbolic, they need to be adapted to the operational realities, risks, and cultural dynamics of each working environment.

Employee lifecycle and progression

It is important to embed EDI principles and processes at every stage, from onboarding and induction to progression, retention and offboarding. HR is responsible for auditing and mitigating bias in promotions, performance management, and access to learning.

Reviewing and strengthening existing practices

Regularly reviewing and challenging current practices helps HR uncover hidden gaps, biases, or one-size-fits-all solutions that may not meet the needs of all employees. By systematically auditing processes, collecting employee feedback, analysing outcomes, and benchmarking against industry standards, organisations can adapt their frameworks to support different contexts and life circumstances, ensuring equity and opportunity throughout the employee journey.

- Interrogate how roles are scoped. Are job descriptions unnecessarily excluding those with care responsibilities or mobility limitations?
- Review current parental provision: is it accessible and genuinely practical for offshore roles? Apply policies to “real world” offshore cases: What happens if an engineer needs to start maternity leave while offshore? Is there a protocol for safe and timely relief/extraction?
- Review flexible and remote working requests
- Check whether onboarding materials, schedules and support are accessible for neurodivergent colleagues?
- Explore whether reporting channels feel safe and are used by all groups, or if some employees report less or face longer resolution times.
- Audit whether personal protective equipment (PPE), onsite clothing, and sanitary facilities are designed to fit all genders and body types, not just the majority.
- Check who is invited to or has access to professional networks, site visits, and client meetings.
- Assess whether wellbeing and mental health support (EAPs, peer support) is accessible, trusted, and suitable for the offshore/remote environment
- Evaluate if anti-racism, bias mitigation, and cultural competence training is regularly provided, up-to-date, and well-attended, not just a one-off exercise.
- Check whether vessels, fabrication yards, and welfare units are physically accessible where possible, and whether evacuation plans cover employees with reduced mobility or sensory impairments.

Addressing the implementation gap

Workers often report a gap between corporate EDI policies and what they experience offshore. Closing this gap is key to building trust and ensuring policies are meaningful in practice.

To close that gap:

- Ensure policies are translated into offshore/site-specific guidance and practices. For example, do not just say flexible working is available. Instead, explain how that could apply in a 2-weeks-on/2-weeks-off rotation.
- Invest in training and supporting supervisors and contractors to implement EDI principles.
- Monitor where EDI breaks down. Use feedback loops from offshore workers (including anonymous channels) to adapt and update approaches.

EDI policies that do not consider the realities of offshore or site-based work may be less effective and face challenges in gaining traction or building trust among those teams.

Practical actions for HR leaders

- Review current HR tech to identify risks, gaps, or bias blind spots. Ask: Who does this serve? Who might be excluded?
- Include people from underrepresented groups in the selection, testing, and evaluation of tech platforms.
- When procuring new tools, use an EDI-informed checklist (e.g. accessibility, bias testing) as part of your procurement process.



Embedding race and ethnicity

Building inclusive workplaces in offshore wind means recognising and valuing the diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds of all employees, including those working offshore, on-site, or within the supply chain. Race and ethnicity are often overlooked in industrial settings, yet they shape experiences of belonging, safety, and opportunity. By intentionally embedding race and ethnicity into EDI policy design and implementation, organisations can create stronger, more resilient teams that reflect the societies they serve.

Supporting racial and ethnic inclusion across work environments

Foster Inclusive Offshore and Site Cultures

Offshore and site-based environments are often close-knit and high-pressure, which makes it especially important to actively foster cultures where all workers feel respected and included. This involves addressing behaviours that may undermine inclusion, such as cultural stereotyping, racialised humour, or assumptions based on appearance or accent, and replacing them with clear expectations for respectful, team-oriented conduct.

Recognise and challenge bias in assessments of ‘fit’ or ‘competence’

Workers can sometimes be judged unfairly based on factors unrelated to their ability, such as accent, communication style, or assumptions linked to ethnicity or nationality. By broadening definitions of professionalism and valuing different ways of speaking and working, organisations can make more equitable decisions about hiring, promotion, and deployment. Inclusive teams are not built through sameness, but through openness to difference.

Ensure inclusive policies in practice

Dignity at work, grievance procedures, and codes of conduct should include examples relevant to racial and ethnic inclusion, such as racial microaggressions or exclusion from informal networks. Practical considerations also matter: PPE should accommodate different hair types and cultural or religious dress; food and accommodation arrangements offshore should consider a range of dietary and cultural needs.

Build trust through voice and representation

Workers are more likely to speak up about exclusion or discrimination when they see a commitment to listening and action. Organisations can build this trust by ensuring anonymous feedback channels, appointing trained inclusion advocates offshore or on-site, and taking visible steps when concerns are raised.

Use Data to drive progress

Collecting and reviewing ethnicity data by site, contract type, and job level enables organisations to spot patterns and act early. This data can highlight where additional support, training, or policy refinement may be needed. Progress is easier to sustain when it is measured and understood.

Inclusion is strengthened when policies reflect the full diversity of the workforce, across gender, race, ethnicity, and beyond. When organisations actively consider how racial and ethnic identity shapes workplace experiences, especially in offshore and on-site settings, they not only improve individual outcomes but also build stronger, more adaptive teams ready to meet the challenges of the energy transition.

Many HR processes are designed to address one type of inequality at a time, for example, gender or race or disability. But in real life, people do not experience their identities in isolation. A Black woman, a disabled migrant worker, or a young LGBTQ+ technician will face barriers that are shaped by the interaction of multiple systems of disadvantage, not just one. This is the core of intersectionality: the understanding that inequality is layered, and that HR practices need to reflect that complexity if they are to be fair and effective.

Using data to drive inclusion

It is important to set clear targets, define accountability and regularly track progress.

- Broaden metrics to be inclusive
- Disaggregate by project site, contract type, and seniority level to check for gaps
- Collect disability data sensitively and voluntarily, and monitor representation and progression rates for disabled employees. Track uptake of reasonable adjustments and assess whether these are effective through employee feedback
- Focus on qualitative insights too, engage in exit interviews, run inclusion pulse checks, and encourage storytelling from underrepresented staff.
- Use feedback mechanisms and publish progress where possible
- Include metrics beyond representation such as psychological safety surveys, belonging scores, and the inclusion index.

Turn inclusion into everyday practice:

- Build class-related questions into your HR data, and use intersectional analysis to uncover where class, race, and gender compound.
- Offer targeted development (e.g. mentoring, coaching, leadership pipelines) to support progression and representation.

Why intersectionality matters for HR

Standard diversity monitoring may show good gender balance, but not reveal that all women hired are white and office-based.

Inclusion policies may address race, but overlook how racialised women experience gendered racism, including assumptions about assertiveness, capability, or “cultural fit”. Recruitment processes may support neurodivergent workers, but not account for how this intersects with social class, language fluency, or shift work constraints.

Overlooking intersectionality risks designing policies and interventions that work well for some, but exclude others, often those facing the greatest disadvantage.

Building inclusive recruitment pipelines

“I’d like to get involved in recruitment—maybe to help more people from my background get into careers in the sector.”

— Male, Black African, Process Engineer

Within the recruitment stage there are plenty of opportunities for individual bias and systematic bias to influence outcomes for women and ethnic minorities. According to ACAS, ‘Unconscious bias occurs when people favour others who look like them and/or share their values. For example, a person may be drawn to someone with a similar educational background, from the same area, or who is the same colour or ethnicity as them’ (ACAS Advice and Guidance). This favouring is common during the recruitment process.

While many organisations hire for ‘cultural fit’ to ensure alignment with team values, this can unintentionally narrow the talent pool. Shifting to a ‘culture add’ approach helps bring in new skills and perspectives that strengthen team performance.

It is important to look to the full recruitment pipeline:

- **Job design and descriptions:**
 - Use inclusive language (avoid gendered words like “strong”, “assertive”, “dominant”).
 - Focus on essential rather than inflated requirements (e.g., challenge the need for offshore experience where it can be trained)
 - Consider adding a line about valuing non-linear or non-traditional career paths.
- **Advertising and sourcing:**
 - Do not rely on the “usual channels”, they often reproduce homogeneity.
 - Ensure all roles are advertised widely (not just through word of mouth or elite networks).
 - Partner with organisations/networks that promote underrepresented talent in energy (e.g., POWERful Women, Diversity in Energy, BAME Energy).
 - Use imagery and language in job ads that signal inclusion (not just “we are an equal opportunity employer”).
- **Shortlisting and interviews:**
 - Introduce structured assessment criteria
 - Have at least two reviewers for CVs and blind the first stage if appropriate (not suitable for every role or context)
 - Train interviewers on EDI, subconscious bias and to spot and challenge pedigree bias.
 - If using interview panels, ensure diversity, or at minimum, train panellists in how to mitigate groupthink and affinity bias.
- **Assessment and decision-making:**
 - Be explicit about what “good” looks like and base decisions on evidence, not gut feel. Ensure that the “good” is not based on a stereotypical worker [see adjacent box]
 - Audit recruitment and promotion processes for classed language and expectations.
 - Ask: *Is the decision based on objective requirements, or a preference for candidates who resemble the current workforce?*

Highlight initiative: Job Crafting

Rethink what “good” looks like

Many organisations try to reduce bias by setting objective criteria and structured scoring. While this is better than relying on instinct or “chemistry”, it is not bias-proof. In fact, these criteria often reflect the idea of an ideal worker, someone who:

- Has continuous, full-time experience (with no career gaps)
- Has already worked offshore or in engineering-heavy environments
- Is assertive, confident, and outspoken in interviews
- Can relocate or travel without restrictions

These standards can unintentionally favour those with similar backgrounds or life circumstances.

So instead of asking “who ticks all the boxes?”, HR and hiring teams should ask:

- Who wrote the boxes?
- Are these essential to success in the role, or are they convenient proxies?
- What alternative strengths or experiences might someone from a different background bring?

This shift is critical if you want to move from hiring for sameness to hiring for difference.

Quick win

Avoid asking for “years of experience” in a sector where access has historically been gated. Focus on transferable skills and trainability.

Using technology and AI to support EDI in offshore wind HR practice

Technology and AI can help HR teams work smarter, faster, and more consistently, but without a critical lens, it can also reinforce bias and reduce transparency. In a sector like offshore wind, where hiring, mobilisation, and training often happen at speed and across geographically dispersed sites, getting the tech-EDI balance right is essential.

Where technology can support inclusion:

Recruitment tools

Applicant tracking systems (ATS) and AI-powered screening tools can help reduce administrative burden and improve consistency. Used well, they can anonymise candidate data, flag biased language in job ads, and surface more diverse talent. However, it is important to be cautious as algorithms can inherit bias from historical data or prioritise traits that reflect past (and often exclusionary) hiring norms.

Learning platforms

Online learning management systems (LMS) allow for tailored, scalable EDI learning that meets employees where they are. Bite-sized, role-specific content can be more effective than generic annual training.

Workforce analytics and dashboards

HR tech can support better data collection on workforce demographics, progression patterns, and inclusion metrics. Dashboards can surface patterns (e.g. attrition by gender or race, training uptake by team) and help leaders act before issues become systemic.

Accessible communication tools

Technology can support inclusion by offering accessible formats (e.g. captioned videos, screen reader-friendly interfaces, multilingual content), especially important in diverse and multilingual workforces.

Risks:

- AI tools trained on biased datasets will replicate and automate that bias at scale. HR leaders must interrogate where the data came from and what assumptions underpin the algorithms.
- Many tools marketed as “AI for HR” operate as black boxes. Ask suppliers to explain how decisions are made and what steps they take to mitigate bias.
- Tech can supplement but not replace human judgement, context, or relationships. A “click to comply” training module will not build a culture of inclusion on its own.
- EDI data is sensitive. Be clear with staff about why you are collecting it, how it will be used, and how their privacy will be protected.



Image courtesy of Equinor

Core statutory legislation

Equality Act 2010

The main legal framework prohibiting discrimination, harassment, and victimisation in the workplace, protecting nine “protected characteristics”:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation.

This includes the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED): Public bodies (and some private organisations carrying out public work) must consider equality in everything they do.

Employment Rights Act 1996

Governs general employment protection rights, including unfair dismissal, redundancy, and contractual terms, which intersect with EDI where protected characteristics are concerned.

Human Rights Act 1998

Ensures the basic rights and freedoms set out in the European Convention on Human Rights are protected in the UK workplace.

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

Obligates employers to maintain a safe workplace, which includes protection from bullying and harassment as part of psychosocial risk

Employment Rights Bill

The Employment Rights Bill is expected to become law later in 2025. This means important changes to employment law.

- Review and update EDI and anti-harassment policies to meet the new “all reasonable steps” threshold.
- Prepare for extended pay gap reporting and start gathering necessary demographic data sensitively and lawfully.
- Audit family, flexible, and sick leave policies to ensure compliance with expanded “day one” rights.
- Ensure consultation processes, documentation, and worker engagement mechanisms are robust

Acas have free regular webinars on employment law topics and employment relations:
www.acas.org.uk/webinars

Upskilling Line Managers for everyday inclusion

Line managers are the front line of employee experience. They shape team culture, set behavioural expectations, and often make the key decisions that impact recruitment, task allocation, performance, and wellbeing. In the offshore wind sector, where teams are dispersed, roles are physically demanding, and shift-based work is common, their influence is even more pronounced.

However, many line managers have not been given the tools, language, or confidence to lead inclusively. Investing in their development is a fundamental requirement for embedding EDI into everyday operations.

Why upskilling matters

- Policies do not implement themselves. Even the most progressive EDI strategy will fall short if line managers are unsure how to apply it on site or offshore.
- Line managers shape team culture more than senior leadership. Workers are more likely to stay or leave based on their relationship with their immediate manager.
- Many line managers have technical expertise but limited experience with EDI. Without support, they may feel uncertain about how to navigate difference, respond to incidents, or speak confidently about inclusion.

What effective upskilling looks like

Build EDI into core management skills

Treat inclusion as a leadership competency, not a standalone initiative. EDI principles should be woven into existing training on performance management, recruitment, conflict resolution, and communication.

Make it role-relevant and site-aware

Managers are more likely to engage with training that reflects the realities of their working environment. Use offshore or site-based scenarios:

- How do you respond to exclusionary banter on a vessel?
- What does flexible working look like for a technician on rotation?
- How do you spot signs of isolation or burnout in transient crews?
- Consider how to support colleagues with disabilities on site. For example, using clear visual communication in noisy environments, ensuring team members with hearing or visual impairments are fully included in safety briefings, and checking that reasonable adjustments are in place and respected.

Focus on confidence, not just compliance

Move beyond “do no harm” messaging. Equip managers with the confidence to lead inclusive conversations, challenge inappropriate behaviour, and support diverse team members.

Create practical tools

Provide simple guidance sheets, checklists, and conversation starters that managers can use in the moment

Encourage reflective practice and peer learning

Offer spaces where managers can reflect on their role in shaping inclusion, share challenges, and learn from peers. This can be built into team leader forums, safety briefings.

Recognise and reward inclusive leadership

Inclusion should be a criterion for performance evaluation and career progression. Celebrate and reward managers who create psychologically safe teams, support diverse talent, and role model inclusive behaviours.

Ensure senior backing and alignment

Managers are more likely to take EDI seriously when it is visibly supported by senior leaders. Make clear that inclusion is not “soft” work, it is critical to safety, team performance, and talent retention.

Top five inclusive habits for HR leaders

Use this checklist to take immediate, practical steps towards embedding EDI across your organisation. Focus on progress, not perfection.

Action	Details	Your reflection
Audit and prioritise	Review one core HR process (e.g. recruitment or onboarding). Identify one high impact change you can make quickly and set a priority list for deeper reviews.	
Listen to your people	Run a short pulse survey or focus group. Actively seek feedback from underrepresented groups including offshore crews, shift workers and disabled employees.	
Upskill key influencers	Select 5-10 line managers or team leads for practical inclusion training. Provide checklists and tools they can use immediately.	
Make visible inclusion	Communicate one EDI initiative clearly and invite employee involvement. Small, visible actions build trust.	
Measure and share progress	Track one or two metrics (e.g. representation, promotion rates, inclusion survey scores). Share results internally.	

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A broader collaborative project between the University of East Anglia and Anglia Ruskin University informs this best practice guide.



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With thanks to:

