

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Conference 2026

Wednesday 10 June, CCE1

Bold and Inclusive in Changing Times: Embedding equity with confidence, purpose and compassion

Time	Session	Location
9:15-10:00	Registration and Refreshments	CCE1 Foyer
10:00-10:15	Introduction: Professor Andy Long, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive	CCE1 001 Lecture Theatre
10:15-11:15	Keynote Address: Professor Arun Verma	CCE1 001 Lecture Theatre
11:15-11:25	Break	CCE1 Foyer
11:30-12:30	Parallel Session 1	CCE1 Ground Floor - See below
12:30-13:15	Lunch and Networking	CCE1 Foyer
13:20-14:30	Institutional Equality Actions Update and Portfolio Updates from our Senior Sponsors	CCE1 001 Lecture Theatre
14:35-14:40	Changeover	CCE1 Foyer
14:45-15:45	Parallel Session 2	CCE1 Ground Floor - See below
15:45-16:00	Closing Remarks: Jane Embley, Chief People Officer	CCE1 001 Lecture Theatre

Conference Outline and Aims

This year's theme — *Bold and Inclusive in Changing Times* — reflects both the urgency and the ambition that define our collective commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion. In a landscape of shifting educational, social, and economic pressures, this conference brings together colleagues from across the university to share research, practice, and lived experience in pursuit of a more equitable institution and a more just society.

Introduction Our Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive, Professor Andy Long, will introduce the conference, highlighting our institutional commitment to EDI but also the challenges that we face, and why we will continue to speak out in support of EDI. He will outline the day's programme, which spans a rich breadth of themes united by a shared conviction: that inclusion is not a peripheral concern, but a foundation for everything we do.

Keynote Speaker We are delighted to share that our keynote address will be given by Professor Arun Verma. Professor Verma is a leader for intersectional, inclusive, and accountable cultures across the public sector and education. His work transforms governance, policy, and organisational systems, both nationally and internationally, into structures that enable equity, agility, and meaningful impact. A strategic leader in institutional change, he specialises in turning complexity into clarity. His achievements include launching Research England's inaugural EDI Action Plan, leading the enhancement of the Race Equality Charter and developing the sector's first Race Equality Theory of Change with over 90 universities in the UK. He led national and international evidence and learning strategies to prevent and protect the most marginalised and deprived groups from harm and has published research on implementing inclusive cultures and intersectionality into education systems. His keynote talk will directly address how to navigate the current pressures and constraints facing higher education, offering ideas and opportunities for inclusive action drawing on real examples from his leadership that have delivered institutional outcomes.

Institutional Equality Actions Progress Review and Updates from our Senior Sponsors In this session our Director of EDI, Rachel Brown, will set the institutional context, aligning with our strategic commitment to promote fairness in a community where all staff and students feel they belong. She will echo Professor Long's introduction and Professor Verma's keynote, acknowledging the challenges EDI work faces in a difficult time for the higher education sector, but reaffirming why the University remains firmly committed to being bold and inclusive in these changing times. EDI Manager Fiona Snook will then provide an update on progress across our institutional Athena Swan, Race Equality, and Disability action plans, before our Senior Sponsors share the detail of work underway across the four focus areas of Disability, Gender, LGBTQ+, and Race.

Designing for Inclusion from the Ground Up Several sessions explore how our institutional structures, curricula, and physical environments can be redesigned to serve everyone better. Northumbria's Universal Design for Learning (UDL) CPD pathways demonstrate how inclusive pedagogy can be embedded at scale, while the Make Space project challenges long-standing barriers in technical and workshop settings through creativity and compassionate teaching. The Maternal Spaces research project, meanwhile, examines how urban and physical environments shape the everyday lives of mothers — asking who our spaces are truly designed for.

Institutional Equality Commitment Several sessions offer a closer look at Northumbria's own institutional commitments and the work underway to turn them into tangible change. Tying in with the session on institutional equality actions and our Senior Sponsors' Portfolio Updates, two sessions talk about the rationale behind our new internal LGBTQ+ and Disability Equality Action Plans. Professor Chris Ashford will introduce the university's LGBTQ+ Action Plan, sharing insights from the LGBTQ+ Equality Forum and university-wide listening groups, and setting out how progress will be measured. Professor Louise Bracken will outline developments in disability equality, including the launch of Northumbria's new Disability Action Plan, findings from listening groups with disabled colleagues and students, and ongoing work to embed inclusive design principles across both the physical and digital estate.

Race, Ethnicity, and Representation A number of sessions address the persistent inequalities faced by racially minoritised students and staff. Research into postgraduate research experiences at post-92 universities, alongside a detailed analysis of 14 years of national satisfaction data for students of mixed ethnic backgrounds, highlight the structural and cultural barriers that remain. The Amplifying Black Voices in the University Library project offers a powerful example of student-led, collaborative change in action. There will also be a session introducing the North East and Cumbria Centre for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) Communities Outreach Project, which is followed by a Gypsy Roma Traveller crafts workshop.

Mental Health, Neurodiversity, and Disability The conference gives significant attention to those whose experiences are too often marginalised within institutional life. Sessions on neurodiversity in the workplace, and the limits of institutional inclusion for those with lived experience of distress, all invite us to reflect critically on who our universities truly centre — and who remains at the margins.

Gender, Widening Participation, and Access From the subtle ways job adverts may deter women applicants, to our Levelling Up Law mentoring scheme supporting law students from widening participation backgrounds, to the Converge Northumbria programme offering creative and educational opportunities to those facing mental health challenges in the wider community, these sessions highlight the many levers available to us in widening access and challenging systemic disadvantage.

Sport, Arts, and Cultural Production Two sessions bring EDI perspectives to the worlds of sport and the arts. Research into inclusive sports technologies considers how design choices can either entrench or dismantle inequality in participation, while a short film explores the lived realities of para-athletes beyond elite performance narratives. Separately, an AHRC-funded study into trans cultural production across the UK charts more than two decades of theatre and performance practice by and about trans artists.

Research, Funding, and the Academy A workshop drawing on the UKRI and British Academy-funded EDI Caucus evidence review examines the obstacles faced by minoritised researchers seeking funding, with practical implications for those involved in internal selection processes. A cross-national study comparing gender equality barriers across higher education institutions in the UK and South East Asia broadens our perspective beyond the domestic context.

Dementia and the Workforce Looking ahead to one of the most significant demographic challenges facing workplaces, a dedicated session on dementia in the workplace introduces the Working with

Dementia network and invites participants to consider how universities can build cultures of care and person-centred support.

Taken together, the sessions in this year's programme reflect the breadth and depth of EDI work happening across Northumbria — in our classrooms, our research, our professional services, and our communities. We hope the day provokes reflection, sparks conversation, and strengthens the connections that make this work possible.

Parallel Session 1, 11:30-12:30

Room	Session Title		Session Overview
CCE1 001 Lecture Theatre	What UDL looks like in practice: Anticipatory design for SAPs, International and Commuter Students Joss Barrowcliff and Jean Moore	1.1	<p>Student Accessibility Plans (SAPs), international student transitions, and commuter student experiences are often treated as separate institutional challenges, each addressed through distinct processes and interventions. This session argues that when we design for categories rather than individuals, we solve the wrong problem.</p> <p>Drawing on Universal Design for Learning principles and an anticipatory inclusive design framework, this session will illustrate through real case studies from Northumbria University what it looks like to embed inclusion before students encounter difficulty, rather than afterwards. Attendees will leave having reflected on their own practice, with illustrative examples they can apply to teaching, assessment, or service design.</p>
CCE1 024 Seminar Room	Maternal Spaces Research Project Dr Jiayi Jin	1.2	<p>This talk focuses on the Maternal Spaces research project, part of the broader initiative on gender-inclusive cities (https://research.northumbria.ac.uk/gender-inclusivecities/). Developed in collaboration with H+PS Architects in Newcastle, the project explores mothers' embodied experiences and spatial practices in Newcastle city centre. It examines how the availability, quality, and accessibility of maternal spaces shape mothers' engagement with urban public spaces, their everyday navigation of the city, and their sense of belonging.</p>
CCE1 018 Seminar Room	Good Practice Guide for Inclusive Demand Management Dr Stefanie Schneider	1.3	<p>The EDI Caucus is funded by UKRI and the British Academy and, in early 2024, published an evidence review examining the obstacles for minoritised researchers who seek funding. This session is a workshop targeted at colleagues who are directly involved with internal selection processes, either as academic panel members or research managers who plan and set up these processes.</p>

CCE1 003 Lecture Theatre	Inclusivity in Sports Dr Daniel Harrison 30 minutes	1.4a	This session focuses on inclusivity within sports, physical activity, and technology (SportsHCI). The work takes a broad EDI perspective, for example, considering how technologies can better support people who are currently underserved or excluded from sport (e.g. “everyday” participants, ageing athletes, and diverse communities), and how design choices can either reinforce or challenge existing inequalities in access, participation, and representation.
	Freedom to Move Film Screening and Discussion Dr Cecilia Stenbom and Dr Andrea Scott-Bell 30 minutes	1.4b	Freedom to Move (2025) is a five-minute short film emerging from an interdisciplinary project led by Dr Cecilia Stenbom (Film) and Dr Andrea-Scott Bell (Sociology of Sport). Their research explores everyday experiences of wellbeing among para-athletes and other underrepresented athlete communities, focusing on the lived realities that sit beyond dominant performance-driven narratives in elite sport.
CCE1 008 Seminar Room	Converge Northumbria – A Healing and Creative Campus Ally Hunter-Byron 30 minutes	1.5a	This session explores the work of Converge Northumbria. With widening participation at its core, the programme offers opportunities for those in the wider community who are 18+ who face challenges with their mental health. The approach is non-clinical, exploring the power of creativity, the notion of a healing campus, access to education and learning environments.
	Levelling Up Law Dr Siobhan McConnell 30 minutes	1.5b	This presentation will share the work of the Levelling Up Law Mentoring Scheme, which matches Year 2 law students from widening participation backgrounds with mentors working in the legal profession in London.
CCE1 002 Lecture Theatre	Experiences of Racially Minoritised staff and students in Post Graduate Research in a post-92 University Dr Benjamin Ajibade 30 minutes	1.6a	This session draws on recent qualitative research examining the experiences of racially minoritised students and staff in accessing and participating in postgraduate research (PGR) within a UK post-92 university. Using the Theory of Possible Selves as a conceptual framework, the study explores aspirations and motivations, structural and cultural barriers, and the role of training, mentoring, and mental health support in shaping PGR journeys.

	<p>Amplifying Black Voices in the University Library</p> <p>Amanda Foster, Sean Howley, Amy Gallon Student ambassadors: Janet Alexandre and Lilian Annih 30 minutes</p>	1.6b	<p>This presentation explores the development and impact of the Amplifying Black Voices in the University Library project at Northumbria University — a collaborative, student-led initiative which has involved working in partnership with paid Student Ambassadors and academic colleagues. The project also produced an exhibition capturing the stories of Black people, including curated collections amplifying student voices and perspectives. These resources have been shared across the institution, prompting meaningful engagement from academic staff and generating wider conversations about inclusive curriculum design.</p> <p>This presentation will reflect on the collaborative process of building the toolkit and exhibition, the challenges and successes of embedding student voice in library services, and the lessons learned in working across professional boundaries to create lasting structural change.</p>
CCE1 021 Seminar Room	<p>Craft Workshop and an Introduction to the North East and Cumbria Centre for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) Communities Outreach Project</p> <p>Roseann Black</p>	1.7	<p>This session will be split into two halves. In the first half, Roseann will introduce the three-year Lottery-funded Outreach project, which aims to improve the participation and progression of students from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in the North East and Cumbria. The second half will be an interactive Gypsy Roma Traveller crafts session.</p>
CCE1 007 Seminar Room	Unassigned		
CCE1 025 IT Lab	Assigned Quiet Space		

Parallel Session 2, 14:45-15:45

Room	Session Title		Session Overview
CCE1 007 Seminar Room	(How) Do Job Adverts Deter Women Dr Helen Hooper	2.1	Previous research demonstrates how small changes to the content of job adverts can influence an applicant's perceived fit with the role being advertised, as well as the effects that specific adverts may have on underrepresented student groups. This presentation will begin by discussing research underpinning the synthesis of an Inclusive Student Recruitment Guide for Employability Practitioners. Findings from this research will be discussed, alongside recommendations for gender-fair job advert design relevant for all students and staff.
CCE1 024 Seminar Room	Working with Dementia Professor Valerie Egdell	2.2	Dementia is and will increasingly become a workplace issue. Out of the 800,000 people living with dementia in the UK, approximately 7.5% of them are under the age of 65 and may still be working when diagnosed. Furthermore, an increasing number of family caregivers will be in employment while caring for a family member living with dementia. There is an urgent need to further understand the impact of dementia on the workforce and to develop innovative research-informed supports to improve the economic and social well-being of people affected by dementia. In this session we will introduce the work of the 'Working with Dementia' network before moving to group discussion and small group exercises to consider 'how can we create dementia-inclusive workplaces that promote and support a culture of care, understanding and awareness of person-centred needs'.
CCE1 001 Lecture Theatre	From Participation to Power, Positionality, Lived Experience and the Limits of Inclusion Victoria Nunn	2.3	This session draws on doctoral research and reflexive scholarship that explicitly centres researcher positionality as a site of equity, knowledge, and power. Speaking from a position that spans lived experience of mental distress and neurodivergence, parenthood, class divide, professional practice, and academic research, the session examines how inclusion is experienced by those who work within institutions while remaining marginal to their centres of authority. It invites participants to reflect on how institutions value (or constrain) people who occupy hybrid or non-normative positions, including disabled researchers, carers, and those with lived experience.

CCE1 021 Seminar Room	See Me North Research Project Professor Monique Lhussier 30 minutes	2.4a	Our See Me North (https://www.seemenorth.org/) research focuses on using creativity to foster futures beyond homelessness. For this, we are working collaboratively with people with experience of homelessness as partners, to co-create solutions. The session will describe this process of working with people who have experienced trauma, often from childhood. It will cover the lessons we have learned on the way, which are relevant to how we, as a university, could be engaging more fruitfully with people who have experienced complex trauma and who tend to be excluded from higher education activities.
	Make Space: A Vice-Chancellor's Diversity and Inclusion Funded Project Alex Coates 30 minutes	2.4b	Make Space is an inclusive, practice-based workshop initiative developed at Northumbria University, with funding from the Vice-Chancellor's Diversity and Inclusion Fund, to address long-standing barriers within technical and workshop environments. In a time of shifting educational pressures and increasing skills shortages across engineering, manufacturing, and construction, Make Space responds by embedding equity through confidence-building, creativity, and compassionate teaching practice. The session will reflect on key findings from the pilot programme, including the impact of representation, peer learning, and flexible teaching structures on confidence and belonging. It will also outline future ambitions for Make Space: expanding provision for staff, influencing wider workshop culture, and developing a scalable model for inclusive technical education.
CCE1 018 Seminar Room	Trans Cultural Production in the UK Dr Rachel Hann 30 minutes	2.5a	This session will share the outcomes of an AHRC Fellowship investigating trans cultural production across the UK. With a focus on theatre and performance practice, the project has gathered interview data with more than 30 artists and producers, as well as a critical survey of artworks from 2004-2025 framed as 'trans performance' or undertaken by artists who happen to be trans. The session would share the initial outcomes of this project, such as a trends analysis of the data, which is still in development.

	Understanding Barriers & Enhancing success in Gender, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion across Higher Education Institutions in UK & South East Asia Dr Kishor Zingre 30 minutes	2.5b	This session shares the insights from the British Council funded research project titled: ‘Understanding Barriers and Enhancing Success in Gender Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity (GEDI) across the HEIs of South East Asia and the UK’.
CCE1 002 Lecture Theatre	Neurodiversity in the Workplace Dr Charlotte Emmerson	2.6	This session will be aimed at supporting colleagues to understand the challenges faced by neurodivergent people in the workplace, to encourage understanding and empathy as well as to highlight areas where barriers can be reduced and reduce stigma and challenge misinformation. Myths will be busted, and a strengths-based approach will be taken to highlight how a more inclusive workplace can be made for everyone to improve staff wellbeing, productivity, and harness a positive culture. This session will be appropriate for colleagues and for line managers.
CCE1 008 Seminar Room	Launch of LGBTQ+ Action Plan Professor Chris Ashford 30 minutes	2.7a	During the Senior Sponsors’ Portfolio Updates, Professor Ashford will introduce Northumbria’s new LGBTQ+ Action Plan. In this session he will provide more detail around our LGBTQ+ equality work. He will share some of the discussion themes from the new LGBTQ+ Equality Forum and university-wide listening groups, and how these were used to develop the action plan. He will also talk about how these actions will be addressed, and how we will measure progress towards these.
	Disability Equality at Northumbria Professor Louise Bracken 30 minutes	2.7b	Professor Bracken will outline our progress related to Disability Equality during the Senior Sponsors’ Portfolio Updates. In this session she will talk in more detail about: the launch this academic year of our new Disability Action Plan; the outcomes from listening groups with disabled colleagues and students on their experiences at Northumbria; our work on the creation of inclusive design principles for both the physical and digital estate; and how we will work going forward to continue to improve the experiences for disabled colleagues and students at Northumbria.
CCE1 003 Lecture Theatre	Unassigned		
CCE1 025 IT Lab	Assigned Quiet Space		

