



Equality and Diversity Policy

Approved by WOCA Committee: Approved March 2018

Date of next review: March 2021

Statement of Intent

WOCA is aware that in our present society power is not shared equally and that groups and individuals have been and continue to be discriminated against on the basis of race, sex, disability and so on.

We expect everyone who involved with us to be treated and to treat others with respect. Our aim is to provide an environment free from harassment, intimidation, or discrimination in any form that may affect the dignity of the individual.

We seek to ensure that no one suffers, either directly or indirectly, as a result of unlawful discrimination. This extends beyond the individual's own characteristics, to cover discrimination by association and by perception.

The purpose of the Equality and Diversity Policy is to set out clearly and fully the positive action WOCA intends to take to combat direct and indirect discrimination in employment policy and management of the organisation. We recognise that developing appropriate policies and practices concerning equality and diversity are not just about writing a Policy.

Definitions

Equality¹ is about preventing discrimination on grounds of status and enabling opportunities, access, participation and contribution that is fair and inclusive.

Diversity² is about valuing individual differences. Its aim is to enable everyone to reach their full potential and to make an organisation better by ensuring that members, employees, and committee members recognise and value the differences between them and the value which this brings to the organisation. It is easier for individuals to approach an organisation which is itself diverse and which recognises and values that diversity.

Legal considerations

The main legislation that covers equal opportunity and discrimination is the Equality Act 2010. In addition, the following should be taken into consideration:

- the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- the Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- the Human Rights Act 1998
- the Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999
- the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006
- any Codes of Practice issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission
- plus any amendments to the above legislation

What is Discrimination?

Discrimination may be direct or indirect, and can take different forms, for example:

- treating any individual less favourably than others on grounds of a protected characteristic³ (sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, marital status or civil partnership, pregnancy / maternity or gender reassignment)

¹ Adapted from Community Matters Equal Opportunities Guidance and Advice 2013

² Adapted from Community Matters Equal Opportunities Guidance and Advice 2013

³ As defined by the Equality Act 2010

- expecting a person, solely on the grounds stated above, to comply with requirements that are different to the requirements for others, for any reason whatsoever
- imposing on an individual requirements that are in effect more onerous than they are on others. This would include applying a condition which makes it more difficult for members of a particular group to comply than others not of that group
- harassment i.e. unwanted conduct which has "the purpose, intentionally or unintentionally, of violating dignity, or which creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment" for the individual
- victimisation – i.e. treating a person less favourably because he or she has committed a protected act⁴. Protected acts include previous legal proceedings brought against an employer or a perpetrator, or the giving of evidence at a disciplinary or grievance hearing or at a tribunal, or making complaints about a perpetrator or an employer or their alleged discriminatory practices
- discrimination by association, i.e. someone is discriminated against because he/she associates with someone who possesses a protected characteristic
- discrimination by perception, i.e. discrimination on the grounds that the person is perceived as belonging to a particular group, e.g. sexual orientation, religion or belief, irrespective of whether or not this is correct
- any other act or omission of an act, which has the effect of disadvantaging one person against another, purely on the above grounds

Employment

WOCA is committed to being an equal opportunity employer and to ensuring that all employees, job applicants, volunteers, members, customers / clients and other people with whom we deal are treated fairly and are not subjected to unfair or unlawful discrimination.

We further recognise the benefits of employing individuals from a range of backgrounds, as this creates a workforce where creativity and valuing difference in others thrives.

We value the wealth of experience within the community that we operate, and aspire to have a workforce that reflects this.

Our policy is designed to ensure that current and potential workers are offered the same opportunities regardless of sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, marital status or civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, gender reassignment or any other characteristic unrelated to the performance of the job.

We have no fixed retirement age and anyone who wishes to work beyond state pension age may choose to do so.

Where those managing employees are required to make judgements between them, for example disciplinary matters, selection for training, promotion, pay increases, awards etc, it is essential that merit, experience, skills and temperament are considered as objectively as possible.

⁴ As defined by the Equality Act 2010

Code of Practice

WOCA will develop a Code of Practice for the organisation. We will look at:

- our activities and services;
- the way WOCA is managed, who is involved and how people become involved;
- how we recruit and support volunteers;
- the way in which we appoint paid staff and their conditions of employment.

Code of Conduct

WOCA will develop a Code of Conduct for members, who will each get a copy, and copies will be displayed around the Centre.

Responsibility for this policy

All trustees and employees, irrespective of their role or seniority, will be given guidance to their responsibility and role in promoting equality of opportunity and not discriminating unfairly or harassing colleagues, nor encouraging others to do so or tolerating such behaviour.

Grievances and Complaints Procedures

Employees who believe they have been discriminated against and have not been able to resolve this informally are advised to use our internal Grievance Procedure.

Members, or other people involved in WOCA's activities, who believe they have been discriminated against and have not been able to resolve this informally are advised to use our Complaints Procedure.

An employee, volunteer, or member who brings a complaint of discrimination must not be less favourably treated.

Harassment or bullying will not be tolerated; anyone who witnesses incidents of harassment or bullying should report this to the Centre Manager.