



Document Title:	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
Document Purpose:	The purpose of this policy is to set out our commitment to creating an organisation where people of all identities and backgrounds can thrive. It was created to ensure people know their responsibilities and how and where to seek support.
Document Statement:	This policy aims to ensure that we: Treat everyone with dignity, fairness and respect and recognise individual uniqueness and identity regardless of any protected characteristic, combination of protected characteristics, or any other characteristic(s), socio-economic or demographic factors and/or cultural traits that may expose them to unfair disadvantage
Document Application:	Organisation wide
Responsible for Implementation:	CEO, all staff and volunteers, including Trustees
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Associated Documents

Data Protection Act
Code of conduct for staff and volunteers
Complaints, comments and complements policy
Communications Policy
Whistleblowing policy
Safer Recruitment Policy
Staff and Volunteer Handbooks
Safeguarding Policies
Equality Act 2010
Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
Human Rights Act 1998

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Policy statement
3. Responsibilities
4. Laws and regulations
5. Monitoring and compliance
6. Training and support
7. Appendix 1 Definitions
- 1. Introduction**

1.1 The SEND The Right Message is committed to ensuring an inclusive environment where people can be their genuine selves in accordance with our values. We are dedicated to proactively advancing a culture of non-discrimination and equity.

1.2 This policy ensures we benefit from various perspectives and better reflect the communities we serve to make more informed decisions and better support people in crisis.

1.3 We believe that it is only through advancing equity and embracing diversity and inclusion to embody our organisational values and Code of Conduct.

1.4 This policy is supported by an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) procedure, which sets out how the policy is applied operationally.

Definitions

1.5 Keywords and terms can be found in Appendix 1.

2 Policy Statement

Purpose and aims

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out our approach to equity, diversity, and inclusion and how we will create a safe and inclusive organisation that learns and grows to proactively dismantle barriers, eliminate discrimination, and create equity for our people and those we serve.

This policy aims to ensure we:

2.2 Treat everyone with dignity, fairness and respect and recognise individual uniqueness and identity regardless of any protected characteristic, combination of protected characteristics, or any other characteristic(s), socio-economic or demographic factors and/or cultural traits that may expose them to unfair disadvantage.

2.3 Challenge all forms of unequal, offensive and unlawful treatment.

2.4 Recognise that certain people are more disadvantaged and address their individual needs to overcome disadvantage and discrimination and ensure equity. This includes acknowledging the additional challenges that may be faced by our people worldwide and in different cultures, working to support these individuals, and acting equitably to protect their security and safety.

2.5 Have the leadership, effective management practices and resources in place so that everyone understands the barriers to EDI and the consequences of discrimination.

2.6 Develop a culture which attracts and retains people from the widest possible range of backgrounds and experiences into all levels of the organisation and create a positive experience for all.

2.7 Design and provide services that meet the needs of diverse communities, and which are accessible to all.

2.8 Amplify, value and act upon the voice of lived experience.

Scope

2.9 This policy applies to:

- all elements and stages of our work and volunteering, and to all stages of the provision of our services and income generation. At each stage, the rights, expectations, and obligations set out in this policy apply equally.
- anyone working for us. This includes all our staff, Trustees, workers, contractors, volunteers, interns, and apprentices. The policy also relates to job applicants.
- all our work in the UK and internationally, and our relationships with third-party providers, partners, donors, supporters, and stakeholders.

Standards

2.10 We will:

Promote equity, dignity, fairness, inclusion and respect for all who work or volunteer for and have dealings with our organisation.

- Create a culture that is free from prejudice, bullying, harassment, victimisation, discrimination and offensive behaviour. We can do this by educating our people on their responsibilities to champion EDI, promoting inclusive language and respectful behaviour, and ensuring that any breaches are handled appropriately.
- Provide support and take complaints of discrimination, unequal, unlawful, or offensive treatment seriously. Including ensuring those who witness or experience it know-how and where to make complaints and seek support. Proactively uphold and advance the rights of individuals belonging to the legally recognised characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, as well as those who may experience discrimination and marginalisation outside the Act's scope.
- Consult and engage with our people to enhance our understanding of the needs of, and obstacles faced by, those from marginalised groups, including through engagement surveys and diversity networks.
- Ensure that our recruitment, selection, development, and progression processes are transparent, merit-based, fair and accessible to all, and remove barriers to progression and proactively widen diversity across senior leadership.
- Make jobs at all levels accessible and available on a flexible basis, where possible, and proactively make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of our people.
- Commit to ensuring transparency in decisions, equality in pay, benefits, and job evaluations, and take steps to ensure any disparity in terms and conditions is eliminated.
- Work to raise awareness of, and provide support for, health, safety, and

wellbeing issues.

- Ensure any new and reviewed policies, programmes, decisions that will affect our people will undergo an Equality Impact Assessment to ensure that any negative impact is mitigated wherever possible.

3. Responsibilities

- The Board of Trustees have ultimate responsibility for the policy and are responsible for championing EDI.
- The CEO is responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy and that this policy allows the achievement of external and internal standards.
- The CEO and the policy owner are responsible for developing, monitoring, and reviewing this policy.
- All employees, volunteers and Trustees are responsible for adhering to this policy.

4. Laws and regulations

4.1 This policy supports our compliance with the requirements of relevant UK legislation, including the Equality Act of 2010

5. Monitoring and compliance

5.1 We will collect and monitor diversity-related data to better understand the experiences of our people, identify and remove barriers, ensure our policy and strategies are working effectively, and set EDI targets.

5.2 Any breach of this policy by our people will be promptly investigated through our Complaints procedure.

6. Training and support

6.1 To ensure compliance with the policy, all employees, volunteers and Trustees will complete mandatory training.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1- Definitions

Protected Characteristics:

People are legally protected from discrimination by the Equality Act 2010. It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of the following protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; marital or civil partnership status; pregnancy and maternity; race including racial group, ethnic or national origin, or nationality; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; Political opinion (Northern Ireland only)

Equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion

Equality: the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, or opportunities.

Equity refers to fairness and justice and recognising that we do not all start from the same place and must acknowledge and make adjustments to imbalances.

Diversity: the existence of variations of different characteristics in a group of

people. These characteristics could be everything that makes us unique, such as our cognitive skills and personality traits, along with the things that shape our identity (e.g. race, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, cultural background). Inclusion - actively embracing people with diverse perspectives and backgrounds and experiences.

Unlawful discrimination

When a person or group of people is treated less favourably than another person or group of people would be treated based on their protected characteristic or religious or political opinion*. *Only in Northern Ireland

Types of discrimination

- Direct discrimination – treating someone unfairly because of their protected characteristic.
- Indirect discrimination – A practice, policy, or rule applied to everyone that may at first appear fair or neutral but puts people of a particular protected characteristic at a disadvantage.
- Discrimination by association – a person is treated unfavourably because of another person’s protected characteristic.
- Discrimination by perception – when someone is treated unfairly because others believe they have a protected characteristic.
- Victimisation – a person is treated less favourably because they have or are expected to complain about discrimination.
- Harassment – unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person’s dignity by creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.
- Bullying –persistent, offensive, abusive, intimidating or insulting behaviour, abuse of power or unfair sanctions which make the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable, which undermines their self-confidence and may cause them to suffer stress.

Each of the above are grounds covered by current anti-discrimination legislation in the UK, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands.

Equality Impact Assessment

An evidence-based approach designed to help ensure that policies, practices, events, and decision-making processes are fair and do not present barriers to participation or disadvantage any protected groups from participation.

Prejudice

A preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience.

Reasonable Adjustments

Under anti-discrimination legislation (Equality Act 2010) employers are required to make reasonable adjustments for disabled staff. This means making changes to a disabled person’s environment or the way their employment is structured to mitigate any disadvantages and allows them to work safely and productively. This may include, removing physical barriers, providing extra support, and providing flexibility