

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Other relevant CVS policies:

Safer Recruitment Policy

Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy

Comments & Complaints Policy

Dignity, Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy

Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy

Alcohol & Substance Misuse Policy

Version: v6
Reviewed: September 2024
To be reviewed: September 2025

This document is available in different formats on request

POLICY

Sefton Council for Voluntary Service aims to create a culture that respects and values each other's differences and to secure genuine equality of opportunity in all aspects of its activities. This applies to job applicants, employees, trustees, volunteer workers and users of the organisation's services. This policy will set out how we aim to achieve this, the responsibilities of staff, volunteers and service users, and what processes will be put in place to monitor our success.

This policy is influenced by current legislation, namely the Equality Act 2010, but it also reflects the wish of Sefton CVS to promote the best practice in this area.

In order to ensure that this policy promotes diversity and inclusion it has been developed in consultation with a wide range of staff and trustees, and will be reviewed with appropriate consultation of trustees, staff, volunteers and other members of the community.

Communicating the Policy

All employees, volunteers and users will be made aware of the organisation's commitment to diversity and equality of opportunity, and of the legal commitments of the organisation.

Copies of this policy will be freely available to existing workers, affiliates and any other interested parties on request. A copy of the Equality, diversity and inclusion Statement, together with a named contact for more information, will be placed in a prominent position in all CVS offices.

All staff and volunteers will be informed of revisions to the policy, and regular training will be used to increase understanding of the issues and to support managers and trustees in implementing the policy and action plan.

Additionally, the supervision and appraisal system will be used as a mechanism for informing staff, ensuring that appropriate training is undertaken, and to address any issues.

Sefton CVS will promote good practice in the voluntary and community sector, and amongst other partner organisations through publicity, training, individual support and through setting a good example. The principles of equality, diversity and inclusion will be embedded into partnership working through the work of the Sefton CVS's Equalities Team.

Under The Act, the 9 protected characteristics are described below;

Age

This refers to a person belonging to a particular age group, which can mean people of the same age (e.g. 32-year olds) or age range (e.g. 18 - 30-year olds, or people over 50).

Disability

Protection is provided where someone has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial (usually lasting more than 1 year) and long-term adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities. A number of impairments such as Cancer, HIV and Multiple Sclerosis are automatically considered disabilities

Gender reassignment

The process of transitioning from one gender to another. This can involve a person changing personal identity documentation. Living and working in their new gender role. Eventually seeking and receiving gender reassignment treatment.

The Act does not require a person to be under medical supervision. The act covers not only those who have fully transitioned to their preferred gender, it also covers those that have started to commence the process, those who have decided to stop the process and those that have expressed an interest. The act also covers those that have decided to adopt the identity of the opposite sex by dressing in a different way but have not reassigned.

Marriage and civil partnership

Marriage in the UK is a union between a man and woman or a same sex couple. Same sex marriage became part of UK law in March 2014 but only made legal in Northern Ireland at midnight on 21 October 2019. Same sex couples can have their relationships legally recognised as civil partnerships and civil partners must be treated the same as married couples. The **first partnership** registered after the normal waiting period was held in Belfast on 19 December 2005. Single people are not covered by the Act, for example, a person who is engaged to be married who is not yet married even if living together. A divorcee or a person whose civil partnership has been dissolved is also not covered by the Act.

Pregnancy and maternity

Protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks, after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breast feeding. Pregnancy and maternity discrimination is when you're treated unfairly because you're pregnant, breastfeeding or because you've recently given birth. You must suffer a disadvantage as a result of the unfair treatment. The law says you've been treated **unfavourably**.

Race

Refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins. A racial group can be made up of two or more different racial groups, for example Black British. Some religious groups such as Sikhs and Jews are also recognised in law as belonging to ethnic groups.

Religion, faith or belief

Belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism) The religion or belief does not have to be mainstream but the belief must have a certain level of seriousness, cohesion and importance. There should be no incompatibility with human dignity or conflict with the fundamental rights of others in a democratic society. The following are classified as religions under the Equality Act.

- Scientology
- Rastafarianism
- Paganism

Sex/Gender

Women and men, including those who are transgender, have the right not to be discriminated against at work because of their sex.

Sexual orientation

Refers to the general attraction a person feels towards people of one sex or another (or both).

- People who are the same sex
- People who are of the opposite sex
- People of both sexes

Functions covered by the Policy

This policy covers all core functions of Sefton CVS, its services and projects, and all policies and procedures will be regularly reviewed to ensure continuous improvement.

- ***Governance and Leadership***

Membership of the Board of Trustees (including co-opted members) will aim to reflect a fair balance and representation of the local community and will endeavour to address equality issues within the organisation and borough.

- ***Recruitment, Selection and Management of Staff and Volunteers***

Sefton CVS is committed to being an Equal Opportunity employer. Our policy aims to ensure that no job applicant, employee or volunteer:

- Is discriminated against, harassed or victimised on the grounds of age, race, gender, disability, religion & belief, marital status/civil partnership, sexual orientation or transgender status.
- Nor will we instruct any third parties to behave in a way that could lead to discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

Selection criteria and procedures will be reviewed in line with the practise of the organisation to ensure that individuals are selected, promoted and treated on the basis of their relevant

merits and abilities. Positive action to attract applications from under-represented groups will also take place by vacancies being promoted through networks.

Individuals involved in the recruitment process will be trained to take an unbiased approach and to ask only questions which relate to the job and that are non-discriminatory.

Reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate the needs of people involved in the recruitment process. Applications will not ask for the sickness record of applicants until the job has been offered subject to references, in line with the Equality Act 2010

Sefton CVS undertakes staff equality, diversity and inclusion monitoring and measures the diversity of its workforce on an annual basis. All members of staff are able to raise concerns to the equality team and through networks.

- ***Publicity and Documentation***

Information on key services will be made available in a variety of formats on request, which may include electronic communication, the use of interpreters, written signs in the appropriate language, the use of pictures or diagrams or audio tapes.

Basic standards of good accessible communication will be developed and used throughout Sefton CVS services including both written documents and websites.

- ***Projects, Service Delivery and Service Users***

All CVS services are covered by this policy. We will strive to provide quality services to all service users equally and fairly and to ensure that our policies and procedures eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different groups.

Training will be provided to staff and volunteers involved in the delivery of services to provide an appropriate and informed response to ensure that they are not discriminating, harassing or victimising service users.

CVS services will be reviewed regularly and changed where needed, and equality of opportunity and celebration of diversity will be built into service planning, including appropriate consultation mechanisms.

To this end Sefton CVS also hosts key projects and services that advance the equality of opportunity and foster good community relations of all protected groups in the borough.

Sefton CVS also support partners with their equality, diversity and inclusion agenda, ensuring protected groups have a voice in relation to service delivery and commissioning decisions.

Service user diversity is also monitored on an on-going basis around CVS training and events and most CVS projects. For those projects that do not collect this data on an on-going basis, they produce case studies of a sample of their diverse clients on an annual basis. Our service users are regularly consulted via annual survey, events, forums and project evaluations.

Sefton CVS will seek to ensure that services are advertised and promoted in an inclusive way, and if a group or groups are underrepresented in accessing particular services, efforts will be made to redress the balance.

All trainers, facilitators and consultants contracted to work for CVS will be required to support our equality, diversity and inclusion policy.

CVS recognises that not everyone has access to personal transport or is able to use it and will plan its services and activities with this in mind.

Responsibilities

Equal Opportunities Officer – The HR Manager or the Chief Executive of the organisation will be nominated as the person charged with securing the day to day implementation of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy with overall co-ordination by the Board of Trustees.

All employees, volunteers and users of the organisation's services are expected to accept their personal responsibility for the practical application of the policy, and must ensure that they do not discriminate in any way against employees, volunteers or members of the public with whom their work may bring them into contact.

Board of Trustees and senior managers have specific responsibility to ensure that this policy is disseminated and implemented.

Sefton Council for Voluntary Service as an employer may be held responsible for the actions of their employees if they act in a discriminatory way.

If a complaint is made against any individual (including staff, volunteers and service users), and it can be shown that discrimination has taken place contrary to laid down procedures, that individual will be held personally responsible and the organisation may decide not to assist in their defence.

Staff or volunteers who do not abide by the terms of this policy will be subject to disciplinary procedures, and service users who break the terms of this policy may be denied access to services and buildings operated by Sefton CVS.

Grievance / Complaints

Any job applicant, employee, volunteer or user of the organisation's services who feels that they have been unfairly treated can raise the matter through the Complaints or the Grievance Procedure. The use of this internal procedure does not take away an individuals' right under the Law to take a case to an Employment Tribunal.

No person who brings a complaint or grievance in good faith under the policies will be subject to victimisation or any other detriment as a result of their action.

Harassment / Abuse by employees will not be tolerated and offenders will be subject to action under the Disciplinary Procedures.

The Complaints and Grievance Procedures will be communicated to all staff and volunteers as part of the induction process. Copies of the policies will be made freely available and the policies will be clearly advertised in all building and services. All complaints and grievances will be investigated and acted upon in accordance with the appropriate policy.

Monitoring and Evaluation

In order to ensure that the organisation's policy objectives are being met, data needs to be gathered and progress monitored to ensure that Sefton Council for Voluntary Service complies with both the spirit and the letter of anti-discriminatory legislation.

A monitoring form will be issued with every application form, and an audit will show how the workforce, including employees and volunteers, is made up. This information will not influence the selection, promotion or treatment of staff.

Baseline information will be collected and used to assess the success of Sefton CVS in providing relevant and accessible services to a diverse community, and this information will be used to inform future service planning and delivery.

Other Policies and Procedures

A number of other policies support and complement our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. These include recruitment & selection guidelines, grievance procedure, complaints procedure, values statement, statement of terms and conditions, Recruitment of Ex-offenders Policy, Dignity, Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy; Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy, Workplace Respect Guidelines and the Alcohol & Substance Misuse Policy.

In line with the good practice that can be drawn from statutory obligations, all relevant current

and future legislation and examples from other agencies, Sefton CVS will endeavour to systematically assess the impact of all policies and procedures on equality, diversity and inclusion and will review the policies as appropriate.

Equality, diversity and inclusion Strategy

We are committed to a programme of action to make this policy effective and an action plan will be devised to lay out timescales and responsibilities. This policy will be reviewed in line with the organisations practise.

Appendix 1: Definition of key terms used in the policy

- **Discrimination** occurs when a condition, or requirement is applied which cannot be justified.
- **Direct discrimination** is treating one person less favourably than another in the same or similar circumstances or segregating them from others solely because they are, for example, a lesbian, a gay man or because they have a disability or illness.
- **Indirect discrimination** occurs where there is a requirement or condition which applies equally to everyone but which, in practice, has an adverse impact on a particular group and cannot be justified. For example, an unnecessary physical or age requirement can discriminate against women or disabled people.
- **Abuse and/or harassment** – Discrimination also covers actions which amount to abuse and/or harassment of people or groups of people because for example they are a member of a national, racial or ethnic minority group, a woman, a lesbian, a gay man or transgender person whether fully transitioned or not and those who have a disability or illness.
- **Victimisation** occurs when a person is treated less favourably or is discriminated against because she/he has pursued or intends to pursue their rights in respect of alleged discrimination.
- **Perceptive Discrimination** - Discrimination against an individual because of a perception that he or she has a protected characteristic when he or she does not, in fact, have that protected characteristic.
- **Associative Discrimination** - Less favourable treatment because of someone else's protected characteristic.
- **Institutional racism (Macpherson Report, 1999)** - The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture

or ethnic origin. It can be seen in the processes or attitudes and behaviour, which amount to discrimination, to unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantages minority ethnic people.

- **Racist incident (Macpherson Report, 1999)** - Any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person. If the victim doesn't want to complain, another person may do so.

The last two definitions can be applied to other forms of discrimination e.g. institutional ageism, homophobic or trans-phobic incident.

Discrimination in any of the forms stated above is unacceptable, regardless of whether there was any intention to discriminate or not.

Positive Action - Within defined limits, the law permits employers to take positive action, for a limited time, to improve the position of disadvantaged groups and allows employers to give special encouragement and provide specific training so that the effects of past discrimination can be overcome.

Genuine Occupational Qualification - There are employment exceptions allowable which are recognised by Law. An employer may claim G.O.Q. to recruit, train, promote or transfer a person of a particular sex or racial group as stated in the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and within the Race Relations Act 1976.