

Voluntary and Community Action Sunderland

Equality & Diversity Policy.

Statement of Commitment

Voluntary and Community Action Sunderland believes that following a policy of equality and diversity will benefit not only the individual but also enrich the whole organisation and its members.

Equality is one of Voluntary and Community Action Sunderland core values and the Board and staff are committed to ensuring that equality is integral to all its policies and practices. Equality is essential to ensuring that services are accessible to all those people who need our help.

Voluntary and Community Action Sunderland recognises that diversity among service users and staff brings positive benefits to the oour work and we are committed to challenging all forms of discrimination and unfair disadvantage in every aspect of its work and working practices.

Voluntary and Community Action Sunderland aims to provide equality of opportunity for anyone who comes into contact with the organisation and to ensure that no-one is treated less favourably because of their gender, marital status, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origins, age, disability, sexual orientation, HIV status, employment status, religious or political beliefs, parental or carer status or any unrelated criminal offence. Harassment or bullying will be challenged and not tolerated.

We are committed to:

- Opposing all forms of discrimination - individual and institutional, direct or indirect.
- Challenging the false beliefs about different groups in society inherent in racism, sexism, heterosexist, homophobia, ageism and assumptions regarding disability.

- Promoting and celebrating the diversity of all the people with whom we work, valuing their contributions and ensuring they are given the opportunity to realise their full potential within Voluntary and Community Action Sunderland. We will work hard to ensure that:

- The diverse needs and expectations of employees, service users and volunteers are met.
- Our services are accessible, high quality and offered on a fair and equitable basis.
- We recruit and retain the best staff possible by eliminating all forms of discrimination in recruitment and employment.
- We promote and value diversity in all that we do.

Voluntary and Community Action Sunderland will assess the current composition of its workforce and establish targets to take positive steps to achieve a workforce and services that reflect the communities in which we work.
As a result of this, we will:

- Increase, where appropriate, the number of employees and service users from black and minority groups.
- Make posts more accessible to, and increase the number of, people with disabilities.
- Encourage age diversity in the workforce.

This policy applies to all aspects of employment and service delivery including the workforce, existing and potential service users and anyone providing goods, services and facilities to Voluntary and Community Action Sunderland.

We will constantly monitor and evaluate our progress in order that we continually improve our practice.

Principles

Voluntary and Community Action Sunderland will not discriminate on the grounds of gender, marital status, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, HIV status, employment status, religious or political beliefs, parental or carer status or any unrelated criminal offence. (Specific justifiable exclusion criteria may apply to certain employment areas. These will be legal, open and service-related).

We will offer access to and provision of services on a fair and equitable basis that meet the individual needs of service users. Targets will be set, based on the location and there will be a focus on outreach into local communities to increase access. Under-represented groups will be taken into account in the development of new services. Outcomes will be regularly monitored and evaluated.

Voluntary and Community Action Sunderland aims to be an equal opportunity employer and ensure that all those eligible to work for us have equal opportunities to do so on the basis of ability, qualifications and fitness for their role. This is achieved by implementing good employment practices. Every employee has responsibility for the implementation of the policy.

We are committed to developing an organisation in which all service users, workers and visitors enjoy equal rights. Measures to promote these rights are designed to ensure that no group is systematically denied them. Sometimes the different rights and needs of different groups will appear to conflict. Reconciling these apparent differences is an important part of the equal opportunities policy and practice.

A variety of laws require Voluntary and Community Action Sunderland not to discriminate and the organisation aims to mirror best practice in implementing the Equality and Diversity Act 2010, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

The principles in equality and diversity will be reflected in our practice relating to:

- Service delivery
- Employment
- Governance
- Partnership

Practice

Service Delivery

Services will be accessible to those who want them, within the constraints of available resources. There will be fair access for everyone, which will sometimes mean tailoring our services for particular groups. For example, specific services may be offered for women or a particular ethnic group.

Access will be interpreted widely to include physical access to buildings and services and the ability to gain information in different forms e.g. Braille, tapes for visually impaired people and in different community languages.

Voluntary and Community Action Sunderland will give active support to service users to enable real involvement in service development and decision-making.

Where clients face harassment or discrimination in their community or from another service provider, Voluntary and Community Action Sunderland will support them and represent them if appropriate, in any action they may wish to take.

We will monitor and review all systems and procedures used in the provision of services to ensure equality of opportunity, responsiveness, sensitivity and accessibility. Take-up of services will be monitored and targets will be set to ensure that services reflect their communities.

Employment

Janette Hilton is responsible for the communication, promotion, implementation and monitoring of the equality and diversity policy in service areas, including where appropriate, in the wider community. They will communicate the policy to staff; ensure that staff understands their responsibilities; ensure that no discrimination takes place and deal appropriately with any breaches. Janette Hilton will ensure that there is no scope for discriminatory practice.

Voluntary and Community Action Sunderland values its staff and will provide them with the skills and training to do their job well and the opportunities to progress in the organisation. y training, guidance and support will be provided to all employees to ensure our the commitment to equal opportunities is known and understood.

All employees have a responsibility to support colleagues in relation to the policy by raising concerns and fears through the appropriate channels. If any member of staff feels they have been treated unfairly they can contact the [Janette Hilton,, the Board, their Trade Union or any other suitable organisation, all of whom are expected to take the grievances seriously, to treat information confidentially, investigate fully and ensure that no victimisation takes place.

There are a number of related policies, which also embody the principles of equality and diversity. These include: The Equal Opportunities Policy and Disciplinary & Grievance Procedures.

Governance

Voluntary and Community Action Sunderland will develop a governance structure that reflects the communities in which we work and ensure that the commitment to equality and diversity is reflected in the induction and training of trustees and committee members.

Trustees and committee members will actively demonstrate their understanding, belief and support of the policy through their communications and actions on behalf of the organisation.

Partnership

Voluntary and Community Action Sunderland will work with partners and stakeholders to develop good practice on issues of access.

Companies, individual consultants or contractors entering into contracts with Voluntary and Community Action Sunderland will be expected to comply with our equality and diversity policy.

Monitoring and Review

The Board of Trustees will monitor the overall success of the policy by assessing its impact on the organisation's efforts to improve service delivery and employment practice.

Document Details

Policy adopted date: 4th April 2025

Scheduled Review date: 4th April 2027