

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

To establish a consistent approach to Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion across the organisation. Following consultation with key stakeholders, this policy sets out the organisation's commitment to promoting, supporting, and embedding Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) across the organisation. SEND and You's commitment is embraced by our governing Board and informs all our activities and their impact on our service users, employees, volunteers, contractors, and other stakeholders. This policy will be communicated to all key stakeholders and made available upon request.

Introduction

We recognise that equality is not simply about treating everyone the same and that equity is key, making appropriate adjustment to ensure equal opportunities for all. We know that Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) will not be something that gets dealt with by a policy or EDI plan alone. We acknowledge that EDI is a way of thinking and behaving that must be embedded in everything we do and the way we think about ourselves and our work.

As we develop our actions across all of EDI, we will prioritise addressing racial inequality. We know there is a great deal to do. Our EDI policy and associated plan will be a living piece of work, with all members of the SEND and You family and external colleagues encouraged to keep suggesting new ideas and guiding the nature and pace of implementation. Everyone has an important contribution to make.

The policy and EDI Plan have been developed in consultation with the Board of Trustees as well as SEND and You staff members.

Policy Statement

SEND and You recognises and values people's differences. We are committed to ensuring that our workplace is free from victimisation or unlawful or unfair discrimination on the grounds of a protected characteristic which include colour, race, marital status, disability, ethnic or national origin, gender (including gender reassignment), sexual orientation, religious or philosophical beliefs, age and pregnancy and maternity.

We aim to ensure that employees can achieve their full potential and that all employment decisions are taken without reference to irrelevant or discriminatory criteria. The Equality Act 2010 outlines the rules which apply to equal opportunities in the workplace, and we aim to fully comply with our obligations under equality legislation.

SEND and You's work on equity, equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is about ensuring we have an organisation culture that enables everyone to feel part of what we do and that our work and services recognise, adapt and respond to people's individual background, experiences and needs.

Related Policies and Procedures

Employment Handbook – Disciplinary & Grievance Procedure, Harassment and Bullying Procedure
Complaints Policy
Safe Recruitment Policy GDPR Policy
Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy
Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy
Modern Slavery Policy
Safer Recruitment Procedure
Volunteer Policy
Whistleblowing Policy
Transgender Equality Statement

Definition of Discrimination

Discrimination can be both direct and indirect. The former is generally easy to identify, whereas indirect forms can be difficult to identify because they are not, on the face of it, immediately obvious. Discrimination can occur under the following protected characteristics, although not all characteristics are covered by every type of discrimination: race, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, gender assignment, religion or belief, disability, age and pregnancy and maternity.

Direct discrimination is defined as where someone is treated less favorably than another person because of one of the protected characteristics which they have or are thought to have. Direct discrimination cannot usually be justified.

Examples include:

- A woman with young children fails to obtain a job because it is feared that she might be an unreliable employee.
- A person is subjected to sexual innuendo or other offensive conduct of a sexual nature at work.

Direct discrimination can also apply where there is an action against someone because they associate with someone who possesses a protected characteristic and where there is a perception that someone possesses a particular characteristic. Maternity and Pregnancy and Marriage and Civil Partnership are not protected characteristics with regard to direct discrimination by both association and perception. Indirect discrimination can occur when you have a rule, policy or practice in an organisation that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic. This kind of discrimination is unlawful unless it can be justified.

The Organisation takes very seriously any act of discrimination and will consider this to be a disciplinary offence under the disciplinary procedure.

Definition of Victimisation

Victimisation occurs where an individual is treated badly because they made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010; or because they are suspected of doing so. An employee is not protected from victimisation if they have maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint. We are committed to ensuring that all our employees and applicants for employment are free from any form of victimisation.

Definition of Equity

Equity recognises that treating everyone equally has shortcomings when the playing field is not level. An equity approach emphasises that people should not always be treated the same, that they are treated according to their own situation.

Definition of Inclusion

Inclusion is often defined as the extent to which everyone at work, regardless of their background, identity, or circumstance, feels valued, accepted, and supported to succeed at work

Aims of this policy

To support our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, this policy aims to:

- Prevent discrimination, eliminate prejudice, promote inclusion, and celebrate diversity within the organisation.
- Ensure that EDI is embedded in everything we do.
- Help us deliver our charity's vision, mission and aims.
- Help us to uphold our values and principles.
- Go beyond compliance with the Equality Act 2010, recognising and addressing the structural inequalities which limit equality of opportunity for many.
- Ensure we cover all aspects of equality including race, religion or belief, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation, disability, and age (as specified by the Equality Act 2010 and its 'Specific Duties' clauses.
- Ensure this policy applies to everyone who receives a service from us, forms part of our governance, is employed or contracted by us or who volunteers their services for us.
- Be fair in our dealings with all people – Board of Trustees, staff, service users, volunteers, and partners – with whom we have relationships considering the diverse nature of their culture and backgrounds.
- Ensure that anyone who works on our behalf demonstrates commitment to EDI.
- Ensure we develop as an open, fair, and inclusive organisation.
- To be an inclusive employer and service provider, aiming to provide equality and fairness for everyone we employ and work with.
- To practice high standards of equality, diversity, equity, and inclusion ethics.
- To be accountable and transparent as an organisation and in our work.

Commitment

SEND and You is committed to:

- Comply with all legal and regulatory requirements, and any subsequent legislation, which apply to the Equality Act's protected characteristics.
- Promote equality through all our activities as an employer, partner, influencer and service provider.
- Actively encourage and engage service users and staff in shaping our organisation and services.
- Ensure the Board of Trustees and Staff Leadership Team are accountable for the embedding of our EDI approach and for monitoring our performance.
- Ensure that everyone we work with complies with our policies on hate crime and harassment, promoting community cohesion in our neighbourhoods.
- Take all reasonable steps to ensure our partners, suppliers and groups connected to us are actively committed to EDI principles.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in practice

To meet our policy commitments and achieve our policy aims, we will work to the following best practices:

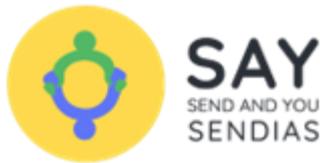
1. **Adopt clear strategies** - we will:
 - Devise an EDI plan and review it each year, reporting the outcomes to the Board of Trustees.
 - Use our EDI demographic model to enable action planning.
 - Put in place appropriate resources to deliver our objectives.
2. **Use information and analysis to drive strategy and action** - we will:
 - Conduct equality impact assessments on all policies and significant change programmes to ensure they deliver our EDI objectives.
 - Collect, review, and measure data on a regular basis to inform us on EDI performance including governance, recruitment, staffing, complaints, and satisfaction.
 - Summarise the data gathered, within a demographic context where relevant, and report to the Board of Trustees with appropriate recommendations to support assurance and management of risk.
 - Provide a full explanation of why information is collected and what we use it for, treating sensitive personal data confidentially and only for the purposes of promoting and ensuring equality and fairness and improving outcomes.
 - Take active steps to address any issues identified by the above reporting.
3. **Embed best practice** - we will:
 - Ensure that all Board members, staff, and volunteers receive mandatory up-to-date training in EDI as part of their induction
 - Ensure all Board, committee members, staff and volunteers receive EDI refresher training when required
 - Support Board, committee members, staff, and volunteers to enable them to champion EDI and meet this policy's objectives.

- Ensure employees and volunteers have the skills and knowledge to understand how to address prejudice and unconscious bias.
 - Support individual commitment to and ownership of EDI objectives by ensuring that appraisal conversations focus on SAY's Ways of Working.
 - Ensure that EDI informs every aspect of our approach to service user support and customer care.
 - Support and promote our EDI staff groups, allocating resources which are appropriate and sufficient for their remit.
 - Ensure that through our procurement processes we appoint partners, associates, and suppliers with a robust and compliant approach to EDI.
 - Provide guidance and support on all aspects of EDI by reference to our best practice group and sector experts.
 - Actively encourage people from protected groups to participate in activities where their participation is disproportionately low.
4. **Have in place reasonable and accessible procedures and approaches to support EDI - we will:**
- Make a clear commitment to service users on how we meet service requirements.
 - Support effective communication by providing a range of contact methods, shaped to service users' requirements, including effective use of digital services.
 - Ensure that no current or potential service user is discriminated against due to a protected characteristic.
 - Ensure that all human resources and recruitment procedures reflect the principles in this policy including equality of opportunity; this includes flexible working arrangements to help maximise the potential of all current and potential employees, and relevant procedures for board and committee members.
 - Have up to date and recognised procedures for the management of incidences of abuse, hate crime and other forms of abuse and discrimination.
 - Involve service users and customers in shaping and scrutinising our services.
 - Have procedures in place to ensure our service complies with our legal obligations to meet requirements arising from disability and other protected characteristics.
 - Recognise that disability includes mental health and that not all disabilities are visible.
 - Ensure that our workplace is both compliant with legislation and welcoming to those with particular requirements regarding accessibility and that this extends to use of other venues and conduct of meetings.
 - Recognise that some vulnerable groups of people may need particular support and address this by having robust procedures in relation to Safeguarding/Adult Support and Protection, Child Protection and Modern Slavery.

Reporting discrimination/potential discrimination

Employees and volunteers who feel that they have suffered any form of discrimination should raise the issue initially with their Line Manager. If this is not appropriate or possible it should be raised with the Head of Service in line with the grievance procedure.

Service users who feel that they have suffered any forms of discrimination should follow our complaints procedure which is available on our website. Employees/volunteers/service users should also use this procedure if they feel that they have been the subject of harassment from someone who is not an



employee of SEND and You. We do not tolerate any harassment from third parties towards our employees/volunteers/service users and will take appropriate actions to prevent it happening again. If an employee/volunteer/service user witness's behaviour that they find offensive in relation to age, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, even if it is not directed at them, they should also use our complaints procedure.

Implementation of this policy

All staff, trustees and volunteers are involved in creating an equality environment and one that values diversity. A copy of this policy is available to all prospective applicants and is available on our website. We will use team meetings and line supervision meetings to discuss this policy and any matters arising. All new employees will sign a copy of this policy to confirm they have read it and agree to it. Any changes to the policy will be distributed to all staff, volunteers and trustees to read and sign.

We use appropriate language, formats, fonts, size in all our promotional materials to aid accessibility for all our service users. We provide information in other languages upon request, and we have 'easy read' versions of information on our website.

The Head of Service is responsible for monitoring this policy and reporting any changes or issues to the Board of Trustees. Data will be anonymised to comply with Data Protection and GDPR legislation.

Responsibilities

Employees, volunteers and trustees have a duty to adhere to this policy and draw attention to any suspected discriminatory acts or practices in the first instance with their line manager and if this is not possible with the Head of Service.

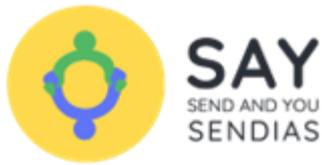
The Head of Service has overall responsibility for the monitoring of this policy and will advise staff and Trustees of any changes to the policy as and when necessary. Breaches of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy by employees and volunteers will be dealt with under the organisations disciplinary procedures.

Employees, volunteers and trustees are all personally liable under equality legislation for any act of unlawful discrimination.

Policy Review

All managers and staff report on EDI issues, policy implementation and performance indicators at monthly staff team meetings. This policy will be reviewed by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Best Practice Group, Staff Equality and Diversity Group, Service User Forum, Senior Leadership Team and Board of Trustees every three years.

To enable the effective implementation, monitoring and review of this policy, SEND and You have set up a specific EDI Group consisting of senior managers, members of the Board of Trustees, staff and volunteers. SEND and You aim to involve service users in this process.



The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Best Practice Group meets quarterly. The Best Practice Group report to the Head of Service and the Board of Trustees on a quarterly basis. Best Practice Group Reports are produced quarterly and feed into operational, strategic and quality improvement plans. Other key stakeholders will be invited and involved in the policy review consultation process.

An annual Equality Impact Statement will be published.

Relevant Legislation and References

Equality Act 2010 (to include updates 16th June 2015) and Public Sector Equality Duty
Protection from Harassment Act 1997
Acas guide, Prevent discrimination: support equality.