

Equality and Diversity Policy

1. Statement of intent

Warrington Voluntary Action recognises that many people in our society experience discrimination or lack of opportunity for reasons which are not fair. This policy recognises the 9 protected characteristics within the 2010 Equality Act which are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and Civic Partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

We also recognise that discrimination can occur for other reasons including, political beliefs, and responsibility for dependants, appearance, geographical area, social class, income level or criminal record.

Warrington Voluntary Action will challenge all discrimination and lack of opportunity in its own policy and practice and will help other organisations and individuals to do the same.

All volunteers, employees and trustees are entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.

Warrington Voluntary Action aims to create a culture that respects and values each others' differences and it sees these differences as an asset to our work as they improve our ability to meet the needs of the organisations and volunteers we serve.

All volunteers, employees, trustees and contractors must declare their support for the intent of this Equality and diversity policy. Warrington Voluntary Action reserves the right not to purchase goods and services from agencies whose activities are contrary to the principles outlined in this policy.

2. What is discrimination?

Warrington Voluntary Action believes that discrimination can take one or more of the forms set out below.

Direct discrimination is treating one person less favourably than another in the same or similar circumstances or segregating them from others solely because they have one of the protected characteristics, for example, a lesbian, a gay man or because they have a disability or illness. Refusing to employ someone who has the required skills because they are deaf or because they are pregnant would constitute such discrimination.

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. The setting of language tests, where language skills or fluency are not really needed for a job, is another example.

Combined discrimination occurs when, because of a combination of two protected characteristics, a person is treated less favourably than other whose circumstances are the same but who do not share both characteristics.

Associated and Perception – This occurs when discrimination or harassment is based on a person being perceived to have a protected characteristic or associated with someone who has one of the protected characteristics.

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 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.

Institutional racism (Macpherson Report, 1999)

Institutional racism is the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their 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)

A racist incident is 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.

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

3. Staff development

Decisions about learning and development opportunities will be made in accordance with Warrington Voluntary Action Training and Development plans and all staff will have equal and fair access to opportunities to enable them to develop in line with the organisations aims and objectives.

4. Service provision

All Warrington Voluntary Action services and activities are covered by this policy.

Warrington Voluntary Action will promote equality and diversity in its work with other agencies or individuals. In order to do this Warrington Voluntary Action is committed to completing Equality Impact Assessments on all services and policies implemented and developed within the organisation.

Warrington Voluntary Action services will be reviewed regularly and changed where needed based on the results of the equality impact assessments undertaken.

Warrington Voluntary Action is committed to ensuring that in the development and delivery of services that under represented and disadvantaged groups have equal access and are encouraged to be involved in the design of services. In order to ensure fairness the organisation will ensure that it considers all issues such as timing of meetings, child-care, personal safety, travel restrictions and religious and cultural considerations.

Within service design and delivery due regard will be taken in advancing equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristic and those who do not. Consideration will be taken to ensure that good relations are fostered between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

All trainers, facilitators and consultants contracted to work for Warrington Voluntary Action will be required to support our Equality and diversity policy.

5. Recruitment and selection

Warrington Voluntary Action believes that no person or group should be treated less favourably in employment because of the characteristics or reasons given in the Statement of Intent.

Staff appointments will be monitored to ensure no discrimination is occurring at the point of selection.

A separate Recruitment policy gives full details of this process.

6. Membership

Warrington Voluntary Action promotes Equality and Diversity within its members. In order to become members of Warrington Voluntary Action all groups must support our equality and diversity policy.

Groups or individuals who cannot become members of Warrington Voluntary Action include:

- Groups or individuals who do not promote equal opportunities or who practise discrimination
- Groups with closed membership whose aims are to satisfy their members with no regard to enriching the wider community.

A separate membership Strategy gives full details of this process

7. Implementation and monitoring

Monitoring of the Equality and diversity policy and its implementation is the responsibility of the Board.

Induction for Board members and new staff will include a briefing on the Equality and diversity policy.

A copy of the Equality and diversity policy will be given to all employees, trustees and volunteers.

Training will be provided for employees, trustees and volunteers on cultural awareness, disability awareness and other subjects that will develop equality and diversity.

8. Breaches of this policy

Breaches of this policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings

9. The Board

The Board's membership (including co-opted members) should aim to reflect a fair balance and representation of the local community and should endeavour to redress any imbalance of under-represented groups.

10. Review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis unless an earlier need to review is identified.