

## Diversity Policy

### Statement

We each have our own unique needs, skills, qualities and abilities. Warwickshire Vision Support believes that this diversity must be valued. So we want to make sure our services meet everyone's needs. We will therefore treat everyone as individuals. We will not unfairly discriminate on any grounds.

WVS accepts the workforce and the communities we serve consist of a diverse population with visible and non-visible personal differences. The Charity has extended the traditional areas of diversity to ensure that social inclusion becomes an integral part of our approach to diversity.

In line to this approach such differences would include:

Ability	Geographic location
Age	Health status
Appearance	Marital status
Background	Personality
Caring responsibilities	Political affiliation
Criminal conviction	Race
Cultural behaviour	Religious belief
Disability	Sexual orientation
Gender	Socio-economic status

This list is not exhaustive and it is accepted that individuals possess many other differences whereby they may be subjected to prejudice and discrimination.

### Why respect diversity?

We believe that valuing diversity:

- Offers a more creative way of looking at equality
- Combats prejudice, stereotyping, harassment and undignified behaviour
- Promotes the concept of equal opportunities beyond the requirements of the law
- Is socially desirable and morally right
- Embraces the challenge of serving communities and individuals with diverse needs
- Avoids categorising people into convenient pigeon holes
- Acknowledges that each individual is unique, possessing different skills and talents, which, if harnessed will benefit the community
- Is the responsibility of everyone

### Is diversity the same as Equal Opportunities?

Equal opportunities are the means by which disadvantage and discrimination is reduced and eliminated by legislation and positive action. Equal opportunity aims to ensure that no group receives less favourable treatment, thereby enabling all people to have access to the provision of goods, services, education, training, facilities, premises and employment.

Diversity takes the equality agenda further forward and is a strategy to promote values, behaviour and practices which recognise the differences between people and thereby enhance motivation and performance and release potential, delivering improved services.

Diversity therefore builds on equal opportunities and recognises that treating people's individual needs does not necessarily mean treating people equally. Diversity means we not only recognise people's different needs and aspirations, but that we respond to and take account of them as well.

## Purpose of the policy

The policy sets out a framework of commitments for the whole of Warwickshire Vision Support. Its purpose is to give a clear direction for the way that the charity manages issues of diversity.

The Charity will ensure that, in all its areas of activity, it promotes diversity and the fair and equitable treatment of all people.

## Scope of the policy

It is a principle of Warwickshire Vision Support policies that all people are respected and valued regardless of personal difference.

We are committed to diversity in:

- Engaging communities
- Providing services
- Employing people

The policy will apply to all employees and citizens who use, and potentially use, the Charity's services. Contractors, visitors, individuals and organisations who visit or use Charity facilities. Volunteers working on behalf of the Charity are also covered by the policy.

## Objectives

The Charity's vision is for Warwickshire to be a place where all people can live and work together harmoniously. A place where no one is excluded or disadvantaged because of individual difference. To achieve this we require action on a number of fronts and therefore have a range of diversity objectives.

These objectives are as follows:

- To help achieve a climate of mutual trust and respect across all of Warwickshire's diverse communities and between them and the main public institutions
- To help create the opportunities and the means whereby all of Warwickshire's diverse communities can fully participate in a wide range of economic and social activity
- To prevent the social exclusion of the most vulnerable in society and to assist those who have become socially excluded
- To ensure that diversity is the key driver in the Charity's strategic, service and financial planning processes
- To ensure that all of the Charity's policies and practises are fair and equitable in the way that they relate to different individuals and groups

- To develop an organisation in which mutual respect is at the heart of all working relationships
- To ensure that elected members, service managers and the workforce in general share a single culture of 'valuing diversity' based on a real understanding of the circumstances, needs and aspirations of different individuals and groups.

## How do I make a complaint?

The Charity recognises that discrimination may occur on many levels and may be in the form of direct or indirect discrimination.

Individuals may feel as though they have been discriminated against by any of the following:

### **Employees & Volunteers**

Complaints made against Charity employees will be investigated and dealt with by Senior Management and/or the CEO.

### **Elected Members**

Complaints made against Elected Members will be investigated and dealt with by the Chair and Personnel Committee/Board of Trustees.

### **Service Policies, Operations, Decisions & Contractors**

Complaints made against the Charity will be investigated and dealt with by the Board of Trustees using the Charity's Complaints & Compliments policy. Complaints against contractors should be dealt with according to the terms of the contract.

These policies and procedures have been designed to deal with complaints of discrimination, which need to be handled in a sensitive manner.

All procedures therefore seek to ensure minimal stress and a timely resolution.

At all stages of the procedure, the need to maintain confidentiality will be paramount. Information circulation will be minimised to that which is necessary to ensure a fair investigation and hearing.

There will be rights of appeal if dissatisfied with the outcome. The procedures however, once exhausted do not prejudice any statutory right of complaint to any outside bodies or the right to seek legal advice.

## Guiding Principles

1. All complaints will be taken seriously and dealt with in a fair, confidential and sensitive manner.
2. Effective conciliation will be sought as a primary objective throughout the procedure and where possible in less serious cases the Charity will seek to rectify the complaint informally.
3. All complaints about alleged discrimination should be brought to the attention of the CEO who will ensure that the complaint is logged and subject to a thorough investigation which will be undertaken independently and as quickly as possible. Individuals will be given the opportunity to present any evidence.
4. The Charity will ensure that staff are trained and competent in handling complaints of discrimination.

5. The complainant will be kept informed of progress at all stages of the investigation.
6. Any individual who is subject to a complaint will be made aware of the complaint and treated fairly and in accordance with Charity policies. Where it is determined that misconduct by an Charity employee has arisen, the Charity's disciplinary procedure will be invoked. The Board of Trustees will deal with complaints against elected members. Complaints made against contractors will be investigated jointly by the Charity and the company concerned.
7. All parties will receive written notification of the outcome of the investigation.
8. On conclusion of the investigation, the CEO will forward the findings to the Board of Trustees who will maintain a record of all complaints and how they are resolved.
9. If any party is not satisfied with any decision regarding the complaint, this should be communicated to the Chair of the Board of Trustees within ten working days of receiving the communication regarding the outcome.
10. The decision of the board is final and the complainant has no further right of appeal should they remain dissatisfied.

This procedure however, once exhausted, does not prejudice any statutory right of complaint to any outside bodies or the right to seek legal advice.

## Timings

In all cases, a fair and timely resolution of the complaint will be the main objective. Therefore, the Charity will seek to formally acknowledge all complaints within two working days of receipt. The investigation will seek to be completed within twenty working days.

## Complaint Monitoring

The Charity will monitor the overall number of complaints and the number that resulted in further action. The Charity will also monitor the nature of complaints. These will be reported on an annual basis.

## Monitoring and Review

The Charity has a statutory obligation to provide information about provision and use of services. Formal monitoring arrangements exist to monitor the provision of service delivery and employment.

Service delivery and employment will be monitored by:-

- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Ethnic origin
- Religious belief
- Sexual orientation

We will however endeavour to monitor all areas covered by the scope of this policy.

The Charity appreciates that individuals may not feel comfortable in disclosing such personal details, however it will strive to create an atmosphere and environment whereby people do not feel threatened by sharing such information.

All information will be held in the strictest of confidence.

## Service Delivery

Service policies will be monitored to ensure that they are free from direct and indirect discrimination and to identify and eliminate any potential adverse impact.

The use and impact of services will be monitored to:

- Improve services
- Identify gaps in services
- Better target resources to meet needs
- Feed diversity data analysis into service area planning processes
- Demonstrate continuous employment

## Employment

The following areas of employment will be monitored to ensure that they are free from direct and indirect discrimination and to identify and eliminate any adverse impact:

- All Society employment policies including;
- Recruitment and Selection
- Access to training and development
- Pay and promotion
- Outcome of performance assessments
- Those involved in disciplinary and grievances
- The leaving the Charity's employment
- Equality complaints

## Engaging Communities

Consultation will be monitored to ensure:

- Appropriate methods are used
- Steps are taken to ensure it is accessible to all

## Legislation

The Charity recognises and complies with the following pieces of equality legislation, along with associated Codes of Practice: -

- Race Relations Act 1976

- Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000
- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2001
- Protection from Harassment Act 1971
- Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- Sex Discrimination (Burden of Proof) Regulations 2001
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- National Minimum Wage Regulations 1999
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Employment Relations Act 1999
- Employment Act 2002
- Public Order Act 1986
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- Treaty of Amsterdam 1997
- European Equal Treatment Directive 1976
- Age Discrimination Act 2006
- Equalities Act 2010

These will be amended and updated as new legislation and codes of practice come into force.

## Version control

The table below shows the history of the document:

Version Number	Author & Job Title	Date
V.1		April 2017
V.2	Deborah Kerrison Finance & Admin Manager	June 2022
V.3	Rebecca Bourton Community Services Manager	July 2023