



Developing young people through personal challenge

# Equality & Diversity Policy

## Version Control

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### Introduction

- The Trustees, employees and volunteers at Youth Challenge Oxfordshire are committed to ensuring an inclusive environment, where people can be their genuine selves in accordance with our values. We are dedicated to taking proactive steps to advance a culture of non-discrimination and equity.
- This policy ensures we benefit from a variety of perspectives and better reflect the communities we serve and to make more informed decisions.

*Definitions: Key words and terms can be found in Appendix 1*

### Policy Statement

#### Purpose and aims

The purpose of this policy is to set out our approach to equity, diversity, and inclusion and how we will create a safe and inclusive organisation that learns and grows to proactively dismantle barriers, eliminate discrimination, and create equity for our people and those we serve.

This policy aims to ensure we:

- Treat everyone with dignity, fairness and respect and recognise individual uniqueness and identity regardless of any protected characteristic, combination of protected characteristics, or any other characteristic(s), socio-economic or demographic factors and/or cultural traits that may expose them to unfair disadvantage.
- Challenge all forms of unequal, offensive and unlawful treatment.
- Recognise that certain people are more disadvantaged and address their individual needs to overcome disadvantage and discrimination and ensure equity.
- Have the leadership, effective management practices and resources in place so that everyone understands the barriers to equality & diversity and the consequences of discrimination.
- Develop a culture which attracts and retains people from the widest possible range of backgrounds and experiences into all levels of the organisation and create a positive experience for all.
- Design and provide services that meet the needs of diverse communities, and which are accessible to all.

#### Scope

This policy applies to:

- all elements and stages of our work and volunteering, and to all stages of the provision of our services and income generation. At each stage, the rights, expectations, and obligations set out in this policy apply equally.
- anyone working for us. This includes all Trustees, employees, volunteers. The policy also relates to job applicants.
- all our work and our relationships with third-party providers, partners, donors, supporters, and stakeholders.

#### Standards

We will:

- Promote equity, dignity, fairness, inclusion and respect for all those who work or volunteer for or have dealings with our organisation.
- Create a culture that is free from prejudice, bullying, harassment, victimisation, discrimination and offensive behaviour. By educating our people on their responsibilities to champion equality & diversity, promoting inclusive language, and respectful behaviour, and ensuring any breaches are appropriately dealt with.

- Provide support and take complaints of discrimination, unequal, unlawful, or offensive treatment seriously. Including, ensuring those who witness, or experience it know how, and where, to make complaints and seek support.
- Proactively uphold and advance the rights of individuals belonging to the legally recognised characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, as well as those who may experience discrimination and marginalisation outside the Act's scope.
- Ensure that our recruitment, selection, development, and progression processes are transparent, merit based, fair and accessible to all and remove barriers to progression and proactively widen diversity across senior leadership.
- Make jobs at all levels accessible, available on a flexible basis, where possible, and proactively make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of our people.
- Commit to ensuring transparency as far as possible in decisions relating to pay, benefits, and job evaluations, and take steps to ensure any disparity in terms and conditions is eliminated.
- Work to raise awareness of, and provide support for, health, safety, and wellbeing issues.
- Ensure any new and reviewed policies, programmes, decisions that will affect our people will be effectively assessed to ensure that any negative impact is mitigated wherever possible.

### Procedures

We will take all reasonable steps to:

1. We promote respect for other people and treat everyone fairly
2. We will not use discriminatory practices in the youth group environment
3. Young people and adults are able to meet together in a positive and accepting environment where they are safe from harm, abuse, harassment and intimidation
4. Young people and adults recognise and challenge prejudice and discrimination
5. Everyone to be considered as a volunteer leader
6. All leaders will have equal access to training opportunities
7. All young people will have equal access to group activities and training opportunities
8. We aim to deal promptly with any complaints of discrimination
9. The policy is applied when recruiting volunteers
10. We monitor what we do to meet any legal requirements and so that this policy is implemented properly and understood by all
11. We take incidents, including those of harassment and bullying, seriously

Any issues of inequality, harassment or discrimination should be reported to the CEO, who will enable the parties involved to give their version of events before considering further action. The CEO will respond quickly and impartially to such issues. We have a responsibility to challenge all forms of discrimination.

### Youth Groups: young people and leaders

Equality and diversity will always be considered in the membership of YoCO youth groups (for young people and leaders). We will make sure that everyone is treated equally, fairly and has access to the same opportunities. The same opportunities for involvement will be provided for all young people and leaders with regards to activities, training, the formation of groups and the delegation of tasks. The differing needs of individual young people and leaders will be taken into account when booking venues and arranging the dates and times for youth group activities and events. These will be arranged so that as many young people and leaders as possible can attend.

It is important that leaders are involved in running the youth group and that young people who live in the surrounding community feel that they are welcome to join. The ways in which we promote the youth group's aims and activities will consider the diversity of their community, including hard-to-reach groups.

### Conduct

The youth group is a place where everyone feels comfortable to get involved in activities. Any discriminatory or offensive behaviour will not be tolerated.

### Unacceptable behaviour

Bullying, harassment and discriminatory behaviour are unacceptable and will be challenged. Volunteers and employees have a responsibility to report any offensive behaviour that they witness.

## Responsibilities

- The Board of Trustees have ultimate responsibility for the policy
- The CEO (policy owner) is responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy and allows achievement of external and internal standards, and policy implementation
- The ED Manager (policy lead), together with the policy owner, is responsible for the development, monitoring, and review of this policy.
- Youth Challenge Oxfordshire Trustees, employees and volunteers are all responsible for adhering to this policy.

## Laws and regulations

This policy supports our compliance with the requirements of relevant UK legislation including:

- **Sex Discrimination Act 1975** (amendments 1986 & Gender Reassignment Regs 1999)
- **Race Relations Act 1976** and the Amendment Act 2000
- **Equal Pay Acts 1970** (amended 1974 & 1983) & 1975
- **Disability Discrimination Act 1995**
- **Employment Protection Act 1978, Employment Rights Act 1996, Employment Relations Act 1999, Employment Act 2002, Employment Equality (Religion, Belief, Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 (Age) 2006;**
- **Disability Equality Duty 2006**
- **Equality Act 2006**
- **Gender Equality Duty 2007**
- **Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1992**
- **Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 and 1999**
- **Human Rights Act 1998**
- **Protection from Harassment Act 1997**
- **Equality Act 2010**

## Review and Revision

This policy will be reviewed by the ED Manager bi-annually or as needed to reflect changing circumstances and best practices.

At every review, the policy will be approved by the Trustees

## Appendix 1: Definitions

### Protected Characteristics

People are legally protected from discrimination by the Equality Act 2010. It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of the following protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; marital or civil partnership status; pregnancy and maternity; race including racial group, ethnic or national origin, or nationality; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; Political opinion (Northern Ireland only)

### Equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion

**Equality:** the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, or opportunities.

**Equity:** refers to fairness and justice and recognising that we do not all start from the same place and must acknowledge and make adjustments to imbalances.

**Diversity:** the existence of variations of different characteristics in a group of people. These characteristics could be everything that makes us unique, such as our cognitive skills and personality traits, along with the things that shape our identity (e.g. race, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, cultural background).

**Inclusion** - actively embracing people with diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences.

### Unlawful discrimination

When a person or group of people is treated less favourably than another person or group of people would be treated based on their protected characteristic or religious or political opinion.

### Types of discrimination

**Direct discrimination** – treating someone unfairly because of their protected characteristic.

**Indirect discrimination** – A practice, policy or rule applied to everyone that may at first appear fair or neutral but puts people of a particular protected characteristic at a disadvantage.

**Discrimination by association** – a person is treated unfavourably because of another person's protected characteristic.

**Discrimination by perception** – when someone is treated unfairly because others believe they have a protected characteristic.

**Victimisation** – a person is treated less favourably because they have or are expected to complain about discrimination.

**Harassment** – unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

**Bullying** – as persistent, offensive, abusive, intimidating or insulting behaviour, abuse of power or unfair sanctions which make the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable, which undermines their self-confidence, and which may cause them to suffer stress.

### People

Our people include Trustees, employees, volunteers, job applicants, donors, third-party providers, partners and supporters.

### Prejudice

A preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience.

### Reasonable Adjustments

Under anti-discrimination legislation (*Equality Act 2010*) employers are required to make reasonable adjustments for disabled staff. This means making changes to a disabled person's environment or the way their employment is structured to mitigate any disadvantages and allows them to work safely and productively. This may include, removing physical barriers, providing extra support, and providing flexibility.