

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Guidance

Who is covered by this policy?

All staff, volunteers and associates.

What is covered by this policy?

This policy sets out Age UK Lewisham & Southwark's commitment to equal opportunities in all areas of its activities. It includes specific actions relating to employment, promotion and provision of services, and accessibility.

Purpose

Age UK Lewisham & Southwark believes staff and service users have the right to be treated equally and with respect, and have the responsibility to treat others equally and with respect.

The Policy

- 1.1 Age UK Lewisham and Southwark (AUKLS) recognises that we live in a society where discrimination still operates to the disadvantage of many groups in society.
- 1.2 AUKLS believes that every individual should have equal rights to recognition of their human dignity, and to have equal opportunities to be educated, to work, to receive services, and to participate in society.
- 1.3 AUKLS recognises that diversity should be celebrated, and that by encouraging diversity in every aspect of its work, the charity has access to a wider range of skills, talents, and perspectives. As such, AUKLS seeks to encourage its workforce to express its diversity where appropriate. Providing equal opportunities and valuing diversity and promoting inclusion is good management practice and makes sound business sense.
- 1.4 AUKLS is committed to the promotion of equal opportunities through the way we manage the organisation and provide services. In order to express this commitment, we develop, promote and maintain policies that will be conducive to the principles of fairness and equality in the workplace.

1.5 The objective of this policy is that no person should suffer or experience less favourable treatment, discrimination or lack of opportunities on the grounds of gender, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religious or philosophical beliefs, health status, HIV status, age, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, political beliefs or trade union membership, class, responsibility for dependents, physical attributes, ex-offender status as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (LASPO 2012), lack of formal qualifications where such qualifications are not formally required, or any other grounds which cannot be shown to be justifiable within the context of this policy.

1.6 Legal obligations: AUKLS complies with the Equal Opportunities and Discrimination (Equality) Act 2010. The equality act protects people from discrimination based on 9 protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex/gender, sexual orientation).

In practice, adherence to this Act will ensure AUKLS protects its staff, volunteers and service users from Direct discrimination, Discrimination by association (due to association with another individual), Perception discrimination (based on incorrect/correct belief a person possesses a protected characteristic), Indirect discrimination (people who are disadvantaged by possessing a protected characteristic), Harassment and Victimization.

In valuing diversity AUKLS is committed to going beyond the legal minimum regarding equality.

1.6 AUKLS acknowledges that UK legislation does not yet cover intersectionality (ie that many people from marginalised groups have multiple and shifting characteristics which could potentially be subject to discrimination, and that these characteristics do not exist separately from each other). AUKLS is nonetheless committed to thinking intersectionally wherever possible.

Individuals who cross several intersections are statistically more vulnerable to discrimination (eg older people who are also BAME, LGBTQ+ or disabled). AUKLS is aware that a one-size-fits-all approach assumes similarities between inequalities, and can often be ineffective and exclusive. The complexity by which people experience discrimination as a result of each nuanced intersection should be acknowledged, to prevent those who experience intersectional discrimination having to split their human rights concerns and prioritise certain aspects over others.

Problems experienced by different groups are should be viewed holistically wherever possible.

- 1.7 This policy will influence and affect every aspect of activities carried out at AUKLS: ie promotional work, service provision, partnership and development work and other functions linked to the AUKLS, as determined by the Board of Trustees.
- 1.8 In the provision of services and the employment of staff, AUKLS is committed to promoting equal opportunities for everyone. Throughout its activities, AUKLS will treat all people equally whether they are:
- Seeking or using our services;
 - Volunteers;
 - Applying for a job or already employed by us; Or
 - Students on work experience or placements.
- 1.9 AUKLS reserves the right to discontinue contractual and supplier agreements with organisations or individuals found to be in breach of our Equal Opportunities Policy.

2. Recruitment and Employment

- 2.1 AUKLS will strive to be a good employer by ensuring that:
- We aim to create a diverse workforce that is representative of the areas it is drawn from and accurately reflects the older people it serves.
 - We adopt a consistent, non-discriminatory approach to the advertising of vacancies.
 - Wherever possible within project budgets, AUKLS will advertise posts or volunteer opportunities through appropriate community or specialist media.
 - We under normal circumstances pay particular attention in drawing up job descriptions, person specifications, and advertisements to encourage members of disadvantaged groups to apply.
 - We endeavor through appropriate training to ensure that employees, making selection and recruitment decisions will not discriminate, whether consciously or unconsciously, in making these decisions.
 - Promotion and advancement will be made on merit and all decisions relating to this will be made within the overall framework and principles of this policy.
 - Job descriptions exist for all posts and are available to staff. They will be revised regularly to ensure that they are accurate and in line with this policy. Job requirements will be reflected accurately in any personnel specifications.
 - Short-listing and interviewing will be carried out by more than one person where possible.
 - Interview questions will be related to the requirements of the job and will not be of a discriminatory nature.
 - All applicants who apply for jobs with us will receive fair treatment and will be considered solely on their ability to do their job.
 - Selection decisions will not be influenced by any perceived prejudices of other staff.
 - All staff and volunteers have access to appropriate induction periods and regular supervision.

- Employment terms and conditions reflect current legislation, good practice and fairness.
- We appoint staff within an agreed framework of terms and conditions.
- We make staff aware of the policies that encourage flexible ways of working, including: right to request flexible working, job sharing and job splitting, reduced hours, time off for dependents leave (approval is subject to appropriateness to the nature of the position).
- Employment and volunteer opportunities are offered to people with disabilities; where possible within project budgets, AUKLS will provide additional aids and equipment or adjustments to the working environment to meet the needs of staff or volunteers with disabilities.
- AUKLS will monitor its recruitment of posts, including the use of different media for recruitment.

2.2 Learning and Development

AUKLS believes that all staff, volunteers and trustees should have access to development opportunities in order to carry out their jobs successfully and to be able to contribute as widely as possible to the positive achievements of the organisation. AUKLS will ensure:

- All staff and volunteers are made aware of development opportunities and are actively encouraged to participate in learning (all forms).
- That briefing on this policy forms part of the Induction procedure for trustees, staff and volunteers and that for those who work with the organisation, appropriate training is available to enable employees and volunteers to perform their jobs effectively.
- Monitoring of training and development activities to ensure equality of access across all staff groups.
- Ensuring that development and performance management activities are transparent and based on competence.

2.3 Monitoring

We will maintain and review the employment records of all employees in order to monitor the progress of this policy. Monitoring may involve:

- The collection and classification of information regarding race in terms of ethnic/national origin and sex of all applications and current employees;
- The examination by ethnic/national origin and sex of the distribution of employees and the success rate of the applicants; and
- Recording recruitment, training and promotional records of all employees, the decisions reached and the reason for those decisions.

The results of any monitoring procedure will be reviewed at regular intervals to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of this policy. Consideration will be given, if necessary, to adjusting this policy to afford greater equality of opportunities to all applicants and staff.

3. Volunteers

AUKLS will:

- Promote volunteering to Lewisham & Southwark residents who are disadvantaged or who are from marginalised groups.
- Recognise the fact that volunteers come from a broad cross section of the community and bring a diverse range of skills, experience, and interests.
- Recruit volunteers for roles which require a variety of time commitments, and for assignments of different durations.
- Ensure that all volunteers are made aware of the equality, diversity and inclusion and other policies that inform AUKLS culture and development.
- Make realistic budget provision for supporting volunteers in AUKLS, including the reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses.
- Ensure that volunteers are encouraged to participate in staff learning opportunities and that their views are considered when developing/implementing policies.
- Monitor take-up of volunteer places to ensure that people from a range of backgrounds are involved in volunteering opportunities.

4. Conduct and general standards of behaviour

All staff and volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and considerate manner at all times. AUKLS will not tolerate behaviour such as:

- making threats
- physical violence
- shouting
- swearing at others
- persistent rudeness
- isolating, ignoring or refusing to work with certain people
- telling offensive jokes or name calling
- displaying offensive material such as pornography or sexist / racist cartoons, or the distribution of such material via email / text message or any other format
- any other forms of harassment or victimisation

The items on the above list of unacceptable behaviours are considered to be disciplinary offences within AUKLS and can lead to disciplinary action being taken. AUKLS encourages staff to resolve misunderstandings and problems informally wherever possible, depending on the circumstances. However, whether dealt with informally or formally, it is important for staff who may have caused offence to understand that it is no defence to say that they did not intend to do so, or to blame individuals for being over sensitive. It is the impact of the behaviour, rather than the intent, that counts, and that should shape the solution found both to the immediate problem and to preventing further similar problems in the future.

5. Complaints of discrimination

AUKLS will treat seriously all complaints of unlawful discrimination on any grounds contrary to this policy made by employees, trustees, clients or other third parties and will take action where appropriate.

All complaints will be investigated in accordance with the organisation's grievance, complaints or disciplinary procedure, as appropriate and the complainant will be informed of the outcome in line with these procedures.

We will also monitor the number and outcomes of complaints of discrimination made by staff, volunteers, clients and other third parties, and review this data to inform later development of this policy.

6. Older People Who Use Our Services

As an older person's charity, AUKLS is directly concerned by the ways in which older people, as a group and as individuals, are subject to discrimination. It will work to ensure that its own services and resources become and remain a genuine response to the needs of all older people.

To meet the varied needs of older people AUKLS will (where possible):

- Ensure accessibility of all of our premises;
- Ensure transparency of policy and procedures and access to information;
- Involve older people in the design and delivery of services;
- Recognise that the older population is diverse and that age discrimination is often accompanied by other forms of discrimination and exists intersectionally;
- Recognise that older people bring a lifetime of knowledge and experience to our relationship with them;
- Ensure our staff are enabled to recognise and tackle age discrimination during their daily work;
- Develop a strategy to improve and extend ways to communicate and involve older people;

- Support marginalised older peoples' groups (small, BAME, new communities, LGBTQ+ and those disadvantaged by geographical location) ensuring awareness of local decision-making structures and are actively supported to access and participate;
- Continue to develop and to promote new and innovative services within the sector, reaching older people from all communities;
- Where practical, hold meetings, events and training sessions at different times and different days and in accessible venues; and
- Monitor the use of AUKLS services by different sections of the community.

7. How will this policy be implemented?

In order to implement this policy AUKLS will:

- Communicate the policy to employees, job applicants, volunteers and relevant others;
- Incorporate specific and appropriate duties in respect of implementing this policy into job descriptions and work objectives of all staff, where appropriate;
- Ensure that those who are involved in assessing candidates for recruitment or promotion will be trained in nondiscriminatory selection techniques;
- Incorporate equal opportunity notices into general communications practices; and
- Ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfill the objectives of the policy.

8. Who is responsible for this implementation?

8.1 AUKLS Board of Trustees' responsibility is to:

- Own and monitor implementation of this policy

8.2 AUKLS Chief Executive's responsibility is to:

- Take responsibility for delivery of this policy; and
- Provide strong leadership on equality.

8.3 AUKLS Senior Management and Leadership Team's responsibility is to:

- Act as equality champions and role models;
- Implement this policy and integrate equality into the work of AUKLS;
- Ensure staff and volunteers are fully aware of their individual and collective responsibilities under this policy; and
- Respond to allegations of discrimination and harassment fairly, quickly and effectively.

8.4 AUKLS line managers' responsibility is to:

- Build specific actions into their team and individual's goals that contribute to the delivery of this policy as part of the organisational, individual and project planning processes;
- Check that staff, volunteers and consultants are aware of this policy and understand their rights and responsibilities contained within it;
- Model behaviour that supports this policy and challenge those they manage to do the same;
- Allocate their time and support and any training or development opportunities objectively, fairly and without discrimination; and
- Communicate regularly with their teams about equality issues in a way that keeps this policy central to our mission.

8.5 All staff have a responsibility to:

- Treat others with dignity and respect;
- Report discrimination, bullying, unfair treatment or harassment that they experience or witness;
- Help identify discriminatory practices or procedures and bring these to the attention of their line managers, or HR;
- Contribute to creating an inclusive learning environment that values difference;
- Attend mandatory staff training and development events; and
- Express opinions constructively with sensitivity and respect.

8.6 Our volunteers' roles are to:

- Play their part in creating an environment where people are valued and respected;
- Treat others with dignity and respect;
- Report discrimination, bullying, unfair treatment or harassment that they experience or witness;
- Help identify discriminatory practices or procedures and bring these to our attention; and
- Express opinions constructively with sensitivity and respect.

8.7 Our service providers', contractors' and consultants' responsibility is to operate within the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the terms of this policy. A copy of the Equality Policy will be given to all contractors and consultants on request and an assessment of their commitment to complying will form part of any formal tendering process.