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Equality & Diversity Policy

(Incorporating Equal Opportunities)

Contents

1. Policy Statement
2. Aims of the Policy
3. Equality & Diversity Policy Statement
4. Scope of the Policy
5. Responsibility
6. Legislation and Codes of Practice
7. Definitions of Discrimination

LINKS TO OTHER DOCUMENTS

Document	Policy	Procedure	Other
Employee Handbook			√
Volunteer Policy & Handbook	√		√
Harassment & Bullying Policy	√		
Comments, Suggestions & Complaints Policy	√		

Approved: *[Signature]* Date: *25/6/26*
For and on behalf of the Board of Trustees – Age UK South Cumbria Ltd

1. Introduction

Age UK South Cumbria is committed to achieving Equality & Diversity for its current and potential staff, volunteers and clients.

Under the Equality Act 2010, it is unlawful to discriminate in recruitment, employment, provision of goods, facilities or services on grounds of:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation.

Responsibility for promoting, implementing and reviewing this policy rests first with the Board of Trustees, who have delegated day-to-day responsibility to the Chief Executive Officer. All Trustees, staff and volunteers will be expected to play their part in seeking to ensure that the policy is adhered to in their appropriate areas of responsibility and influence.

2. Aims of the Policy

- 2.1 To ensure that Age UK South Cumbria fulfils its obligation to act in accordance with requirements of The Equality Act 2010 and subsequent amendments and guidance.
- 2.2 To increase awareness within the organisation of the Equality & Diversity Policy and of the needs of diverse groups.
- 2.3 To have a workforce made up of staff and volunteers, which positively represents the local community and to ensure that our recruitment procedures and employment terms and conditions fully reflect our policy and comply with the law.
- 2.4 To provide equality of access to Age UK South Cumbria's services to all sections of the community, recognising that some individuals and groups may require specific measures to facilitate this, and to remove barriers which directly or indirectly restrict equality of opportunity and access to services.
- 2.5 To examine all services and activities of Age UK South Cumbria to ensure that they reflect the needs of people facing disadvantage.
- 2.6 To ensure that no member of staff, or volunteer, trustee or the users of our services suffers any form of discrimination.

3. Equality & Diversity Policy Statement

By understanding and respecting people's different needs and aspirations, we can stay in touch with the changing society in which we work, and address inequalities to ensure that everyone has the same access to the services and opportunities they need.

Staff and volunteers need to recognise and fulfil their personal role in making Age UK South Cumbria a genuinely inviting and inclusive organisation.

Age UK South Cumbria has a commitment to diversity and equality, which is about:

- Recognising and valuing difference.
- Recognising and seeking to redress inequality and disadvantage.
- Treating everyone in a fair, open and honest manner.
- Recognising the right of volunteers, employees, service users and customers to be treated with dignity and respect.
- Providing equality of opportunity and access to services.
- Tackling discrimination and disadvantage.
- Tackling harassment and intimidation.

Age UK South Cumbria will not tolerate less favourable treatment on the grounds of the protected characteristics outlined in The Equality Act 2010. Age UK South Cumbria believes that discrimination is wrong and should be actively opposed.

Discrimination denies freedom for people to be themselves and to have place in a free society. We will ensure that all people; trustees, volunteers, employees and members of the public are treated fairly and consistently without discrimination.

The organisation will therefore:

- Demonstrate its commitment to these statements by adopting a policy of Equality & Diversity, which will be reviewed annually and, when necessary, updated.
- Seek to remove bias from existing policies, procedures and practices, and taking steps to ensure equal access to employment, volunteering and services.
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware that it is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly or harass clients or customers because of the protected characteristics of disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation in the provision of goods and services.
- Age UK South Cumbria believes that by drawing on and valuing diversity, the organisation will be enriched, and its ability to provide services to older people in our community will be strengthened.

4. Scope of the Policy

This policy will influence all aspects of employment practice, volunteering practice and service delivery. Age UK South Cumbria recognises that every person is an individual with different needs, preferences and abilities. We aim to reflect this diversity in everything we do, including making our services inclusive and accessible to older people from all sections of the community throughout South Cumbria.

4.1 Recruitment and Selection

Age UK South Cumbria is committed to attracting and retaining a diverse workforce, which is representative of the community served and ensuring that each member of staff, volunteer or client feels respected and able to give their best.

Age UK South Cumbria will treat all employees and volunteers equally and create a working environment which is free from discrimination and harassment and which respects, where appropriate, their diverse backgrounds and beliefs.

Terms and conditions of service will comply with The Equality Act 2010 and Age UK South Cumbria will ensure that recruitment practices fulfil the requirement of this legislation.

Where appropriate and necessary, Age UK South Cumbria will endeavour to provide facilities and conditions of service which take into account the specific needs of employees which arise from their gender, ethnic or cultural background, nationality, responsibilities as parents or carers, disability, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status, part-time status, age, religion or belief.

All posts will have a job or role description and person specification, which will contain essential and desirable skills, qualifications, knowledge and experience. Person specifications will only contain details which are required.

All employment opportunities will be open and accessible to all, on the basis of their individual qualifications, qualities and personal merit.

Where appropriate, positive action measures will be taken to attract applications from all sections of society and especially from those groups which are under-represented in the workforce.

Wherever appropriate and necessary, lawful exceptions (Genuine Occupational Requirements) will be used to recruit suitable employees to meet the special needs of particular user-groups.

All staff and Trustees involved in recruitment and selection will be briefed on the requirements of an equal opportunities interview.

The format for interview will be agreed before it takes place and will remain constant for all interviews for the position.

All enquiries for posts will receive a copy of the Equality & Diversity Policy Statement with the information provided. At interview, they will be questioned on their understanding of the issues and the practical implications of having a policy.

All application packs for staff and volunteers will include an Equality and Diversity Monitoring Form, used to inform the review process, with an annual report to the Board.

As an organisation using the Disclosure and Barring Service to assess candidates' suitability for positions of trust, Age UK South Cumbria will comply fully with the DBS Code of Practice and undertake to treat all candidates fairly, and not to discriminate unlawfully against any candidate who is required to provide information through this process.

All recruitment advertising will carry the statement, "Age UK South Cumbria is an Equal Opportunities Employer". Posts which are deemed suitable will be advertised as available for job share.

Volunteers

Age UK South Cumbria is committed to offering a mutually satisfying and rewarding relationship with the organisation to all Volunteers.

Age UK South Cumbria is committed to ensuring that no unfair or unlawful discrimination occurs in the recruitment, training, support and management of its volunteers.

Volunteers approaching Age UK South Cumbria will be introduced to all currently available opportunities open to them in their area, and they will make their choice from the full range, according to their skills and knowledge.

4.2 Training and Development

The Board of Trustees, staff and volunteers need to recognise and fulfil their personal role in making Age UK South Cumbria a genuinely inviting and inclusive organisation.

The content and structure of the training, as well as the way training is accessed will be regularly reviewed to ensure that they are fair.

4.3 Promotion

Promotion for staff will only take place as a result of objective assessment, which will be based on the specific abilities, knowledge and skills required for the post.

Equal access to promotion will be exercised and promotion opportunities will be advertised on the basis that they are accessible to all staff including those that work full time, part time, from home and those who work from all Age UK South Cumbria bases.

There may be situations where some specialised posts are only suitable for people with particular skills, but consideration must still be given to all staff and a fair selection process adopted as some staff may have skills and knowledge of which the Charity is unaware.

4.4 Discipline

Any member of staff or volunteer breaching the Charity's Equality & Diversity Policy will be regarded as behaving in a manner that constitutes an act of misconduct and will be dealt with through the appropriate disciplinary procedures.

Any volunteer, including trustees or members of any steering group, found to be in breach of this policy will be counselled on their actions and may, where necessary, be removed from Age UK South Cumbria's volunteer register. Any service user found in breach of this policy will, where appropriate, be counselled on their actions and may, where necessary, be referred back to their referring organisation (if appropriate) or refused future services from Age UK South Cumbria.

4.5 Grievances

Any staff member or volunteer who feels they have been a victim of discrimination or unfairly treated in a way contrary to the intention of this policy should raise the issue through Age UK South Cumbria's established **Grievance Procedure**.

Any member of staff or volunteer suspecting that another member of staff, manager or volunteer has been involved in any fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing, may report this using the **Public Interest ("Whistleblowing")** procedures.

Any job applicant or service user who feels they have been unfairly treated in a way contrary to the intention of this policy should raise the issue through Age UK South Cumbria's established **Complaints Procedures**. Age UK South Cumbria will not treat lightly or ignore grievances on the assumption that the complainant is over-sensitive about discrimination.

4.6 Provision of Services

Age UK South Cumbria aims to deliver services in South Cumbria to older people who need them, without discriminating against, stigmatising or patronising them. Every service user will be treated in a professional manner, with courtesy and respect.

- They will know a policy exists, that a copy is available for them to read upon request, and that this policy will guide all members of the organisation to share the commitment to Equality & Diversity.

- They will know that they have the right to complain if they feel that these standards are not being adhered to or are dissatisfied with the service provided to them.

Age UK South Cumbria is committed to ensuring that the highest standards are maintained in the provision of services. The organisation will keep under review the procedures that are used, and the practices that are established to ensure that no person is treated less favourably when receiving services.

Age UK South Cumbria will make sure that its services meet the needs of our diverse communities by involving communities in identifying their needs and by seeking to meet these needs.

Age UK South Cumbria will, where possible, provide information in plain English and in accessible formats, where appropriate.

Age UK South Cumbria is committed to ensuring that whenever it is possible and reasonable to do so, any features of the premises used to provide services which create a barrier to equal access will be adjusted.

4.7 Recording and Monitoring of Equality & Diversity with Service Provision

Age UK South Cumbria will monitor and review the take-up of services.

Equality & Diversity monitoring will be carried out on all service delivery activity.

4.8 Procedures for making complaints about any aspect of service provision

Age UK South Cumbria is committed to ensuring that any complaint related to the delivery of their services is dealt with in a sensitive and speedy manner.

For details of the procedures to make complaints about service provision, please refer to the "AUKSC00007 - Complaints, Comments & Suggestions Policy".

5. Responsibilities

The Board of Trustees has ultimate responsibility to provide, implement and review the Equality & Diversity Policy.

It is the responsibility of Trustees, staff and volunteers to adhere to and to promote the policy by ensuring that Age UK South Cumbria's activities promote equality and diversity.

The Chief Executive Officer, or appointed representative, holds the day-to-day responsibility for ensuring that the policy is implemented and, in the first instance, for dealing with and acting on disciplinary offences.

6. Legislation & Codes of Practice

The following pieces of legislation and codes of practice have informed this policy:

- The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. It replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, making the law easier to understand and strengthening protection in some situations. It sets out the different ways in which it is unlawful to treat someone.
- The Human Rights Act 1998.
- The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

7. Definitions of Discrimination

Discrimination can arise in the following ways:

- Direct Discrimination
- Indirect Discrimination
- Associative Discrimination
- Perceptive Discrimination
- Failure to make reasonable adjustments
- Victimisation
- Harassment
- Third Party Harassment

Direct Discrimination

This form of discrimination occurs when a person who is entitled to be treated equally, is directly adversely affected by a decision that results in that person being treated less favourably. Most often, though not exclusively, this will be as a result of a decision to directly discriminate against a person based on prejudice or stereotyping.

An example of direct sex discrimination would be refusing to employ a person because they were pregnant.

Indirect Discrimination

This is created where a provision, criterion or practice is applied which is such that it would be to the detriment of a considerably larger proportion of the relevant group to which the individual belongs than to others, which is not objectively justified, and which is to the individual's detriment.

An example of indirect sex discrimination could be requiring everyone to work full time unless there is a good reason, unrelated to sex, as to why the particular job has to be done on a full-time basis, since requiring everyone to work full time will normally adversely affect a higher proportion of women than men.

Associative Discrimination

Under the Equality Act 2010 it is unlawful to discriminate directly against an individual for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic (although this does not cover harassment because of marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity.)

Perceptive Discrimination

Under the Equality Act 2010, it is unlawful to discriminate against or harass an individual based on a perception that he or she has a particular protected characteristic when he or she does not, in fact, have that protected characteristic (although this does not cover harassment because of marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity.)

Failure to make reasonable adjustments

Failure to make reasonable adjustments occurs where a physical feature or a provision, criterion or practice puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared with someone who does not have a disability and the employer has failed to take such steps as are reasonable to overcome the disadvantage.

Victimisation

This occurs when a person is subjected to a detriment, such as being denied a training opportunity or a promotion because they made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because they are suspected of doing so or being about to do so.

An example of this would be that having made a complaint about discrimination, a person is denied the promotion they would otherwise have received. Other examples would include being threatened with dismissal, having their workload increased or being subjected to any other form of detriment.

Harassment

Harassment is where there is unwanted conduct related to one of the prohibited grounds, which has the purpose of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person, or is reasonably considered by that person to have the effect of violating his or her dignity or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for him or her, even if this effect was not intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

An example might include inappropriate language or behaviour which focuses attention on a person's religion or belief. Harassment applies to all protected characteristics except pregnancy and maternity and marriage or civil partnership. Employees are also protected from harassment based on the perception of having a particular protected characteristic or by association with a person with a particular protected characteristic.

Forms of harassment may include:

- Unwanted physical contact, ranging from touching to serious physical assault.

- Verbal or written harassment in the form of jokes, offensive language, gossip, slander, sectarian songs, letters
- The visual display of posters, graffiti, flags.
- Isolation or non-co-operation at work, exclusion from social activities.
- Coercion, ranging from pressure for sexual favours to pressure to participate in political/religious groups.
- Intrusion by pestering or stalking.
- Bullying, physical, verbal or emotional or a combination of these carried out by an individual or group of people.

Examples of types of bullying:

- Physical – taking belongings, hitting, pushing and other forms of violence.
- Verbal – name-calling, teasing and other hurtful or insulting remarks.
- Emotional – spreading stories and rumours, exclusion from social groups, ridicule and humiliation.

We have a separate harassment and bullying policy to which you should refer if you are subject to or witness to any conduct of this nature.

Third Party Harassment

Third party harassment occurs where an employee is harassed and the harassment is related to a protected characteristic (although this does not cover harassment because of marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity), by third parties such as clients or customers.

Positive Discrimination

Whilst it is lawful for an employer to encourage groups that are currently under-represented in the organization to apply for employment positions, (described as Positive Action) selection must always be based on merit.

Selecting a person based on their gender or ethnic background is known as “positive discrimination” and it is unlawful.

Gender reassignment

The Equality Act 2010 provides protection for transgender people. A transgender person is someone who proposes to, starts or has completed a process to change his or her gender. **The Act no longer requires a person to be under medical supervision to be protected** – so, for example, a woman who decides to live as a man but does not undergo any medical procedures would be covered.

It is discrimination to treat transgender people less favourably for being absent from work because they propose to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment than they would be treated if they were absent because they were ill or injured.

8. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary at that time.

