

Equal Opportunities Policy

Statement of Intent

The Trustee Board of Horsham Area Council for Voluntary Service (HACVS) acknowledges the need for an Equal Opportunities Policy in its role both as an employer and a provider of services. It accepts that it has a responsibility to ensure that all, staff and volunteers are fully aware of the issues relating to equality of opportunity and that they understand their role in its promotion and implementation.

HACVS recognises that the United Kingdom is a multi-racial and culturally diverse society and is committed to developing equal opportunities in all areas of its activities.

Both in our employment practices and in improving services, equality involves:

Providing fairness and equality of opportunity recognising that everyone is different and that these differences must be equally respected, and challenging discrimination, so that we demonstrate our commitments to equality and do not exclude people and make them feel isolated.

We aim to ensure that no volunteer or staff member, organisation or individual is discriminated against irrespective of gender, nationality, ethnic origin, race, age, disability, sexual orientation, belief, religion, marital status, civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment (or in the process of changing). HACVS also recognise that it is wrong that poverty, geographical location and other unjustified grounds may also be used as a basis of discrimination; we recognise that everyone has a contribution to make to society and a right to equality of opportunity.

We seek to work in partnership with our member organisations and aim to encourage and assist them in the adoption of a policy of equal opportunities. We will seek to encourage application for membership from a wide range of organisations.

HACVS recognises that unjustified discrimination does exist in our society and that we have an obligation and a responsibility both to oppose such discrimination and actively to promote equality of opportunity amongst all groups of society.

HACVS recognises that the following types of discrimination are recognised in law and take these very seriously and extend these to all forms of discrimination whether specified in law as a 'protected characteristic' or not:

- * Direct discrimination: discrimination because of a 'protected characteristic'.
- * Associative discrimination: direct discrimination against someone because they are associated with another person with a protected characteristic
- * Indirect discrimination: when rules or policies applies to everyone but disadvantages a person with a 'protected characteristic'.

- * Harassment: behaviour deemed offensive by the recipient.
- * Harassment by a third party: the harassment of staff or clients/customers by people not necessarily employed by the organisation.
- * Victimisation: discrimination against someone because they made or supported a complaint under Equality Act legislation.
- * Discrimination by perception: direct discrimination against someone because others think they have a protected characteristic

We also recognise that a policy will not of itself provide equality of opportunity and we are therefore committed to implementing action towards making the policy effective.

In order to ensure that this policy is effective, all Board members, volunteers and staff will be made aware of its content and the policy will be monitored and reviewed regularly.

Encourage nominations to the HACVS Trustee Board, which ensure that diversity of the local voluntary and community sector is reflected.

Legal Framework

HACVS will ensure that its policies and procedures meet with both the letter and spirit of the relevant legislation, for example the Human Rights Act.

Implementation

All members, associates, employees, and volunteers of HACVS will be made aware of the policy and its contents and asked for their commitment to it.

Reference will be made to the HACVS commitment to equal opportunities and positive and appropriate language will be used and encouraged in all relevant documents and publications.

The Trustee Board is responsible for the implementation of the policy but will delegate day to day responsibility to the Manager HACVS.

If required training will be provided to staff, volunteers and where appropriate the Trustee Board to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities in relation to the Policy.

Appropriate means of monitoring will be used and effectiveness reviewed.

All Staff, Volunteers and Trustee Board will be required to behave in a non-discriminatory manner towards colleagues and others and anyone who does not comply will be subject to disciplinary action.

Member Organisations

We will ensure that our Equal Opportunities Policy is distributed to our member organisations. We will encourage and inform the development of their own Equal Opportunities Policy.

We aim to encourage and support people from all backgrounds and with all abilities to volunteer and to overcome any barriers which might prevent their involvement or affect those they help.

We continue to provide training on Equal Opportunities and provide information about training opportunities elsewhere.

We encourage volunteers to participate in relevant training opportunities and aim to include them in the organisation as a whole.

Services

We aim to make our services as accessible as possible and to advertise them so as to reach a wide range of organisations.

In the organisation of meetings and events, we will aim to ensure that these are held in premises, which are accessible to everyone and at times, and locations that encourage participation from as wide an audience as possible.

Employment

HACVS will recruit on the basis of the best candidate for the post irrespective of gender, nationality, ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, belief, marital or employment status, poverty, geographical location or any other unjustified grounds and in compliance with all legal requirements. We will ensure that applicants appreciate the HACVS commitment to Equal Opportunities.

We also undertake to follow good practice including ensuring that all those involved in the recruitment and selection of staff are aware of the Equal Opportunities Policy, and that they understand how it should be implemented and follow the HACVS agreed recruitment and selection process.

Employees will be required to behave in a non-discriminatory manner towards colleagues and others and anyone who does not comply will be subject to disciplinary action.

Monitoring and Review

The implementation of the 'Equal Opportunities Policy' will be monitored regularly by the Trustee Board and reported to stakeholders and members annually.