VIY Equality & Diversity Policy

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Revised by	**Dee Dee Whelan, Ed Sellwood, Sue Johnson**
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Introduction / aim

In carrying out our functions as a community interest company Volunteer It Yourself (VIY) is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all, and to ensuring that no individual is discriminated against in the planning and delivery of any of our activities.

We therefore aim to ensure that the values of equality, diversity and respect for all are embedded into everything that we do.

About our policy

This policy is intended to demonstrate VIY's commitment to eliminating discrimination and encouraging and valuing diversity among staff, volunteers, partners, suppliers and users/beneficiaries of our services and projects.

We recognise our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and are committed to meeting them in full. We believe that a culture that embraces equality and values diversity will help us to ensure that everyone feels involved and included in our plans, programmes and activities/projects.

We aim to create an environment which respects and welcomes everyone, and in which no form of bullying, harassment, disrespectful or discriminatory behaviour is tolerated by anyone towards anyone. This particularly applies in relation to the 'protected characteristics' named in the Equality Act 2010, i.e. age, disability, gender reassignment, income, marriage or civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation (see pages 3 and 4 for explanations).

Our responsibilities

VIY understands that for equality to be achieved this policy needs to be understood and embraced by staff, volunteers, suppliers and partners.

Where relevant/applicable, this policy will be subject to agreement with any trade union which staff/volunteers choose to join or to which they belong. The policy has been created with the input and support of our employees and volunteers and has been agreed by the VIY Board.

All staff, volunteers, suppliers and partners have a responsibility to ensure that their own language

and actions are consistent with the spirit as well as the contents of this policy.

Overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy lies with VIY's designated equality and diversity coordinator (Ed Sellwood, COO – 07725 172 441 / ed@teamviy.com) and our other Board members.

Our commitments

VIY recognises that an Equality & Diversity Policy alone is not enough to ensure that equality and diversity are central to everything that we do.

We will seek to create an environment in which diversity and the contributions of all staff, volunteers, suppliers and partners are recognised and valued in all that we do. In this way we hope to represent an example of good equality practice and promote community cohesion within the sector.

In introducing this policy we recognise that many people are unfamiliar with the ways in which discrimination and disadvantage affect people's health, well-being and quality of life. We will therefore support people to develop equalities awareness and understanding.

To ensure that we are meeting the aims and the spirit of this policy we will:

a) Discuss and review how well we are implementing this policy, and adjust our practices/develop an action plan where necessary
b) Assess any significant new or revised policies and procedures for their impact on equality
c) Embed equality and diversity into our programme development and delivery plans, as well as our staff and volunteer recruitment plans
d) Ensure our employment practices and procedures are consistent with the aims of this policy

Working with volunteers, contractors, suppliers and partners

It is important to us that our volunteers, contractors, suppliers and any other individual or organisation working on behalf of VIY are aware of and agree to comply with our equality and diversity policy while that work is underway. In addition we are committed to:

- Using accessible venues for events and meetings
- Using plain English, and offering accessible communications, for example, emails, letters, reports and publicity materials, as far as it is within our means to do so

Training

a) Staff/volunteers will be provided with appropriate induction/training regardless of sex, race, marital status, disability, age, part-time or fixed-term contract status, sexual orientation or religion
b) All staff/volunteers will be encouraged to discuss their career prospects and training needs with their line manager

Grievances and victimisation

a) VIY emphasises that discrimination is unacceptable conduct which may lead to disciplinary action
b) Any complaints of discrimination will be pursued through the organisation's Grievance Procedure

Review and action

We recognise that it is important for us to regularly review this policy to ensure that it reflects up-to-date equality legislation and best practice. A review of our Equality & Diversity Policy will therefore be carried out on a yearly basis and any necessary actions taken.

Equality Act 2010 – explanation of protected characteristics

Age:

An age group includes people of the same age and people of a particular range of ages. Where people fall in the same age group they share the protected characteristic of age.

An age group would include 'over fifties' or twenty-one year olds. A person aged twenty-one does not share the same characteristic of age with 'people in their forties'. However, a person aged twenty-one and people in their forties can share the characteristic of being in the 'under fifty' age range.

Disability:

A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

This section replaces similar provisions in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and provisions in secondary legislation made under that Act.

Gender reassignment:

A person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if the person is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.

Marriage and civil partnership:

A person has the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership if the person is married or is a civil partner.

- A person who is engaged to be married is not married and therefore does not have this protected characteristic
- A divorcee or a person whose civil partnership has been dissolved is not married or in a civil partnership and therefore does not have this protected characteristic

Race:

Race is defined as

a) Colour: includes being black or white
b) Nationality: includes being a British, Australian or Swiss citizen
c) Ethnic or national origins: include being from a Roma background or of Chinese heritage. A racial group could be "black Britons" which would encompass those people who are both black and who are British citizens

This section replaces similar provisions in the Race Relations Act 1976. However, the power to add caste to the definition of race is a new provision.

Religion or belief:

Religion means any religion and a reference to religion includes a reference to a lack of religion.

A religion must have a clear structure and belief system. Denominations or sects within a religion can be considered to be a religion or belief, such as Protestants and Catholics within Christianity.

- A belief means any religious or philosophical belief and a reference to belief includes a reference to a lack of belief. A philosophical belief must:
  - Be genuinely held
  - Be a belief and not an opinion or viewpoint based on the present state of information available
  - Be a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour
  - Attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance
  - Be worthy of respect in a democratic society, compatible with human dignity and not conflict with the fundamental rights of others

Any cult involved in illegal activities is not covered. Beliefs such as humanism and atheism would be covered.

This section replaces similar provisions in the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 and the Equality Act 2006.

Sex:

a) A reference to a person who has a particular protected characteristic is a reference to a man or to a woman
b) A reference to persons who share a protected characteristic is a reference to persons of the same sex

Sexual orientation:

This covers a person's sexual orientation towards:

- People of the same sex as him or her (in other words the person is a gay man or a lesbian)
- People of the opposite sex from him or her (the person is heterosexual)

- People of both sexes (the person is bisexual)

The definition is designed to replicate the effect of similar provisions in the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 and the Equality Act 2006.

Source: Equality Act 2010 and Explanatory Notes to the Equality Act 2010.