



# SP-UK

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SUICIDE PREVENTION UK

Suicide Prevention UK

## Equality and Diversity Policy

2024

## Introduction

Making sure your charity takes steps towards equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is a core responsibility for any Board. Doing so contributes to good governance as set out in the EDI principle as part of the Charity Governance Code.

Suicide Prevention UK is fully committed to promoting equality and diversity in all activities and is proud of the actions we take to eliminate discrimination and prejudice and ensure inclusion and engagement for all.

For our staff, users of our services, and all charity stakeholders, this means not discriminating against anyone based on their protected characteristics.

Furthermore, we truly believe that every individual provides value and brings their own unique skills, attributes, knowledge, experience, and beliefs that enable both our charity and the communities we operate in to thrive.

Encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace is not only good practice but makes the workplace, the community, and the world a better place.

This document provides a brief overview of the UK laws on Equality and Diversity and sets out how we, as a charity, implement the Equality Act 2010 in practice.

## Purpose

The policy's purpose is to:

- Ensure equality of opportunity for all staff, users of our service, and stakeholders.
- Provide a framework that ensures that we do not unlawfully discriminate.
- Outline how Suicide Prevention UK will promote both diversity and inclusivity.

## Scope

The policy applies to all staff, including employees, volunteers, trustees and others working for or on behalf of the charity.

It also, in part, applies to our service users and all charity stakeholders.

# Definitions

## Equality

Equality means making sure that every individual has equal opportunities. By being conscious of and actively challenging bias or prejudice, we make sure no one is treated less favourably because of who they are or what makes them different from other people. This requires a proactive approach to make reasonable adjustments that address the visible and invisible barriers people face.

## Diversity

Diversity means having differences within an organisation or setting. Diversity recognises we are all different in many ways. People with differing identities, backgrounds and experiences should all have equitable access to resources and decision-making. Some people prefer to use the term 'representation' to focus on how organisations should be reflective of the society we live in and the communities we serve.

## Inclusion

Inclusion means being proactive to make sure people of different backgrounds, experiences and identities feel welcomed, respected and fully able to participate. It is not only about creating a diverse environment but also about making sure that a culture exists where individuals can be their full selves.

## The Protected Characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 defines nine protected characteristics:

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

## Types of Discrimination

**Direct Discrimination** – excluding or treating an individual or group less favourably due to a protected characteristic, e.g., excluding a person from applying for a role unfairly and/or unlawfully because of a disability that has no bearing on their ability to perform in the role or harassing an individual (see below).

**Indirect Discrimination** – excluding or treating an individual or group less favourably by putting those with a protected characteristic at a disadvantage, e.g., making a policy where a dress code negatively affects certain staff who are unable or unwilling to adhere to the policy due to religious beliefs. Indirect discrimination is less obvious than direct discrimination and may happen unintentionally.

**Harassment** is unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive working environment. It is related to discrimination as the harassing behaviour is related to the protected characteristics.

**Discrimination** is not just treating one person less favourably than another. It can take place because:

- Someone associates with a person with a protected characteristic, which is known as discrimination by association.
- Someone is believed to possess a protected characteristic (even though they do not), which is known as discrimination by perception.

**Victimisation** refers to unfair treatment or adverse action taken against an individual because they have made a complaint, raised a grievance, or supported someone else in raising an issue related to discrimination, harassment, or similar illegal or unethical activity.

## Understanding Hidden Disabilities

As a diverse organisation with a diverse group of service users, it is crucial that hidden disabilities are understood. Here are some useful facts:

- Not all disabilities are visible - some are not obvious and can make everyday life demanding for so many people.
- In the UK, 1 in 5 people have a disability, 80 per cent of which have a hidden disability.
- Hidden disabilities are a wide range of physical and mental conditions that are not visible or immediately obvious. They can range from a speech impediment, reduced sight, bipolar, chronic fatigue syndrome, colitis, autism, depression, and there are many others.

Therefore, we ask that our staff, service users and stakeholders acknowledge that though they cannot see evidence of a disability, the disability still exists.

## Roles and Responsibilities

The Trustees and management team will:

- Embed this policy into daily operations.
- Provide suitable training and supervision to staff on its application.
- Ensure the timely review and update of this policy as necessary.
- In a timely manner, appropriately investigate and manage discrimination-related complaints and incidents.
- Support individuals who have been discriminated against.
- Work with all staff members and stakeholders to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion through partnership and problem-solving.

Every staff member will:

- Treat all individuals encountered during their work as an individual, fairly, with dignity and respect.
- Never take part in any form of discriminatory behaviour.
- Have a basic awareness of the equality legislation, types of discrimination, and the protected characteristics and undertake the required training on the subjects.
- Step in to stop and eliminate discriminatory behaviour when it occurs.
- Report any incidents where they feel they have witnessed or have been a victim of discriminatory behaviour.
- Promote the values of equality and diversity amongst colleagues, service users, and other stakeholders.
- Undertake or cooperate with investigations into breaches of this policy.

We expect that our service users and all stakeholders will:

- Treat others with dignity and respect.
- Never take part in any form of discriminatory behaviour.
- Report any breach of this policy.

## Policy

### Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion for our Staff

Suicide Prevention UK will:

- Train staff on equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- Utilise the most effective ways to bring job vacancies and volunteering opportunities to the attention of potentially disadvantaged groups.
- Ensure that decisions concerning recruitment and selection are based on merit alone, except in the matter of offending background or inability to hold a position of trust where it relates to the requirements of the post.
- During shortlisting, include multiple candidates from underrepresented groups.
- Ensure that interview questioning is fair and legal.
- Ensure that decisions related to recruitment and selection are open to peer review to eliminate bias.
- Ensure that all employment benefits, including those related to family leave, are open and/or applied to every eligible employee.
- Promote flexibility within volunteering roles to allow those with caring responsibilities or other needs to help us when it suits them.
- Ensure that employees are paid fairly and equally for the same job or equivalent jobs.
- Ensure that opportunities for training, career development and joining as a paid employee are made available to every eligible staff member based on the needs of the charity and any financial constraints.

### Reasonable Adjustments

Suicide Prevention UK acknowledges that we have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled job applicants, employees, and self-employed contractors.

Beyond the law, we acknowledge that organisations failing to provide employment or volunteering opportunities to disabled individuals are losing out on qualified talent and unique skills.

When we are made aware that an individual has a disability, we will, where practicable make reasonable adjustments to both accommodate their needs and reduce or remove the impact of their disability.

We recognise that the costs of making reasonable adjustments to accommodate disabled staff are often low and will consider all requests for reasonable adjustments. However, if we are not able to make such adjustments, we will:

- Inform the individual of why the reasonable adjustment is not practicable.
- Where possible, discuss alternative arrangements which could be offered.

## Representing our Community and Promoting Diversity

At Suicide Prevention UK, we acknowledge that a varied staff composition enables us to learn, develop, and thrive through the valued differing opinions, skills, knowledge, and experiences of the individuals who work or volunteer for us and allows the people using our service to feel represented.

Therefore, we seek to foster an environment where every individual is enabled to be a part of our team, whether as a volunteer, trustee, or employee.

## Fair Service Provision – Charities Exception

Regards service provision, we are proud to offer services to a diverse range of people within the local community and further afield (who use our online and telephone services) and will not decline to support any individual based on their protected characteristics.

To ensure that our service is truly non-discriminatory and inclusive, Suicide Prevention UK will:

- Proactively help service users who have a disability to access the service through reasonable adjustments.
- Learn how to improve by listening to our service users.
- Understand that language is not neutral, and continuously work with stakeholders to question and develop our language so that the service can be inclusive and non-discriminatory in every aspect.

## Fair Partnership Opportunities

Suicide Prevention UK will not discriminate unlawfully against any person or organisation seeking to partner with, work with, or support us unless there is a lawful and legitimate reason.

Where we are made aware of any assistance a partner, supplier, or supporter requires, we will work with that party to make our organisation accessible to maximise our reach and promote equality, diversity and inclusion within the service.

## Promoting Diversity and Inclusivity

Our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion goes far beyond our legal responsibilities, and we are proud to:

- Obtain regular feedback from staff, service users and other stakeholders on how we can improve.
- Promote a healthy work-life balance within our team, acknowledging that every individual will have their own needs and set of circumstances.
- Respect individuals' personal, professional, and life choices.
- Overcome barriers together by understanding others' needs, backgrounds, and preferences.
- Respect and honour religious beliefs, cultural celebrations and traditions, and recognise significant events in those religions and cultures by incorporating them into our activities where appropriate.
- Continue to seek out new ways to ensure and promote equality of opportunity both in our organisation and the community as a whole.

## Code of Conduct for All

**Respect everyone** - Any verbal or physical abuse is unacceptable. Respect other's differences and don't pre-judge others.

**Be Open-Minded** – Never stop learning! Learning enables us to be more sensitive, more compassionate, and less judgemental.

**Lead by example** – Behave towards others in a polite, friendly, and personable manner at all times and encourage others to do the same. Never initiate or take part in intimidating, offensive and/or threatening behaviour, including offensive 'banter' and jokes which may cause offence).

**Stand up for better behaviour** - Eliminate discrimination and inequality by reporting any incidents witnessed to a manager immediately.



## Reporting Discrimination Procedure

Suicide Prevention UK will not tolerate discrimination (including harassment) and treats allegations of such behaviour seriously.

**Informal Discussion:** If you feel subject to discrimination, you may, if you feel comfortable to do so, make clear to the individual concerned that you find it unacceptable.

Person-to-person discussion at an early stage may be enough to resolve your concern without involving anyone else. Alternatively, seek the help of a trusted friend or colleague and ask them to approach whoever has caused you offence.

You may find it necessary to inform a manager of this conversation, even if you feel that the informal discussion has resolved the matter, as the perpetrator may have a history of complaints against them, in which case, we would urge you to make a formal complaint.

**Formal Complaint:** If discrimination continues, or you consider an instance to be particularly serious, you should consider making a formal complaint.

If you are a staff member, you should speak to a member of the management team (or a trustee if the matter is particularly serious).

If you are a service user or other stakeholder (non-staff member), we ask that you submit a complaint under our Complaints Policy.

Most complaints will warrant an investigation, the size of which depends on the circumstances; however, all complaints will be taken seriously.

The Suicide Prevention UK complaints manager will, during and after the investigation, consider the feelings of the complainant when determining the severity of the action and harm caused, not merely how they, as individuals, would feel in that situation.

## Victimisation and Cooperation

Any staff member who has acted in good faith regarding allegations of discrimination or harassment will not be victimised due to complaining or cooperating with an investigation.

All staff members are expected to cooperate in investigations and must not share confidential information without prior approval from the Charity Manager or the Board of Trustees.

Staff, service users, and all stakeholders will be supported in any complaint, and victimisation against any individual or group will not be tolerated.

## Data Protection

All data collected by Suicide Prevention UK relating to the protected characteristics will be stored securely and will not be shared without due regard.

Statistical non-identifiable data may be drawn from this information; however, unless there is a need to know, personal data will only be processed as per UK GDPR or regional equivalent.

## Failure to Abide by This Policy

Breaches of this policy by employees will be regarded as misconduct, which may warrant dismissal.

Self-employed colleagues and volunteers who breach this policy will be warned about their behaviour and, in serious cases, have their contractual agreement or volunteering tenure terminated.

Stakeholders who breach policy will initially be warned about their conduct, and in severe cases, we will withdraw our services or end business relationships.

We will report the perpetrator(s) to the authorities where a crime has been committed.

## Monitoring and Reviewing

This policy should be reviewed periodically to ensure that it remains compliant with current legislation, meets best practices, and is not discriminatory.

Suicide Prevention UK will monitor the number of complaints and the type of complaints received.

The results of monitoring will be reviewed by the senior management at regular meetings.

Where evidence or trends indicate that our culture, policy, procedures, or workforce require intervention, an action plan will be initiated.

Policy Date: October 2020

Review Date: April 2024

Next Review: April 2025

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Dated and Signed by the Chair and Founder of Suicide Prevention UK:

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