

Connected Voice

Equality and diversity policy

Contents

1. Equality and diversity statement
2. Principles
3. Aims
4. Implementation
5. Action plan
6. Connected Voice structure and responsibilities for equality and diversity
7. Monitoring and review
8. Keeping staff up to date with changes to equality and diversity legislation
9. Challenging and reporting inappropriate behaviour
10. Recruitment, selection and employment
11. Services
12. Comments, suggestions and complaints
13. Statutory rights
14. Relevant equality legislation

Appendix 1 - Glossary

Document details and review

Author	Equality and Diversity Sub Group
Organisation	Connected Voice
Responsible person	Chief Executive
Reviewed	Dec 2018
Next review	Dec 2019

Signed by responsible person:
Date

This policy will be reviewed annually (or sooner if there is any relevant change in legislation)

1. Equality and diversity statement

Connected Voice is committed to promoting equality and diversity and will take steps to challenge discrimination, harassment and victimisation in everything we do.

This policy applies to all Connected Voice trustees, staff and volunteers. It also applies to our interactions with users, members, partners, stakeholders and suppliers.

2. Principles

The trustees, staff and volunteers will work to ensure that our services meet the needs of all the communities in Newcastle, Gateshead and any other area in which we provide services, are equally accessible to everyone and promote community cohesion and social inclusion.

We recognise that certain individuals and groups of people are subject to discrimination and unfair and unequal treatment on grounds of their personal and social characteristics.

Connected Voice therefore aims to ensure that no organisation or individual to whom we provide services, job applicant, staff member, trustee or volunteer, will be disrespectfully treated or discriminated against by us on any condition or requirement that cannot be shown to be justified including but not limited to the nine protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010

- ✓ Age
- ✓ Disability
- ✓ Gender identity
- ✓ Marriage and civil partnership
- ✓ Pregnancy and maternity
- ✓ Race including nationality, colour and ethnic or national origins
- ✓ Religion or belief
- ✓ Sex
- ✓ Sexual orientation

Plus

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| ✓ Caring responsibilities | ✓ Political belief, unless those beliefs discriminate against others |
| ✓ Class | ✓ Personal appearance |
| ✓ Employment status | ✓ Trade union activity |
| ✓ HIV status | ✓ Unrelated criminal convictions |

Connected Voice regards unfair discrimination as unacceptable and will promote equality and diversity with trustees, management, staff and volunteers through a programme of training, support and monitoring.

The trustees recognise the importance of developing an equality and diversity action plan as the practical means of implementing this policy. Trustees will fully involve and consult staff and volunteers in developing and reviewing our equality and diversity strategy and policy, and ensure that any new policies, strategies and services are checked against this policy.

Connected Voice will ensure that the organisations we work with are aware of our equality and diversity policy and will encourage them to adopt similar policies.

Equality and Diversity is incorporated into all of the Connected Voice Policies and Procedures.

Connected Voice has a number of policies and procedures in place to challenge inappropriate behaviour by staff, trustees or volunteers and include:

- ✓ Connected Voice Code of Conduct
- ✓ Connected Voice Disciplinary Procedure
- ✓ Connected Voice Grievance Procedure
- ✓ Connected Voice Zero Tolerance of Abuse
- ✓ Connected Voice Bullying and Harassment Policy
- ✓ Connected Voice Volunteer Policy
- ✓ Connected Voice Recruitment Guidelines
- ✓ Connected Voice Whistleblowing Policy
- ✓ Connected Voice Confidentiality Policy
- ✓ Connected Voice Data Protection Policy

3. Aims

This policy aims to

- ✓ Ensure that all staff, trustees and volunteers are aware of our responsibility to comply with relevant equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory legislation and with the spirit of the Human Rights Act
- ✓ Ensure other policies and procedures prevent unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and promote equality and diversity in Connected Voice
- ✓ Promote and ensure equality and diversity in the delivery of services

4. Implementation

Connected Voice will ensure that all staff, trustees and volunteers are aware of our responsibilities under the law and this policy by

- ✓ Actively promoting equality and diversity in all areas of Connected Voice's work. This will include staff and trustee handbooks; through recruitment, selection and employment; in strategies and action plans; and, in all Connected Voice's policies
- ✓ Developing an equality and diversity action plan which positively promotes work with the diverse communities in Newcastle , Gateshead and any other area in which we provide services and develops our own practice around equality and diversity
- ✓ Ensuring all new employees, volunteers and trustees understand and are familiar with the equality and diversity policy and how it is implemented in the organisation
- ✓ Requiring all staff, volunteers and trustees to attend equality and diversity training as arranged by Connected Voice on a regular basis as agreed
- ✓ All Connected Voice staff are expected to take responsibility for their own equality and diversity training where it is specifically relevant to their work. Training and personal development will be monitored through regular staff supervision. Connected Voice managers will ensure that all staff are made aware that they are expected to be proactive in sourcing and attending equality and diversity training and events
- ✓ Connected Voice staff, trustees and volunteers will be made aware at their induction that inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in line with the Connected Voice Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure.

<h2>5. Action Plan</h2>

The equality and diversity strategic objectives will be set annually by the Equality and Diversity Sub Group. An Action Plan will be produced as a practical means of implementing this policy. The Action Plan will be reviewed quarterly at:

- ✓ Connected Voice board meetings
- ✓ Management Group meetings
- ✓ Equality and Diversity Sub Group meetings
- ✓ Staff meetings

6. Connected Voice structure and responsibilities for equality and diversity

Group	Responsibilities
Connected Voice board of trustees	<p>Review equality and diversity policy yearly</p> <p>Review action plan half yearly</p> <p>Review equality and diversity sub group report half yearly</p> <p>Review annual monitoring report on staff, recruitment, membership and organisations that use the Connected Voice services</p>
Connected Voice Management Group	<p>Review equality and diversity policy yearly and authorise changes to go to Connected Voice board</p> <p>Set equality and diversity objectives annually</p> <p>Review progress on equality and diversity objectives quarterly</p> <p>Review equality and diversity sub group report quarterly</p> <p>Discuss equality and diversity issues at monthly Management Group meetings</p>
Equality and Diversity Sub Group meetings	<p>Review equality and diversity policy yearly and make changes in line with new legislation</p> <p>Set objectives annually and produce an action plan for their implementation</p> <p>Review action plan at quarterly meetings</p> <p>Produce an annual report for Connected Voice trustees and Management Group</p> <p>Arrange staff training on equality and diversity as required</p>
Connected Voice Managers	<p>Ensure equality and diversity is discussed at supervision sessions</p> <p>Ensure staff engage in equality and diversity training – both internally and externally</p> <p>Ensure staff are aware of their responsibilities in arranging accessible</p>

	<p>events</p> <p>Ensure recruitment is carried out fairly and in line with the Connected Voice recruitment guidelines</p> <p>Tackle inappropriate behaviour through the Connected Voice policies and procedures</p>
Staff	<p>All staff are responsible for identifying and attending equality and diversity training and events</p> <p>Engaging and keeping informed on equality and diversity issues through reading Connected Voice e-bulletins, Inform articles and other publications</p> <p>All staff are responsible for challenging and reporting inappropriate behaviour</p>

7. Monitoring and review

The Connected Voice equality and diversity group will meet quarterly to review the equality and diversity policy and make any changes necessary in line with new legislation and ensure that Connected Voice business is carried out according to the Act.

The equality and diversity policy and any actions arising from changes in legislation and the promotion of good practice will be monitored and reviewed by the Connected Voice management structure as above.

Connected Voice will make sure that all information gathered is handled in line with the Connected Voice Confidentiality and Data Protection Policies.

8. Keeping staff up to date with changes to equality and diversity legislation

Connected Voice will keep staff up to date with changes to equality and diversity legislation by circulating information through the Connected Voice ICT network, displaying posters and leaflets, articles in Connected Voice e-bulletin, Inform magazine and arranging/attending appropriate training sessions.

Connected Voice receives updates about changes to legislation from the following national bodies and consultants:

- ✓ Various HR Consultants
- ✓ National body of CVSs – NAVCA, NCVO
- ✓ Regular email updates e.g. EHRC, S. Adirondack Legal Update for voluntary organisations, Government Equalities Office

9. Challenging and reporting inappropriate behaviour

Connected Voice is committed to promoting equality and diversity and will take steps to challenge discrimination, harassment and victimisation in everything we do.

All staff are responsible for challenging and reporting inappropriate behaviour in line with the Connected Voice Equality and Diversity Policy.

If a member of staff wants to challenge inappropriate behaviour they can in the first instance discuss it with:

- ✓ A line manager
- ✓ Chief Executive
- ✓ Equality and Diversity Sub Group member
- ✓ Staff Council

Depending on the nature of the incident Connected Voice has a number of ways to raise an issue. The following policies and procedures are in place to challenge inappropriate behaviour by staff, trustees or volunteers and include:

- ✓ Connected Voice Code of Conduct
- ✓ Connected Voice Disciplinary Procedure
- ✓ Connected Voice Grievance Procedure
- ✓ Connected Voice Zero Tolerance of Abuse
- ✓ Connected Voice Bullying and Harassment Policy
- ✓ Connected Voice Volunteer Policy
- ✓ Connected Voice Recruitment Guidelines
- ✓ Connected Voice Whistleblowing Policy
- ✓ Connected Voice Confidentiality Policy
- ✓ Connected Voice Data Protection Policy

10. Recruitment, selection and employment

Connected Voice's recruitment, selection and employment policies aim to ensure that unfair direct or indirect discrimination or discrimination by association does not occur in our recruitment, selection and employment of staff, trustees and volunteers.

The recruitment and selection policy aims to ensure

- ✓ That no applicant, whether internal or external, is discriminated against either intentionally or unintentionally, or receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of personal or social characteristics.

- ✓ That no applicant is placed at a disadvantage by requirements or conditions which have a disproportionately adverse effect on people with their personal or social characteristic and which cannot be shown to be justifiable on other grounds.

All trustees and employees with responsibility for recruitment and selection are required to operate within the recruitment and selection policy and procedures.

It is our policy to provide equality and diversity training to all staff and trustees responsible for recruitment and selection and/or line management of staff. This will make sure that they are aware of equality and diversity issues and carry out their responsibilities according to our adopted procedures.

Connected Voice needs to be sensitive to cultural and religious beliefs. Any specific needs an employee might have regarding religious/cultural beliefs should be discussed with the line manager who should use their discretion (referring to the Cultural Beliefs Handbook as appropriate).

11. Services

Connected Voice is committed to equality and diversity for everyone using our services, and we also committed to prioritising and targeting our services to communities and groups in greatest need. We strive to make all our services accessible to the diverse communities in Newcastle, Gateshead and any other area in which we provide services as far as is possible and reasonable given our resources. When we review our services, we will consider how we can improve or change our services to provide greater access to communities not yet using or not making full use of our services.

Connected Voice employees should be aware of cultural, religious and other festivals appropriate to their work and client group/s.

12. Comments, suggestions and complaints

If Connected Voice staff, trustees and volunteers are concerned about any equality issue, it should be raised with their line manager, the chief executive or the chair. This will be dealt with informally, through the grievance policy and procedure, or other policies and procedures as appropriate.

If a user, member, partner or other stakeholder of Connected Voice feels we are not providing our services in line with this policy or have been treated unfairly in any way, they should speak to the chief executive or chair. Our comments, suggestions and complaints policy and procedure on our website explains how this can be done.

13. Statutory rights

Any action taken under section 8 is without prejudice to any statutory right to complain to an employment tribunal or other appropriate statutory body, or to involve the Equality and Human Rights Commission or other appropriate external body.

14. Relevant equality legislation

Connected Voice recognises its responsibilities under the following pieces of legislation plus any new or updated legislation that combats discrimination and promotes equality and diversity

- ✓ Equality Act 2010
- ✓ The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007
- ✓ The Equality Act 2006
- ✓ Work and Families Act 2006
- ✓ Employment Act 2002
- ✓ Employment Rights Act 1996

Appendix 1 - Glossary

Sources – Equality Act 2010 guidance for service providers and for employers produced by Equality and Human Rights Commission July 2010

Age – this refers to a person belonging to a particular age group, which can mean people of the same age (eg 32-year-olds) or range of ages (eg 18–30-year-olds, or people over 50).

Direct discrimination - less favourable treatment of a person compared with another person because of a protected characteristic.

Discrimination by association - this refers to discrimination against a person who does not have a protected characteristic but because of their association with someone who has a protected characteristic.

Disability – a person has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Diversity – diversity is about recognising, valuing and taking account of people's different backgrounds, knowledge, skills, and experiences, and encouraging and using those differences to create a productive and effective workforce.

Gender - refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.

Gender reassignment – the process of changing or transitioning from one gender to another.

Harassment – unwanted behaviour that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creates a degrading, humiliating, hostile, intimidating or offensive environment.

Indirect discrimination - the use of an apparently neutral practice, provision or criterion which puts people with a particular protected characteristic at a disadvantage compared with others who do not share that characteristic, and applying the practice, provision or criterion cannot be objectively justified.

Liability – employers have legal liability for any act of discrimination (including harassment) carried out by their employees unless the employer can show that they have taken all reasonably practicable steps to prevent it.

Marriage and civil partnership - marriage is defined as a 'union between a man and a woman' or a same-sex couple. Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act).

Occupational requirement - where having a protected characteristic is an occupational requirement, certain jobs can be reserved for people with that protected characteristic (eg women support workers in women's refuges; Ministers of Religion).

Pregnancy and maternity - pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

Protected characteristics - these are the grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful. The characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Race - refers to the protected characteristic of race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins.

Religion or belief - religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (eg atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

Sex - this is a protected characteristic. It refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women.

Sexual orientation – whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

Trade unions - these are organisations formed to represent workers' rights and interests to their employers, for example in order to improve working conditions, wages or benefits. They also advocate more widely on behalf of their members' interests and make recommendations to government, industry bodies and other policy makers.

Transgender – refers to a person who has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment. This may be a woman who has transitioned or is transitioning to be a man, or a man who has transitioned or is transitioning to be a woman. The law does not require a person to undergo a medical procedure to be recognised as a transgender person.

Victimisation – subjecting a person to a detriment because they have done a protected act or there is a belief that they have done a protected act ie bringing proceedings under the Equality Act; giving evidence or information in connection with proceedings under the Act; doing any other thing for the purposes or in connection with the Act; making an allegation that a person has contravened the Act.