



Louth Volunteer Centre

Equality and Diversity Policy and Procedures

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1.1 Policy Statement	Louth Volunteer Centre is committed to taking action to promote equality and to value diversity. We will work to address unfair treatment, discrimination and prejudice within the workplace, in our work with volunteers, organisations and in the wider community and voluntary sector. We recognise that every individual has a right to equal recognition and fair and appropriate treatment and opportunities regardless of their: gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief or lack of religious belief, age, disability, race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origin or membership of the travelling community. In order to achieve our commitment to equality and diversity, we will: • Prioritise working with communities and groups whose full participation in society is limited by economic and social disadvantage and/or discrimination. • Deliver equality and diversity throughout organisational policies, procedures and practice and develop an ethos which respects and values all people. • Challenge discrimination and lack of opportunity and encourage other individuals to do the same • Actively promote equality of opportunity. • Create a culture that respects and values an individual's differences and recognises that difference/diversity is an asset to our organisation. • Strive to eliminate all forms of unfair discrimination, bullying, harassment or other oppressive behaviour. • Take positive action to provide encouragement and support to individuals and groups whose progress has been limited by stereotyping and cultural expectations. • Ensure all team members and collaborative partners are aware and encouraged to support the objectives of this policy. • Promote good relations amongst people within the organisation and the wider communities within which we work • Strive to remove barriers which limit or discourage access to the organisation's services. • Monitor the implementation, set targets for improvement and evaluate the impact of equality and diversity action.
1.2 Purpose	The policy aims to create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all staff, interns and volunteers are recognised and valued and to ensure compliance with our legal obligations.
1.3 Scope	This policy and the principles of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity apply to all staff, interns and volunteers. This includes job advertisements, recruitment and selection, training and development, opportunities for promotion, conditions of employment, pay and benefits, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures and termination. It also applies to how staff and volunteers deal with service users and anyone else dealt with in the course of business.

1.4 Responsibilities	All staff, volunteers and board/steering committee members have a responsibility to: 1. Contribute to an environment that embraces diversity, ensuring their behaviour and actions do not amount to discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation in any way. 2. Ensure that the policy and procedures are put into practice. 3. Commit to acting as equality and diversity champions for the organisation. 4. Show an understanding of the benefits of equality and diversity. 5. Attend or complete any training provided or recommended by the organisation. 6. Draw attention to any instances of apparent discrimination or issues relating to this policy. 7. Work in a way that demonstrates a commitment to diversity. 8. Refrain from any form of discrimination or stereotyping. Board/Steering Committee ● Has overall responsibility for the implementation of the policy and procedures. ● Delegating day to day operational activities to the manager. ● Ensuring resources are in place to meet the requirements of this policy. ● Ensuring the policy and procedures are adequate, up-to-date, in line with legislative requirements and systematically reviewed. Manager ● Ensures policies and procedures are in place and implemented to comply with all applicable legislation. ● Ensures the organisation implements and follows its equality and diversity policies and codes of practice and meets its legal responsibilities. ● Ensures that all staff and volunteers know their responsibilities and receive the necessary support and training. ● Ensures a consistent and high-profile lead on equality and diversity. ● Ensures promotion of equality and diversity inside and outside the organisation. ● Ensures relevant procedures and actions are followed in cases of unfair discrimination, harassment or bullying. ● Dealing with concerns arising out of the implementation of this policy. Staff ● Cooperate with the organisation to ensure that this policy is effective. ● Promote equality and diversity, and avoiding unfair discrimination. ● Participate in reviewing the existing policy and procedures. ● Challenge and report any incidents of unfair discrimination, racial, sexual or other stereotyping perpetrated by staff and/or volunteers. ● Participating in equality and diversity training.
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2. Procedures

Procedure Title	4.1 Recruitment and Employment
Purpose	To ensure that no applicant, employee or volunteer receives less favourable treatment or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable.
Staff Involved	Board/Steering Committee, All Staff
Procedure	1. All posts will be advertised as widely as possible, including through community and voluntary sector mediums. 2. We will appoint staff or engage volunteers within an agreed framework of terms and conditions. 3. Employment terms and conditions reflect current legislation, good practice and fairness. 4. Staff are made aware of the policies that encourage flexible ways of working, including: - Right to request flexible working. - Job sharing. - Reduced hours - Time off for dependents leave. 5. Employment and volunteer opportunities are offered and open to applications from all individuals including those with additional support needs. 6. Board/steering committee members will be representative of the wider community and geographical area. 7. All staff and volunteers will receive an induction, regular supervision and for staff an annual performance appraisal. 8. Where possible and within budgets we will provide additional aids and equipment or adjustments to the working environment to staff or volunteers with additional support needs. 9. Ensure that all team members are made aware of the equality and diversity and other policies that inform culture and development. 10. Make realistic budget provision for supporting volunteers including the reimbursement of out-of- pocket expenses.
Records	Role Advertisements, Employment Contract, Induction Checklist, Volunteer Contract, Staff, Volunteer and Board Handbooks

Procedure Title	4.2 Learning and Development
Purpose	To ensure that all staff, volunteers and board/steering committee members have access to development opportunities in order to carry out their role successfully and to be able to contribute as widely as possible to the positive achievements of the organisation.
Staff Involved	Board/Steering Committee, All Staff
Procedure	1. All staff, volunteers and board/steering committee members are made aware of the procedures for accessing CPD opportunities and they are actively encouraged to participate in learning. - Briefing on this policy forms part of the Induction. 2. Appropriate training is made available to enable individuals to perform their role effectively. - The training offered will take into account the needs of all individuals. 3. Information will be made available to staff and volunteers on a regular basis to promote understanding of our commitment to equality and diversity. 4. Development and performance management activities are carried out and are transparent and based on competence. - Support and supervision meetings. - Annual performance appraisal. 5. Monitoring of training and development activities to ensure equality of access across all staff and associated groups. 6. Ensure that volunteers are encouraged to participate in staff learning opportunities and that their views are considered when developing and/or implementing policies.
Records	Record of Meetings, Induction Checklist, Attendance at Training, Internal Audit Reports

Procedure Title	4.3 Providing Access and Information to Service Users
Purpose	To ensure we are meeting the varied needs of our service users by maximising access to and information about our services.
Staff Involved	Board/Steering Committee, All Staff
Procedure	1. Regularly reporting our achievements in implementing this equality and diversity policy, to service users, funders and associated stakeholders. 2. Publicising our equality and diversity policy. 3. Supporting local groups to build their capacity enabling them to develop and deliver high quality, services for their local communities. 4. Facilitating and promoting partnerships between voluntary groups and statutory bodies to provide the best services to local people, whatever their background.

	5. Ensuring that marginalised groups are made aware of local decision-making structures and are actively supported to access and participate in community activities. 6. Continuing to develop and promote new and innovative services within the sector. 7. Providing training, briefings and other support tools to raise the skills levels of groups most in need. 8. Hold meetings, events and training sessions on different days and at different times in accessible venues. 9. Develop a strategy to improve and extend ways to communicate to and involve service users. 10. Provide materials in forms, languages and formats appropriate to all users where practicable and where budgets allow. 11. Monitor the use of services by different sections of the community and different areas within the geographical remit.
Records	Media, Record of Meetings, Promotional Material, I-Vol,

Procedure Title	4.4 Volunteers and Volunteering
Purpose	To ensure that all individuals in the catchment area have an opportunity to participate in voluntary activities that meet their needs and requirements.
Staff Involved	All Staff
Procedure	1. Work with volunteer involving organisations to develop opportunities. 2. Promote volunteering to those who are disadvantaged or who are from groups which are discriminated against. 3. Actively engage with underrepresented individuals and groups to encourage participation in voluntary activities. 4. Actively engage with key stakeholders in underrepresented areas to assist in the development of volunteering opportunities. 5. Recognise the fact that volunteers come from a broad cross section of the community and bring a diverse range of skills, experience and interests and facilitate participation in voluntary activities. 6. Offer volunteering opportunities with a variety of time availabilities 7. Monitoring the range and location of volunteering opportunities to ensure that there is a diverse range of opportunities available to potential volunteers across the catchment area. 8. Monitor the take-up of volunteer places to ensure that people from a range of backgrounds are availing of volunteering opportunities.
Records	I-Vol, Annual Work Plan, Records of Meeting

Procedure Title	4.5 Dealing with Non-Compliance
Purpose	To provide individuals who have highlighted an instance of perceived discrimination, harassment or bullying with the opportunity to have the matter dealt with in a professional manner.
Staff Involved	Board/Steering Committee, Manager
Procedure	1. Service users and job applicants who feel they have been discriminated against or unfairly treated, will be made aware of the grievance and complaints policies and procedures. 2. We will investigate and take appropriate action in all reported incidents of: - Unlawful discrimination or unfair treatment - Bullying or harassment - Victimisation 3. Serious breach of the equality and diversity policy by a: a) Staff member – will be dealt with under the disciplinary and grievance procedure. b) Volunteer – will be dealt with through a one-to-one meeting with the manager. c) Board/Steering Committee member – will be dealt with through a report to the Board by the Chief Executive Officer/Manager, as appropriate.
Records	Records of meetings, Complaints Form.

3. Monitoring and Review

Monitoring and Review	Groups and individuals will be provided with opportunities to provide feedback on the service and their volunteering experience through email and an annual survey. Feedback will be reviewed at regularly scheduled staff meetings where relevant workers will provide an update activities and have an opportunity to highlight any procedural issues. Procedures will be reviewed by the manager and relevant staff members annually or sooner if required. The LVC team will review other policies and procedures to see that they do not operate against this policy and can be improved in terms of equal opportunities. The policy will be reviewed by the Board/Steering committee every three years, or sooner if required.
Records	Version History, Annual Self-Assessment Report, Internal Audit Report, Record of Meetings, Equality and Diversity Checklist

Appendix 1 – Checklist for Monitoring the Policy

Area	Yes	No	Action
Governance			
Is specific reference made to equality in your organisation's Mission Statement?			
Does the organisation have an equality and diversity policy and is it endorsed at the highest level in the organisation?			
Is there an action plan (procedures) in place to implement the policy?			
Is the policy statement well publicised across the organisation and made known to all new and potential team members and external stakeholders?			
Do you report on progress in your annual report?			
Does the board/steering committee reflect the diversity of the community and voluntary sector?			
Staff and Employment			
Does the manager have the skills and knowledge to implement and provide leadership on the policy?			
Are training opportunities available to staff, volunteers and board/steering committee members to ensure they are aware of their rights and responsibilities in this area?			
Does the organisation have an agreed recruitment and selection process which includes equality issues?			
Do you take account of part-time workers' hours when arranging staff meetings, training days etc.?			
Do you have clear procedures relating to: maternity pay, parental and carers' leave, maternity and paternity leave, part-time workers, flexible working?			
Do you have an equal pay statement?			
Are employee rights communicated to staff i.e. staff handbook?			
Do you take into account all religious holidays?			
Do you allow flexible working around time off for religious observances/holidays?			
Working with Diverse Communities			

Do you take positive steps to engage with organisations that may experience social exclusion and marginalisation?			
Do you take positive steps to engage with individuals that may experience social exclusion and marginalisation?			
Do you challenge institutions, organisations and practices that are discriminatory?			
Does your publicity and promotional material demonstrate positive images of the diversity of your workforce, activities and membership?			
Does your organisation provide materials in translation or offer interpretation services?			
Does your organisation take positive steps to engage with individuals and groups across all of its geographical area?			
Has the organisation mapped the diversity of the community in your geographical area?			
Working with Volunteer Involving Organisations			
Are organisation registered with you required to have an equal opportunities policy?			
Do you collect and analyse feedback on equality issues from volunteers who may engage with registered organisations?			
Do you have procedures in place for dealing with organisations that may not be adhering to equality and diversity policies and procedures?			
Do you offer advice, guidance and training on equalities issues?			
Does the voluntary and community sector reflect the diversity of the community in your locality?			
Do the registered organisations reflect the diversity of the local voluntary and community sector?			
Has your organisation mapped the diversity of the volunteer involving organisations in your geographical area?			