

Developing and Implementing an Equal Opportunities Policy

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Why it's important

Diversity within an organisation's workforce and Management Committee is of enormous advantage, ensuring that talent and potential is properly identified and developed.

This guide provides some information on the positive advantages of promoting equal opportunities. It outlines the legal requirements for employers, and explains some of the terms used in relation to discrimination.

The guide gives details of what should be considered when drawing up an equal opportunities policy or statement, and most importantly how this should be put into practice through an action plan. As well as links to other sources of information, a model equal opportunities policy and framework for the action plan is also provided.

A Diverse Workforce

Equal opportunities and ensuring a diverse workforce is important for all employers. It isn't just important because there are laws about it but because it is of enormous benefit to your organisation as talent and potential are distributed across the population.

The benefits include:

- ensuring your workforce really does represent the community you serve,
- being able to attract and keep the very best staff,
- giving your organisation the edge over other employers in an increasingly diverse and competitive labour market,
- improving staff morale and productivity,
- avoiding losing good staff,
- avoiding under-using and under-valuing able staff,
- managing all staff better,
- helping to develop good practice.

The Law for Employers

It is unlawful to discriminate against people at work because of someone's sex, sexual orientation, marital status, gender reassignment, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religion, age or because of a disability (including mental illness). It is also unlawful to discriminate because of pregnancy, childbirth, or maternity leave, because a person is a member or non-member of a trade union or because they are part-time workers or on a fixed term contract.

The main acts

- *Race Relations Act 1976, 2000 Amendment and 2003 Amendment Regulations*
 - It's unlawful to discriminate against someone on the grounds of race, colour, nationality – including citizenship – or ethnic origins in employment, education, housing and the provision of goods, facilities and services.
 - The 2000 Amendment placed enforceable duties on public authorities to promote equality.
 - The penalties for race discrimination can be high since there is no limit on compensation and there is no length of service requirement in bringing a claim.
- *Equal Pay Act 1970*
 - It's unlawful to discriminate between women and men in contracts of employment, including pay and other benefits.
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1975, 1986 Amendment, Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulations 2005 and Gender Equality Duty 2007*
 - It's unlawful to discriminate against someone on the grounds of sex or marital status in employment, education, housing and the provision of goods, facilities and services.
 - Less favourable treatment of women on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity leave is also defined as a form of discrimination.
 - Sex based harassment - i.e. harassment based purely on the victim's sex; harassment of a sexual nature - i.e. physical activity of a sexual nature or non-physical activity of a sexual nature such as offensive jokes or vulgar comments; sexual harassment on grounds of gender reassignment status; and harassment on grounds of rejection of harassment or submission to harassment are expressly prohibited.
 - The penalties for sex discrimination can be high since there is no limit on compensation and there is no length of service requirement in bringing a claim.
 - The Gender Equality Duty requires public authorities to promote gender equality.
- *Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007*
 - It's unlawful to discriminate against someone on the grounds of their sexual orientation, whether lesbian, gay, heterosexual or bisexual in employment or vocational training.
 - Discrimination relating to perceived sexual orientation is also unlawful.
 - The penalties for sexual orientation discrimination can be high since there is no limit on compensation and there is no length of service requirement in bringing a claim.
 - The Equality Act also made it unlawful to discriminate in the provision of goods, facilities and services on the grounds of sexual orientation.

- *Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations and Gender Recognition Act 2004*
 - It's unlawful to discriminate against someone on the grounds that they have undergone, are undergoing or intend to undergo gender reassignment in employment and vocational training.
 - A person who has undergone gender reassignment also has the right not to be discriminated against as a person of their acquired gender.
- *Civil Partnership Act 2004*
 - Same sex partnerships are recognised and those who undergo the ceremony have the same rights as married couples.
- *Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005 and the Disability Equality Duty 2006*
 - It's unlawful for any employer or service provider, regardless of size, to discriminate against someone on the grounds of their disability.
 - Employers and service providers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to enable a disabled person to work or use a service.
 - The penalties for disability discrimination can be high since there is no limit on compensation and there is no length of service requirement in bringing a claim.
 - A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Since December 2005, this also included people with cancer, HIV and multiple sclerosis.
 - The Disability Equality Duty requires public authorities to promote disability equality.
- *Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 and the Equality Act 2006*
 - It's unlawful to discriminate against someone on the grounds of their religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief in employment, vocational training and education and when providing goods, facilities and services.
 - Belief is considered to be philosophical systems which are similar to religion. People who have no religion or belief (such as atheists or agnostics) are also protected under the Act.
 - Religious harassment is defined as a form of discrimination.
- *Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006*
 - It's unlawful to discriminate against someone on the grounds of age in employment and vocational training.
 - Harassment and victimisation on the grounds of age are expressly prohibited.
 - Age is now the only equality strand that is not protected from discrimination in the provision of goods and services.
- *Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974*
 - Ex-offenders have certain employment rights if their convictions become 'spent', including not having to declare spent convictions and protecting them against dismissal or exclusion (with certain exceptions such as for those working with children).

- *Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000*
 - The regulations aims to ensure that part-time workers are not treated less favourably than comparable full-time workers, including having the same rates of pay and pro rata holiday entitlement.
- *Fixed-term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002*
 - The regulations aims to ensure that employees on fixed-term contracts are treated no less favourably than comparable permanent employees, including having the same terms and conditions of employment.

The Government is also currently reviewing all the anti-discrimination laws with the aim of implementing a single *Equality Act*. Their intention is to provide a clearer and more streamlined discrimination legislative framework to produce better outcomes for those who currently experience disadvantage.

The key aspects of the Government's Equality Bill are:

- A new streamlined Public Sector Duty covering the existing areas of race, disability and gender, as well as extending the duty to cover age, sexual orientation, religion or belief and gender reassignment.
- Extending age discrimination to cover the provision of goods, facilities and services.
- Strengthening the use of positive action as a means of promoting greater diversity in the workplace, allowing employers to take under-representation into account when selecting between two 'equally suitable' candidates.

It is expected that the Equality Bill will be brought forward in Parliament within 2009.

Definitions of Discrimination

Direct Discrimination is when you treat someone less favourably than others for unlawful means, for example not employing someone because of their gender or disability.

Indirect Discrimination is when an employer has a policy, practice or procedure that applies to everyone but might disadvantage a particular group, and which cannot be justified in relation to the job.

Harassment is unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive working environment.

Victimisation is when you treat someone less favourably or discriminate against them because they have pursued or intend to pursue their rights relating to alleged discrimination.

Positive discrimination is unlawful.

Positive action to address imbalances in the workforce is allowed in particular circumstances. Examples would include setting equality targets (but *not* quotas which are unlawful); encouraging people from particular groups to apply where they are under-represented; training for promotion or skill training for employees from under-represented groups who show potential.

The Equal Opportunities Policy

Although not specifically required by law, it is recognised good practice for organisations to have a statement or policy that clearly shows their commitment to equal opportunities.

Service Provision

Equal opportunities and diversity are also essential when considering your service users and you may wish to prepare a separate policy or statement for service provision or include this area within your main policy. An action plan to check that your policy goals are being put into practice is essential to ensure that equality and diversity are really being promoted. Services will need to be reviewed and adapted if necessary in response to the diverse needs of the current and potential users, including consideration of premises, complaints procedures, and publicity and PR including the image of the organisation and making links with other organisations.

In addition you should ideally consider your suppliers of goods and services in addition to consultants and trainers, that they too promote equal opportunities and diversity.

What it should state

The policy should state an organisation's values on equality and diversity. It should clearly show the Management Committee members, staff, volunteers and potential recruits how committed it is to promoting equality and how it wants to better reflect the community it serves. A clear Equal Opportunities Policy, backed up by an Action Plan could help avoid any potential discriminatory practice. For example an employer could be taken to an employment tribunal by an individual, even if they are not an employee, if they believe they were not selected for a job for discriminatory reasons.

The policy should also state that the effectiveness of the policy will be monitored and reviewed. If a senior member of the organisation and/or Management Committee is named as responsible for monitoring the policy's effectiveness, the organisation is indicating that they take equal opportunities at all levels very seriously.

Model Policy and Action Plan

An example model equal opportunities policy and action plan are shown below. They cover the internal working practices of an organisation for staff, volunteers and Management Committee members. They do not cover service provision (see above) and you are recommended to get further advice and guidance from your local CVS or umbrella group when drafting a policy, statement or action plan for this area of your organisation's activity. Alternatively phone PEACe on 020 7700 8147, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday or email peace@lvsc.org.uk.

Equal Opportunities Statement

Organisations may wish to use a briefer equal opportunities statement and examples can be found on the Ask NCVO website at <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/askncvo/hr/index.asp?id=187>

Implementation of the policy

As well as the statement summarising the organisation's commitment to equal opportunities, there should be an action plan clearly setting out how the policy will be implemented and how the plan will be monitored and reviewed. This is crucial to ensure that what has been said is actually put into practice across the organisation.

Benefits

Developing a clear policy for equal opportunities allows organisations to review how they are working now and how they will work in the future, and ensure that they fulfil their legal responsibilities. An equal opportunities policy also helps to ensure that organisations recruit and keep the best people and get the best performance from all employees.

Consultation

The policy and action plan should ideally be developed in consultation with all staff, and needs to be supported by managers and Management Committee members. It should also show that there is an expectation for staff to have a responsibility for implementation, and could give a definition of the kind of behaviour the organisation considers discriminatory.

Promotion of the policy

Once developed it is then important to ensure that the policy is public and available to all the Management Committee, staff, volunteers and potential recruits. For example:

- A copy should be given to each staff member.
- It could be made into a poster and displayed at work.
- It could be included in the annual report each year.
- Part of the statement could be included on all publicity leaflets produced by the organisation.

Developing an Action Plan

The action plan should go into detail about what will be done, by when and by whom.

- It will cover the specifics of what is expected from management, employees and prospective employees in all aspects of their work.
- It may say how harassment and bullying will be tackled although many organisations have a separate policy to cover this.
- It will set targets for increased diversity or better practice and may consider positive action measures.
- However it will not include quotas that must be achieved by any means – these are unlawful.
- It will set specific dates for the monitoring and review processes, and for any training and guidance required.

It should cover all aspects of how the organisation operates such as:

- the Management Committee including membership and induction;
- Human Resources including the recruitment procedure, induction, training, anti-harassment policies, volunteers.

Further Information

- ***Equality Direct Helpline 0845 600 3444***
9.00am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday
Confidential information and advice for employers on equality issues in the workplace run by ACAS.
- ***'Tackling discrimination and promoting equality - good practice guide for employers'***
Guide produced by ACAS
<http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=818>
'Guidance on Age and the Workplace'
Guide produced by ACAS
<http://www.acas.org.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=588&p=0>
- ***'A Guide to Equality and Diversity in the Third Sector'***
<http://www.olmec-ec.org.uk/main.cfm?Type=PUB&MenuId=-1&Menu2Id=366>
This guide is available to download from the **Olmec** website. Olmec is a community investment foundation and work alongside disadvantaged communities to deliver programmes that lead to positive impact. The guide is a useful and practical resource to help improve performance on equality and diversity.
- www.equalityhumanrights.com
The Equality and Human Rights Commission, took over the role and functions of the Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission, with new responsibilities for sexual orientation, age, religion and belief, and human rights. It enforces the law, influences government policy, and provides advice, support and information.
- www.uksdpc.org
The United Kingdom Disabled People's Council is the UK's national organisation of the worldwide Disabled People's Movement. Its services include training, consultancy and transcription into more accessible formats.
- www.equalities.gov.uk
The **Government Equalities Office** is a new self-standing Department, whose mission is to put equality at the heart of Government. The GEO is responsible for the Government's overall strategy on equality, (including a new Equality Bill and Public Service Agreement) as well as leading on women's issues across Government, and sponsoring the Equality and Human Rights Commission and Women's National Commission.
- www.berr.gov.uk/whatwedo/employment/discrimination
Information on discrimination in employment from **The Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR)**.

- www.stop-discrimination.info
The European Commission's website on anti-discrimination.
- www.agepositive.gov.uk
Age Positive who promote age diversity in employment.
- www.efa.org.uk
Employers' Forum on Age - an employer-led initiative to promote the benefits of a mixed-age workforce. Many downloads are available only to members but there are also free downloads including an age bias free application form available from <http://www.efa.org.uk/publications/default.asp> .
- www.employers-forum.co.uk
Employers' Forum on Disability – focusing on the issue of disability in the workplace.
- **'Access to Work'**
Information from Jobcentre Plus about the Access to Work scheme, providing advice and information to disabled people and employers, and funding towards any extra employment costs that result from a person's disability or health condition.
www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Employers/advisoryservices/diversity/Dev_015798.xml.html
- www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/askncvo/
Ask NCVO is an online best practice resource for the voluntary sector, providing a wealth of free advice on subjects from trusteeship to employment law, including downloadable documents on equality and diversity at www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/askncvo/index.asp?id=171
- NCVO also publishes the guide **'Making Diversity Happen'**: A *practical guide for voluntary & community organisations with case studies and checklists* available from their website at <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/askncvo/hr/index.asp?fid=255>. It covers a wide range of diversity issues including service users, funders and suppliers.
- www.multifaithcentre.org/
Multifaithnet is a research, learning and information website which provides details on the cultural difference and customs of different religions.
- www.stonewall.org.uk
Stonewall – promoting equality and justice for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals.
- www.workingfamilies.org.uk

The Working Families website helps children, working parents and carers and their employers find a better balance between responsibilities at home and work. It includes information and advice for employers on all work-life aspects, such as flexible working.

- www.volresource.org.uk
Vol Resource website provides links to useful information on anything to do with running a voluntary organisation including equal opportunities at http://www.volresource.org.uk/moreres/rev_peep.htm#equal
- www.businesslink.gov.uk
Business Link has lots of useful information for organisations including a section on employing people where there is a document '*Prevent Discrimination and Value Diversity*' at <http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/layer?r.l1=1073858787&r.s=tl&topicId=1073877851>
- ***'Respond: A practical resource for developing a race equality action plan'***
Practical guide produced by the Arts Council aimed particularly at arts organisations but covering many areas of relevance to all voluntary organisations.
www.artscouncil.org.uk/publications/publication_detail.php?rid=0&sid=&browse=recent&id=432
- ***'Action for access: a practical resource for arts organisations'***
Resource pack aimed at arts organisations wishing to make their activities more accessible to disabled people.
www.artscouncil.org.uk/publications/publication_detail.php?rid=0&sid=&browse=recent&id=412

Model Equal Opportunities Policy

Principles

This Association wholeheartedly supports the principle of equal opportunities in employment. We aim to encourage, value and manage diversity and we recognise that talent and potential are distributed across the population. Not only are there moral and social reasons for promoting equality of opportunity, it is in the best interest of this organisation to recruit and develop the best people for our jobs from as wide and diverse a pool of talent as possible. That diversity adds value.

The Association recognises that many people in our society experience discrimination. Discrimination is acting unfairly against a group or individual through for example exclusion, verbal comment, denigration, harassment, victimisation, a failure to appreciate needs or the assumption of such needs without consultation.

Discrimination can be direct or indirect (where there is a requirement or condition on all, but which has an adverse impact on a particular group and cannot be justified).

All forms of discrimination are unacceptable, regardless of whether there was any intention to discriminate or not. Employees have a duty to co-operate with the Association to ensure that this policy is effective in ensuring equal opportunities and in preventing discrimination. Employees should draw the attention of their line manager to suspected discriminatory acts or practices or cases of bullying or harassment.

Statement of Intent

The Association aims to create a culture that respects and values each others' differences, that promotes dignity, equality and diversity, and that encourages individuals to develop and maximise their true potential.

We aim to remove any barriers, bias or discrimination that prevent individuals or groups from realising their potential and contributing fully to our organisation's performance and to develop an organisational culture that positively values diversity.

We are committed wherever practicable, to achieving and maintaining a workforce that broadly reflects the local community in which we operate.

Every possible step will be taken to ensure that individuals are treated fairly in all aspects of their employment at the Association.

One major area for consideration under equal opportunities is the organisation's recruitment and selection procedure. Many organisations

have a separate recruitment policy which would include all aspects of ensuring equal opportunities and monitoring and reviewing.

It is also important to remember that other policies should clearly reflect the Association's commitment to equality and diversity, such as those covering flexible working practices, parental and dependants leave, annual leave, discipline, grievance and induction, development, promotion, supervision and appraisal, and working environment as well as contract terms and conditions.

Our aim is that the workforce will be truly representative of all sections of society. Selection for employment or promotion or any other benefit will be on the basis of merit and ability only. Selection for training will be on the basis of job requirement only. Intimidation, harassment and bullying will not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action. Details of how harassment and bullying will be tackled are covered in the Association's separate 'Dignity at Work' policy.

Many organisations develop a separate anti-harassment/anti-bullying or **dignity at work policy**. This can tackle the issue of potential harassment and bullying of all employees and clearly show that such behaviour is not tolerated. An example can be found at www.lvsc.org.uk/equalopportunities

The dignity at work policy can work alongside and support the equal opportunities policy and other policies, such as for [disciplinary and grievance](#) (see Grievance Procedures and Disciplinary Procedures documents on the LVSC website www.lvsc.org.uk/disciplinary for further information).

The Association will challenge discrimination in its own policies. It aims to provide equality and fairness for all job applicants, employees whether part-time, full-time, fixed term or temporary, volunteers and Management Committee members irrespective of gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, colour, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or age.

These are all the areas that are covered by law. Your organisation may also want to include other categories that are particularly relevant to the organisation or local circumstances e.g. social class, refugee status.

If your organisation works with children or vulnerable adults, this type of work may require employees to undertake criminal record disclosure checks. As part of the required code of practice for registered persons (those receiving this disclosure information), organisations should have a written policy on the **recruitment of ex-offenders**, as job applicants may be asked to reveal all past offences whether spent or unspent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (for

further information go to www.crb.gov.uk). Organisations may also wish to include this policy or refer to it within their equal opportunities and recruitment policies.

Implementation

The Chief Officer [or Management Committee where there is no Chief Officer] is responsible for the policy's day-to-day implementation. Consultation will take place with a staff working group [or recognised trade union if there is one] on the implementation and development of this policy. The Association has drawn up an Action Plan detailing how it will deliver this policy and challenge discrimination in other policies.

It is the responsibility of the Management Committee to monitor effectiveness, and to review and develop the policy where necessary. Monitoring and review will take place annually.

Each employee, volunteer, consultant, trainer, facilitator or Management Committee member is responsible for their own compliance with this policy. Breaches of the Equal Opportunities Policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary action against employees, appropriate action against a member of the Management Committee, termination of contracts for services of consultants or trainers, or withdrawal of volunteer agreements.

Employees who feel they have been discriminated against should raise the matter with their line manager. Initially the employee and manager should aim to resolve the matter informally. It may be that discriminatory action is unwitting and easily resolved once the problem is clear.

If they are dissatisfied with the outcome, the complaint is very serious, or their line manager is the cause of the complaint, the employee should raise the matter, in writing, as a formal grievance under the Association's Grievance Procedure. Employees may also find the Association's Dignity at Work Policy [if relevant].

The Association will ensure that all new employees, volunteers, and Management Committee members will receive induction on the policy and action plan and that consultants, trainers and facilitators will be fully informed.

Appropriate training and guidance will be provided to develop equality and diversity. Adequate resources will be made available to fulfil the aims of this policy. The policy will be widely promoted, and copies will be freely available and displayed in the Association's offices.

Letting people know about the Policy

- **Consider how your equal opportunities policy statement is publicised and promoted across the organisation and to stakeholders?** E.g. through posters, flyers, newsletters, statements on advertisements, the annual report, induction and staff meetings etc.
- **Are people provided with additional information?** E.g. providing documents to read, providing training on rights and responsibilities, keeping committees informed with monitoring reports etc.
- **How else could the equality culture be promoted?** E.g. by including a specific reference in the mission statement, clearly demonstrating that the policy is endorsed by the Management Committee etc., ensuring that managers have the skills and knowledge to lead on the policy
- **Have you consulted widely?** E.g. with staff or Management Committee members, perhaps setting up an advisory group – this helps ensure ownership of the policy throughout the organisation. Also with similar organisations or umbrella bodies to learn from good practice elsewhere (e.g. disabled people or disabled-led organisations for advice on improving access – physical, attitudinal and access to information).

Model Action Plan

This is a suggested action plan to help ensure the implementation of your organisation's Equal Opportunities Policy.

You should consider having a separate action plan to tackle certain areas of potential discrimination such as race or disability, particularly if you have identified that certain groups are under-represented in the organisation.

1st Step: Audit your organisation

➤ **What is the audit?**

The audit is a useful way of establishing where your organisation is with regard to equal opportunities and diversity issues. It will help you build a picture of the organisation's current practice, identify the main issues and priorities for action and provide the starting point from which you can measure your progress in the future.

➤ **Who will undertake the audit?**

It needs to be an individual or a team with the necessary expertise and skills, such as having:

- a thorough understanding of equal opportunities and diversity issues,
- knowledge of the voluntary sector,
- experience of how such organisations operate at all levels,
- experience of policies and procedures,
- knowledge of good practice in these areas,
- excellent communication skills.

They need to be provided with the necessary time and resources.

➤ **Is everyone aware that the audit is taking place?**

Make sure that everyone is aware of their involvement (such as completing questionnaires or contributing to an advisory or working group) and of the timescale for it.

➤ **Consider all areas of the organisation.**

- Policy and Planning
- Recruitment and selection
- Retaining and developing staff
- Retirement
- Management Committee members and volunteers, consultants and trainers

➤ **Ask people about the organisation's culture**

One way of getting the views of people within the organisation is through a short questionnaire (see the example on page 31)

You could ask them:

- If they feel they or others are readily accepted and valued;
- If they feel they have been discriminated against or harassed or bullied;
- If they feel that all groups and individuals receive fair treatment at work;
- If they think that the recruitment processes are fair;
- If they know if the organisation has an equal opportunities policy;
- If so, are they aware of the what the policy says;
- If they feel that the whole organisation including senior management and Management Committee are committed to equal opportunities;
- If they feel that the organisation meets the employees' access requirements.

➤ **Check on all policies and procedures**

- Look at the detail of the five areas of the organisation mentioned above and how they operate, following suggested questions below. You may want to add to the areas of consideration as relevant for your organisation.
- Consider the responses. Do they indicate that an equal opportunities approach is:
 - 1) missing,
 - 2) in development,
 - 3) in place but needs improvement or
 - 4) in place and working well.
- Decide on what are strengths of the organisation and where action needs to be taken.

The Association has drawn up this Action Plan in order to deliver the Equal Opportunities Policy.

Organisation Audit

An audit of the organisation was undertaken by [name the individual or team responsible for this].

The aim was to get a picture of the Association's current position and where priorities will need to be made, as well as providing a starting point from which we can measure progress.

As part of the audit the Management Committee, employees and volunteers were asked about the organisation's culture through written surveys [or focus groups etc.]. Details of these along with the collated results are detailed in the appendix.

The audit was completed on [state the date].

	Equal Opportunities Approach <small>(state whether missing, in development, in place but needing improvement, in place & working well)</small>	Action required?
<p>Policy and planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the organisation have an equal opportunities policy? • Does the policy cover all areas of possible unfair discrimination, under legislation and good practice? • Is the policy well publicised within the organisation? • Is there an action plan with a timetable? • Is progress on the plan regularly reviewed? • Is a staff working group [and/or union representatives if one is recognised] consulted about the action plan? • Does the Management Committee 		

<p>and all managers demonstrate their commitment to the policy in all areas of their responsibility?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are all workers aware of who is accountable for making sure the policy is implemented? • Do publicity materials promote positive images of the organisation's workers? • Does the organisation's publications (such as newsletters, annual reports) mention the progress made in equal opportunities? • Does the organisation have any positive action initiatives to develop workers from under-represented groups? 		
<p>Recruitment and Selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an agreed recruitment and selection process? • Are job applications encouraged from 		

<p>a diverse range of applicants, especially those that are currently under-represented?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are vacancies publicised widely?• Are advertisements written clearly, without jargon and state that applications from all sections of the community are welcome?• Do advertisements avoid language which seems to gear the vacancy to a certain age group?• Are clear job descriptions and person specifications prepared for all posts?• Do the specifications contain any non-essential requirements such as qualifications which potentially discriminate against a particular group of people?• Do the specifications focus on skills and aptitudes needed for the post rather than attributes which might imply someone of a certain age, such		
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<p>as a specified length of experience?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are application forms used and are questions about age/date of birth and other unnecessary age-related information removed from the form?• Do the shortlisting and interview procedures focus on the person specification?• Are reasonable adjustments made in the workplace to overcome physical and non-physical barriers that may disadvantage disabled applicants?• Are all those involved in the recruiting process aware of the equal opportunities policy in practice?• Have they all received equality training?• Are salary levels, conditions and grades fairly set (e.g. through a job evaluation scheme) and checked to ensure equal pay and to avoid any disparities?		
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the organisation make sure that specific needs are met, such as for disabled employees? • Is the recruitment process at every stage monitored and recorded? • Does the Management Committee regularly receive monitoring reports? • Are the interviewers involved throughout the recruitment process? • If you use a recruitment agency, does it act in accordance with your equal opportunities policy. 		
<p>Retaining and Developing Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are development opportunities planned around the individual and their own work priorities? • Does all training including induction take account of equality and diversity issues, and that all Management Committee members and staff know their rights and responsibilities? 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are opportunities for promotion made known to all staff and available on a fair and equal basis?• Are decisions on promotion and career management based solely on objective and related criteria.• Are there clear procedures for maternity pay and leave, parental and carers' leave and paternity leave?• Are flexible working arrangements available at all levels of the organisation e.g. for time off for family or religious needs?• Are reasonable adjustments made in the workplace to overcome physical and non-physical barriers that may disadvantage disabled employees?• Does the organisation have an anti-harassment/anti-bullying policy?• Are procedures for dealing with discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation clear and well-		
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<p>publicised?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is staff turnover monitored? • Does the Management Committee regularly receive staff turnover monitoring reports? • Are there clear procedures for supervision and appraisal, and do they show a clear commitment to equal opportunities? • Are these procedures carried out for all staff at all levels within the organisation? • Is there equality in the application of the organisation's employment policies e.g. disciplinary and grievance, absence, redundancy, leave and holidays. 		
<p>Retirement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the organisation have a normal retirement age below the default retirement age of 65, and if so can it 		

<p>be objectively justified?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the retirement policy follow the notification procedure as required under the age discrimination legislation? • Are workers over the age of 65 aware of their right to request not to retire? 		
<p>Management Committee members, volunteers, consultants and trainers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are all members, volunteers, consultants and trainers informed about the equal opportunities policy? • Does the Management Committee reflect the diversity of the local community? • Are reasonable adjustments made to overcome physical and non-physical barriers that may disadvantage disabled Management Committee members, volunteers, consultants and trainers? 		

Step 2: Set out the Plan

➤ Set objectives

Equality objectives now need to be set out within the plan with clear targets and key actions to be taken. The objectives and actions need to be **realistic and achievable** for your organisation, in order to be a meaningful tool for improvement.

You may want to consider the action plan over a **one-year period** or longer, thereby identifying short and long-term objectives. For example a short-term objective may be setting up an agreed recruitment policy and procedure. A longer-term objective may be to recruit new Management Committee members, particularly encouraging people to join from particular groups currently under-represented on your MC such as women or the disabled.

The action plan should contribute to the business plan and you may want to incorporate objectives within it.

From the list of areas that the audit has identified that action is required, **prioritise** the most urgent and important issues. Consider what else the organisation will be doing over the same period as identified in the business plan that could impact on the planning. Check that each prioritised objective is SMART i.e. **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time bound**.

The plan should also set out **who is responsible** for each objective, the **resources** required (people, equipment, time, internal costs, external costs such as publicity, consultants), **timescales** and methods of **measuring** progress (who will benefit and how).

NOTE: The Disability Discrimination Act states that an employer must make **reasonable adjustments** if they are aware that the employee or job applicant is a disabled person. Factors such as the cost of the adjustment, size and turnover of your organisation, its resources may be taken into account when considering whether changes or adjustments are reasonable.

If you cannot remove or alter all the physical features of your premises you should have a plan and costings of when and how you are going to carry these alterations out. If access is unavoidably limited, this information should be made clear e.g. in the application pack.

However it must be remembered that some adjustments need not be costly, such as providing adequate lighting and lack of background noise which may assist people who use lip reading to understand what is being said; providing audio descriptions or large print documents to assist

visually impaired people; by making sure floors are uncluttered, even and without thick carpet to assist wheelchair users and people with mobility difficulties; producing clear signage and information in plain English, and using pictures or photos to support and explain the message for learning disabled people.

Priorities for Action

It was agreed by the Management Committee on [state date] that the following areas are the Association's current priority for action.

Action required	Person Responsible	Resources required	Timescale	Target
Policy & Planning e.g. changing images on the organisation's website to promote positive images of a diverse workforce				
Recruitment & Selection e.g. changing the methods by which jobs are advertised				
Retaining & Developing Staff e.g. developing a training policy				
Management Committee members, volunteers, consultants and trainers e.g. ensuring that all MC members receive equality training				

Step 3: Monitor, review and evaluate

The review process should show how policies impact on staff, and the recruitment of Management Committee members and volunteers. You should have clear definitions for the **success criteria or goals** that you are setting out to achieve. It should include analysis of statistical data which can help show trends, and qualitative feedback from employees and service users on policies and services.

One way of producing this data to help assess the impact of the policy is through **surveys, questionnaires, focus groups, spot checks or monitoring**.

You should record and produce monitoring data such as undertaking ethnic, sex, disability and age monitoring of current workers and Management Committee members and of all job applicants. In addition you could consider monitoring sick leave/absences and reasons; disciplinary action/grievances; hours that staff work; rates of pay and training received.

Monitoring can check on numbers and e.g. how applicants heard about the job. Be careful about wording, for example it would not be acceptable to ask people if they have any impairments but you could ask if they consider themselves to be a disabled person or if they have any access requirements.

It is better to monitor at fixed intervals, such as quarterly. Different areas will need more frequent monitoring than others. Regular progress reports should be sent to the Management Committee. Data collected can be compared to regional, national or local statistics such as from the census, local authority or the Office for National Statistics at www.statistics.gov.uk

NOTE: It must be remembered that the information gathered should be treated as **confidential**. For example, monitoring forms included in application packs should be detached from the application form and stored anonymously. Always be clear **why** you are collecting data and **who** is going to analyse it, and respect people's sensitivities.

The Management Committee ideally need to be involved in the subsequent review and evaluation process, looking at the detail of the equality work, the performance so far, particular strengths and areas requiring further action, and what the next steps are to be. Ideally this should take place annually and would also involve the staff working group.

Evaluation of the Action Plan

The action plan objectives were reviewed by the Management Committee on [state date].

Action required	Person Responsible	Outcomes achieved	Evidence	Areas for further improvement
Policy & Planning			e.g. all management committee members and staff have undertaken equal opportunities training	
Recruitment & Selection			e.g. increase in applicants from BME groups	
Retaining & Developing Staff			e.g. 'dignity at work' policy produced	
Members, volunteers, consultants and trainers			e.g. organisation has mapped the diversity of the local community and monitoring data shows that it is reflected in volunteers	

Step 4: Repeat steps 1 to 3

The cycle of audit, prioritise, act and review would then again repeat itself, and continue ideally annually.

Following the review, an updated audit of the organisation was undertaken by [name the individual or team responsible for this].

The audit was completed on [state the date].

It was agreed by the Management Committee on [state date] that the following areas are the Association's current priority for action.

Etc.....

PEACe, January 2009

LVSC's Personnel, Employment Advice and Conciliation Service

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Example Internal Questionnaire (based on the version in the *Arts Council Respond: A practical resource for developing a race equality action plan*)

The Association asks for your views as part of its review of diversity and equal opportunities within the organisation.

Statement – PLEASE TICK A RESPONSE	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
People from diverse backgrounds and different ages are readily accepted at the Association.			
People from diverse backgrounds and different ages are treated fairly at the Association.			
I do not feel harassed or bullied at work.			
I do not feel that I have been discriminated against at work.			
I am aware of the Association’s equal opportunities policy.			
I understand how to put the equal opportunities policy into practice within my work.			
The Association takes equal opportunities seriously.			
Under-represented groups are able to progress at the Association and they receive fair treatment based on their merits.			
People of all ages are able to progress at the Association and they receive fair treatment based on their merits.			

Our recruitment processes do not discriminate against people from particular groups or ages.			
I feel valued by my colleagues in the organisation.			
I feel fully equipped and trained to carry out the requirements of my job.			
I have been able to make progress in my job at a pace which matches my abilities.			
I feel I can discuss my career development with my line manager.			
I feel I am appropriately rewarded for the work I do.			
The Association is making progress on equal opportunities and diversity.			
There is real commitment at the highest level of the Association to improve our performance on equal opportunities.			
We learn from other organisations within the voluntary sector about better ways of doing things.			