



Equality and diversity policy

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Victim Support Single Charity

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1 Policy statement

The purpose of this document is to communicate Victim Support's commitment to tackling all forms of discrimination and inequality in the workplace and the services it gives by setting out how it will promote equality of opportunity and to prevent all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

We all have the right to expect to be able to work in an environment where we are shown respect and consideration, and in which the dignity of each and every individual is valued and maintained.

We also have a responsibility to ensure that our behaviour contributes to a positive work environment and that it does not cause any offence.

Commitment to inclusion

Victim Support is committed to creating inclusive environments, where unlawful discrimination on any grounds is eliminated and good relations between people from different backgrounds and equality of opportunity are promoted.

The promotion of diversity and inclusion and the genuine equality of opportunity for all are central to ensuring fair employment and high quality service provision. In pursuing this, Victim Support will ensure that in the development and use of employment procedures and practices, no person or group of people will suffer detrimentally in recruitment, promotion and dismissal, or in the access to training facilities or other benefits. They will also not endure discriminatory behaviour in their everyday work, or when they are in receipt of services from Victim Support.

Victim Support shall continue to actively work towards eliminating discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion/belief, marriage/civil partnership, maternity and pregnancy.

Victim Support must work towards a culture where discriminatory behaviour by its employees, volunteers and trustees are routinely challenged in a polite and constructive manner so the person making them has an opportunity to correct their behaviour.

2 General information

The success of Victim Support depends on our people. Capitalising on what is unique about people and drawing on their different perspectives and experiences will add value to the way we deliver our services.

By accessing, recruiting and developing people from the widest possible talent pool Victim Support can gain an insight into different communities and generate greater creativity in anticipating victim and witness needs. Victim Support will constantly strive to create a productive environment, representative of and responsive to different cultures and groups, where everyone has an equal chance to succeed.

Victim Support is the independent national charity that helps people cope with crime. Our services are free and available to everyone, whether or not the crime has been reported and regardless of when it happened. We also work to promote and advance the rights of victims and witnesses. To achieve this, we need to make sure that Victim Support puts anti-discriminatory practices into effect in both employment and service delivery.

Diversity and inclusion is morally and ethically right and it goes beyond the agenda of equality, including social justice and fairness. It is driven by our business needs and our business drivers as well as our organisational values (see appendix 1).

A commitment to this policy is required by all members of the organisation.

3 Victim Support's diversity statement

Victim Support has a diversity statement that builds on the organisation's values and works towards fair and appropriate treatment for everyone it works with.

Victim Support takes pride in being a diverse organisation, enriched by the participation of all individuals and communities. It is recognised that prejudice and discrimination continues to result in unfair treatment for many people.

The statement is "***Diversity matters and we value it***" and everyone at Victim Support should ensure they value and see the benefits of being part of an inclusive organisation.

4 Victim Support's equal opportunities statement

Victim Support is an equal opportunities employer. Our policy is to ensure that no victim, witness, employee, volunteer, trustee or job applicant receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of ethnicity, faith/religion, age, gender, gender identity, marital/civil partnership status, sexual orientation, disability, maternity or pregnancy, or that they are disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown as justifiable. Selection criteria and procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are selected and treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities. Employees will be given equal opportunities and, where appropriate, training to enable them to progress within the organisation.

Victim Support's Board of Trustees is committed to a programme of action to make this policy effective and will bring it to the attention of all Victim Support employees.

5. Legislative context

This policy also embodies the principles contained in the Equality Act 2010 (see appendix 2).

The Act identifies 'protected characteristics'. These are best described as certain attributes that people possess, which the law considers should be safeguarded.

Victim Support aims to ensure it values the diversity of communities. The protected characteristics below will be reflected at all levels of the workforce.

5.1 Protected characteristics

5.12 Gender

Women and men are fully and properly represented and rewarded for their contribution at all levels of the organisation through:

- challenging gender stereotypes
- supporting employees in balancing their life at work and at home.

5.13 Gender identity

Employees who plan to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone gender re-assignment are protected against all forms of discrimination and harassment. Victim Support will take positive steps to support a transgender person and ensure they are treated with dignity and respect.

5.14 Marital/civil partnership status

Employees are treated fairly and equally in the workplace irrespective of their marital or family status.

5.15 Ethnicity

The racial and cultural diversity of our communities is represented at all levels of the organisation through:

- challenging racial stereotypes
- understanding, respecting and valuing racial and cultural differences and perspectives
- encouraging and enabling members of minority ethnic groups to volunteer or work for Victim Support at all levels.

5.16 Disability

The abilities of disabled people are recognised and valued at all levels of the organisation through:

- focusing on what employees can do rather than on what they cannot
- challenging stereotypes about people with disabilities and in particular, not making assumptions about an individual's ability.

- making appropriate adjustments in the workplace so that all employees can reach their full potential regardless of any disability.

5.17 Age

Age diversity within the workforce is promoted and valued through:

- challenging age stereotyping, recognising that new ideas and fresh approaches can come from anyone irrespective of their age
- recognising the benefits of a mixed-age workforce.

5.18 Religion or belief

Employees are treated fairly in the workplace irrespective of their religious beliefs, faith or lack of belief. Employees are also expected to recognise the individual freedom of belief and right to protection from intolerance and persecution of other individuals and groups.

Note: The expression of beliefs and opinions should not contravene Victim Support's values or its capability to carry out its work.

5.19 Sexual orientation

People are treated fairly in the workplace irrespective of their sexuality through:

- respecting the rights of everyone irrespective of whether or not they are open about their sexual orientation
- respecting different lifestyles, even if they conflict with one's own religious or cultural beliefs
- challenging negative stereotypical views
- celebrating and welcoming significant lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) events in the same way that similar events of importance to heterosexual people would be, for example civil partnerships.

5.20 Pregnancy and maternity¹

People should be treated fairly in the workplace throughout their maternity period and supported appropriately through pregnancy. Women will not be discriminated against within Victim Support's employment policies.

¹ Although paternity is not a protected characteristic, Victim Support understands that staff on paternity leave should be treated fairly and not discriminated against within its employment policies

6 Scope

The aim of the policy is to:

- work towards the elimination of discrimination (whether direct, indirect or through victimisation or harassment)
- create a positive culture throughout, where diversity, inclusion and respect are core values and at the centre of all our activities
- ensure members are engaged with development and implementation of policies and procedures
- encourage positive action to overcome disadvantage and discrimination
- ensure the highest possible standards are achieved in delivery of our services and in our employment practices, and equality, diversity and inclusion are promoted through our work internally and externally.

Diversity is about valuing all visible and non-visible differences and recognising and accepting that everyone has something to offer. Just because people don't all look or act the same, it does not mean they cannot positively contribute towards achieving the organisation's objectives, or be helped by the organisation.

7 Responsibilities

Victim Support believes that it is the responsibility of everyone at Victim Support to uphold strong working practices. This is to ensure that an environment of diversity and inclusion is maintained and celebrated throughout employment and service delivery. Our commitment to equality and diversity means that everyone involved with Victim Support has a duty to:

- promote equality, diversity and inclusion in the delivery of Victim Support's services
- ensure that everyone associated with Victim Support is treated in a non-discriminatory way
- promote a welcoming environment in which individuals from all backgrounds feel welcome, valued and respected
- promote the equality and diversity policy.

8 Role of line managers

The **line manager's** responsibility is to:

- ensure systems, procedures and services do not discriminate
- set a positive example in everything they do
- listen to and respect others, and not dismiss their problems as "trivial"
- challenge discrimination
- observe people and stop inappropriate behaviour immediately
- support and implement action that Victim Support takes to improve diversity and equal opportunities, where that action has been agreed as national policy

- encourage employees to maximise their contribution to the work of Victim Support
- promote and implement diversity within the management of service provision
- provide appropriate training programmes in order to put our Equality and Diversity policy into practice
- support, protect and give training to volunteers.

8.1 Role of employees

Every employee has a responsibility to:

- challenge any behaviour that could be interpreted as discrimination
- understand what is expected of them in terms of performance, the standards they seek to achieve, their behaviour and conduct towards others
- set a positive example in everything they do
- listen to and respect others, and not dismiss their problems as “trivial”
- challenge and discourage discriminatory speculations
- observe people and challenge any behaviour that could be interpreted as unfair discrimination.

8.2 Role of volunteers

Every volunteer has a duty to:

- attend appropriate training provided by Victim Support around diversity, equality and inclusion issues
- not discriminate unfairly against service users when giving help and support, or other members of the organisation
- set a positive example in everything they do
- listen to and respect others, and not dismiss their problems as “trivial”
- challenge discriminatory speculations and rumours
- observe people and challenge any behaviour that could be interpreted as unfair discrimination.

9 Procedures

Victim Support shall continue to actively work towards eliminating discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, religion or belief.

All complaints of discrimination will be sensitively investigated and, if proven, will result in appropriate action for the perpetrator. Any employees found to be in breach of this policy could be subject to disciplinary procedures and/or their continued engagement with Victim Support should be considered.

Victim Support is committed to the development and promotion of a positive workplace culture that is free of discrimination and aims to ensure that any allegation

of bullying, harassment and discrimination at work is taken seriously, is properly investigated, and is dealt with effectively.

10 Associated documentation

This policy should be read in conjunction with all of Victim Support's policies, procedures and mandatory documents. Equality and diversity is an integral part of all policies and practices within the organisation.

For breaches of the policy and/or acts of discrimination, see:

- Recruitment and selection policy
- Disciplinary procedure.

For circumstances where the employee considers they have been the subject of harassment or discrimination, see:

- Grievance procedure
- Bullying and harassment procedure.

For circumstances where a service user considers they have been the subject of harassment or discrimination, see:

- Complaints procedure.

11 Status of this policy

This policy and procedure is not a contractual term of employment. It is intended to act as a general framework only. It may be varied in any way and at any time if Victim Support reasonably deems this to be necessary.

12 Further help

Further help and advice can be obtained from the HR department at the National Centre.

Appendix 1

Victim Support's values

Victim Support's vision and aims are what drives and motivates us as an organisation. Our mission is to make sure that diversity is valued and that we give services that meet the needs of the victims and witnesses we help.

Our values are at the heart of what we do; these make up the core values of Victim Support and we expect everyone within the organisation to share these values. Diversity and inclusion are an integral part of the corporate strategy and we will make sure that they remain a priority and part of our strategic aim.

- **Strong:** helping victims and witnesses to find their inner strength
- **Diverse:** understanding that everyone is different and deserves to be valued for who they are
- **Welcoming:** friendly and easy to approach
- **Straightforward:** doing what we say
- **Excellence:** achieving the best results and continuously improving
- **Ambitious:** aiming high and looking to the future.

Appendix 2

The Equality Act 2010

Purpose of the Act

The Equality Act 2010 was implemented in October 2010 and can be summarised as:

- the bringing together of several different pieces of UK anti-discrimination legislation:
 - Equal Pay Act (EPA) 1970
 - Sex Discrimination Acts (SDA) 1975 & 1986
 - Race Relations Act (RRA) 1976
 - Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 & 2005; and
 - The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Codes of Practice on Employment
 - The Human Rights Act 1998 and the European Convention on Human Rights
 - Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
 - Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 and 2007
 - Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
 - Race Relations Act (Amendment) 2000
 - Civil Partnerships Act 2004
 - Equality Act 2006
 - Gender Equality Duty 2007
 - Disability Equality Duty 2006
 - Race Equality Duty 2002
 - Gender Recognition Act 2004

and

- the updating and extension of these where required.

The Act defines certain actions that are not permissible and are considered unlawful:

- direct discrimination
- associative discrimination
- perceptive discrimination
- indirect discrimination
- harassment
- third party harassment
- victimisation

The Act also identifies 'protected characteristics', described as certain attributes that people possess, which the law considers should be safeguarded.

In summary, these protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race/ethnicity
- religion or belief
- gender
- sexual orientation.

Background

It replaces nine major pieces of legislation and lots of smaller pieces of legislation, and draws together all the important UK anti-discrimination laws.

In addition to this, the Act introduces some new anti-discrimination features and is therefore a combination of rights and responsibilities that have

- stayed the same
- changed
- been extended
- been introduced for the first time.

Developments in European law (directives), as well as case law, meant that the equality laws were constantly being challenged.

All of this prompted a review of UK equality legislation, beginning in 2005 with the Discrimination Law Review, and culminated in the announcement in June 2008 by Harriet Harman, the then Leader of the House of Commons, of a new Single Equality Bill. Ultimately, the Government published the Equality Bill on 27 April 2009.

Equality Act 2010

What's new & what's changed: at a glance



Key

Characteristic covered in existing legislation - no changes	
Characteristic covered in existing legislation - but some changes	
Characteristic not covered in existing legislation - now covered	
Characteristic not covered in existing legislation - still not covered	

	Age	Disability	Gender Reassignment	Race	Religion or Belief	Sex	Sexual Orientation	Marriage & Civil Partnership	Pregnancy & Maternity
Direct discrimination Someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic (PC)									
Associative discrimination Direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a PC	New	New	New			New			
Discrimination by perception Direct discrimination against someone because the others think they possess a particular PC		New	New			New			
Indirect discrimination Can occur when you have a rule or policy that applies to everyone but disadvantages a particular PC		New	New						
Harassment Employees can now complain of behaviour they find offensive even if it is not directed at them	Changes	Changes	Changes	Changes	Changes		Changes		
Harassment by a third party Employers are potentially liable for harassment of their staff by people they don't employ	New	New	New	New	New		New		
Victimisation Someone is treated badly because they have made/ supported a complaint or grievance under the Act	Changes	Changes	Changes	Changes	Changes	Changes	Changes	Changes	Changes

Types of discrimination

There are a number of different actions outlined in the 2010 Act. These are the types of unlawful discrimination that can arise.

Direct discrimination

This occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic.

Associative discrimination

This is discrimination against a person because they have an association with someone with a particular protected characteristic.

The 2010 Act extended application of this action to cover age, disability, gender reassignment and sex. Previously, it applied only to race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation.

Perceptive discrimination

This is discrimination against a person because the discriminator thinks they possess a protected characteristic, even if they do not.

The 2010 Act extended application of this action to cover disability, gender reassignment and sex. Before, it had applied only to age, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

Indirect discrimination

This occurs when a policy, rule or procedure applies to everyone but has a disproportionate impact on people with a protected characteristic.

The 2010 Act extended this action to apply to disability discrimination and gender reassignment.

Harassment

The 2010 Act defines harassment as 'unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual'.

It applies to all the protected characteristics except pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership.

An employee can complain of behaviour they find offensive even if it is not directed at them.

Third party harassment²

The Act makes employers potentially liable for harassment of their employees by people they do not employ. An employer will only be liable if the harassment has occurred on at least two previous occasions, and if it knows that it has taken place and has not taken reasonable steps to prevent it from being repeated.

Third party harassment applies to all the protected characteristics except pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership.

Victimisation

This occurs when an employee is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act; or because they are suspected of doing so.

² The Government is planning to consult to remove the requirement in the Equality Act 2010 for businesses to take reasonable steps to prevent persistent harassment of their staff by third parties.

If an employee has maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint they are not protected from further actions.

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