

Diversity Scheme



BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE ORGANISATION

NOTE

This policy must read in conjunction with our Equal Opportunities Policy

Created 10 Aug 2004	Trustee acceptance 1 Nov 2004	Reviewed 17 Dec 2004
		Reviewed Dec 2008
Review Jan 2013		Next Review Nov 2015

Equality and Diversity – an Overview.

With the introduction of the new Employment and Race directives from the European Union in 2001 it is now important that we examine our attitudes and policies on gender, race, disability, sexuality, age and religion. Given this context, we believe that an understanding of the legislation and its effect on

Age Concern Okehampton and Torrington's policies are important for all trustees, volunteers and employees.

There is a need to examine people's perspectives on difference, diversity, change and the attitudes and feelings that are sometimes difficult for people around equal opportunities programmes.

With this type of activity people can attend a one-day event covering legislation and policy and leave with the feeling that the work was "bolt-on" and irrelevant to them. It is easy for the group to feel that it has done what is required but little really changes back in the centres.

If people feel unable to engage with the realities of working within a diverse, multi-cultural organisation then we will not meet the challenges of working with new initiatives within the Age Concern Federation.

Bigotry is a human condition, whether it's around race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion or nationality. Whether people want to admit or not, we are all prejudiced. We all make assumptions about others that reinforce our stereotypes; indeed we look for evidence to support our biases. We're all guilty of the occasional toss-away line that cuts deep; and we all have intolerant behaviours that are so ingrained we don't even notice we're doing them.

Not only that, each of us is the focus of someone else's prejudices and narrow mindedness, is someone else's stereotype, is the trigger for someone else's intolerance.

Can we eliminate prejudice? No we cannot.

We can however help people to be aware of how their prejudices affect others and help them do something about it?

Recognising the problems

It is important to acknowledge that people will face real dilemmas around equal opportunities issues. They need to feel equipped to cope with the human side of problems that arise and to feel able to engage with and challenge their own

Created 10 Aug 2004	Trustee acceptance 1 Nov 2004	Reviewed 17 Dec 2004
		Reviewed Dec 2008
Review Jan 2013		Next Review Nov 2015

prejudices and stereotypes around difference. They also need to understand just how that prejudice translates into active discrimination.

We need to understand what happens to people when they are excluded, harassed, bullied, passed over, ignored, isolated - not because of what they do but because of who they are?

People feel demeaned and disempowered. Their motivation falters and their stress levels increase. Most unfortunate of all, their self-esteem and confidence about who they are diminishes.

We will not remove discrimination entirely, but we believe we can make a positive change in the ethos of this group.

The most successful diversity training helps people to develop reflective thinking, empathy, understanding, raised awareness, sensitivity, an understanding of consequences and a desire to be fair. All these skills which will assist them in extending equality of opportunity will also help them when they themselves are the victims of discrimination.

We want to value our values so that the possibility for change is much easier to achieve.

Culture Clashes

When people operate from their prejudices, they create culture clashes. Cross-cultural issues exist everywhere; they exist in every aspect of our lives.

A culture clash of some sort occurs as soon as two people get together, since no two people, even family members, have the same internal world or the same view of the external world. In the broadest sense, you 'cross' cultures with every person you come into contact with, whether they are the 'same' as you or not.

In a workplace that celebrates differences, people accommodate, sublimate or ignore these different 'cultures' because of common ground, shared goals and like interests. When people concentrate on similarities, the differences are less noticeable, or at any rate, less important. Once we get a certain amount of common ground, we can 'get along'.

When cultures clash, no matter what the cause, things inevitably evolve into a 'them' and 'us' environment; and then people go around collecting 'evidence' to prove that they are right and you are wrong.

There are many ways to help cultures 'get along' better: identifying and concentrating on improved communication, fostering mutual respect, engendering

Created 10 Aug 2004	Trustee acceptance 1 Nov 2004	Reviewed 17 Dec 2004
		Reviewed Dec 2008
Review Jan 2013		Next Review Nov 2015

co-operation and shared visions. Then, all kinds of diverse cultures can work side by side to everyone's benefit.

Feelings and Behaviours

So we can have laws, directives, charity policies and values and you will still have major problems around diversity unless people's feelings and behaviours are the focus of any equal opportunity work we do.

It can be an extremely uncomfortable process – asking people to dig down deep and talk about their own prejudices on the one hand, and their experiences of being discriminated against on the other.

Subtler forms of exclusion exist that almost everyone will have experienced at some time in their lives. Look for a spare seat on a train and see how many seats are filled with bags! I want to sit on my own is the clear message.

Overt forms of discrimination include sexual harassment, racist jokes, job rejections, promotion limitations.

What is our Diversity Scheme?

Our diversity scheme is a living and evolving document. We want members of diverse communities to have access to and engagement with high quality services which meet their needs. We are starting, with commitment, on a journey to ensure that at Age Concern Okehampton and Torrington our trustees, staff and volunteers reflect the communities we serve.

In this, our first version of the Scheme, we outline what we have already done to promote diversity, using case studies as examples of the kind of initiatives we have undertaken and will build on. Then we provide an action plan for the next three years, describing how we see the Scheme working, how we will review our progress and how our 'staff' can contribute to this work. The Scheme is a practical guide to action, not a perfected and finished strategy document.

Created 10 Aug 2004	Trustee acceptance 1 Nov 2004	Reviewed 17 Dec 2004
		Reviewed Dec 2008
Review Jan 2013		Next Review Nov 2015

Our organisation

Our vision

We aim to engage with all older people in our area of benefit by recognising and providing relevant services and through developing opportunities that enable them to live life to the full.

Managing for diversity is central to this vision and to us meeting the four strategic aims of our strategy - 'Delivering Improvement.'

- focusing our work on users and carers over the age of 50
- helping to deliver improvements to services
- maximising the benefit and minimising the burden of regulation, and
- modernising ourselves.

We want all of the older community to have access to and engagement with the Age Concern Home Service seven core principles of:

- Affordability Support
- Practical Tasks
- Home Safety
- Home Security
- Gardening
- Home maintenance
- Winter Warmth

We recognise that we need to work on ourselves too. We have set ourselves the goal of becoming an Age Concern that promotes diversity in its products and services and that really values difference.

This is an ambitious target given that our strategic approach is fairly new and our current investment in diversity work is dependent on the identification of new funding.

Created 10 Aug 2004	Trustee acceptance 1 Nov 2004	Reviewed 17 Dec 2004
		Reviewed Dec 2008
Review Jan 2013		Next Review Nov 2015

Diversity is much more than just ‘doing the right thing’. It reflects a significant development in our thinking and our approach to equalities. The focus of equal opportunities is fairness – developing policies and practices that tackle inequalities and ensuring that all people are treated fairly.

Managing for diversity provides us with an enhanced focus – removing barriers and changing group behaviour that have a negative impact on particular communities, whilst creating an environment that maximises the potential of each trustee, member of staff and volunteer and uses their skills and talents to add value to our work.

Diversity is complex and we are clear that we will not effectively manage for diversity without addressing equality of opportunity. There are key values and core behaviours that we will encourage and promote, creating an environment in which people can exchange opinions and ideas without ‘fear or favour’ and respect each other across differences of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or age.

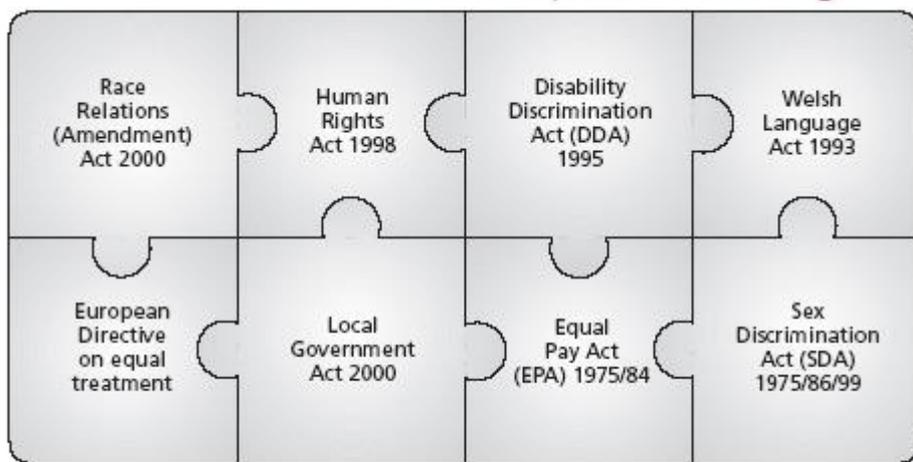
There are many examples of good practice across the Commission, some of which are outlined later in case studies. But we accept that we need to improve our performance on diversity, and we know that we have a fair way to go before we achieve our goals.

We have set ourselves **4 key diversity objectives**:

- **Leadership** – putting diversity on the agenda from the top of the organisation
- **Inclusivity** – developing a broad and inclusive focus across all equalities issues
- **Mainstreaming** – translating strategy into targets and ensuring that behaviours match vision; and
- **Delivery** – ensuring that activities are co-coordinated, that information is shared and that our priorities are implemented.

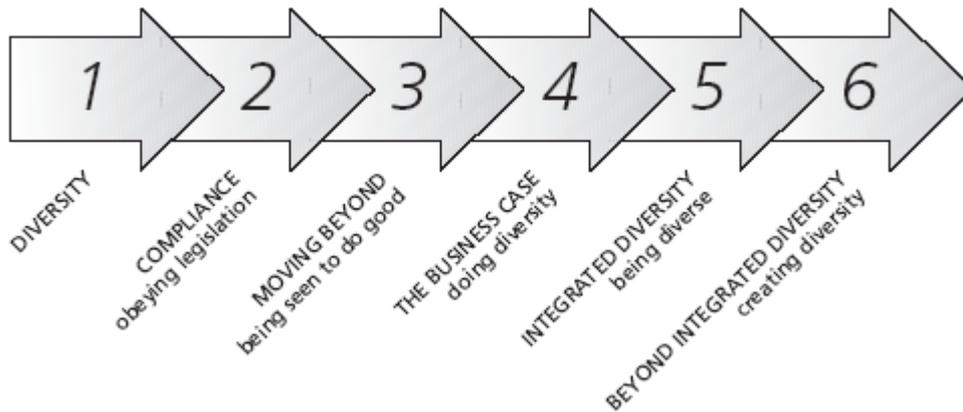
The Legislative Framework

Created 10 Aug 2004	Trustee acceptance 1 Nov 2004	Reviewed 17 Dec 2004
		Reviewed Dec 2008
Review Jan 2013		Next Review Nov 2015



THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The journey to real diversity will take time and will require several stages as the group develops and involves people in paid and unpaid opportunities .



Ethnicity, disability and gender

We will seek to monitor and record diversity as the group grows and involves more people.

Created 10 Aug 2004	Trustee acceptance 1 Nov 2004	Reviewed 17 Dec 2004
		Reviewed Dec 2008
Review Jan 2013		Next Review Nov 2015