

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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Date Drafted:	April 2015
Date Effective:	July 2015
Last Review Date:	June 2024
Next Review Date:	June 2026
Officer Responsible:	Chief Executive
Delegated Delivery Responsibility:	SLT

Version	Date	Note	Author
V1-0	July 2015	Original – New Policy Format	SLT
V2-0	October 2017	Policy review	SLT
V3-0	July 2019	Policy reviewed and into new format	Compliance Team
V3-0	August 2020	Policy Reviewed by HC and no changes	HR Manager
	October 2020	No changes – just put into Arial 11	Lisa Finch
	May 21	No changes – new logo added	Lisa Finch
V4-0	June 2022	Policy review – amendment to title of policy, discrimination, recruitment and selection, disabilities, part time and fixed time working, breaches of policy added	Laura Small
V5	January 2023	Full Review	KK/LH
V6	June 2024	Full Review	SLT

# Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

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## Policy Statement

Carers First is committed to ensuring an inclusive environment where diversity and difference are valued and celebrated; recognising the unique contributions people bring.

We will embed this in everything we do, from how we attract, recruit and support our workforce, to how we support carers within our services, ensuring they are at the centre of everything we do, creating a sense of value and belonging for all.

We recognise the inequality and disadvantage that individuals and/or groups can experience in society; and seek to remove the barriers that can exist to fair and equitable treatment, and to wider life opportunities,

Our commitment is firmly founded on the belief that:

- To offer services that are personal, committed and creative, we need staff teams that reflect the diversity of their local communities and that can respond to carers as individuals; and
- To attract, keep and motivate the most talented staff, we need to:
  - Reach out to all sections of the community.
  - Provide a working environment in which everyone feels valued, respected and able to contribute.

We are fully committed to ensuring we not only comply with legislation but also consistently demonstrate and share good practice in this arena. We will value and develop our employees, by investing in their learning and development and by combatting discrimination at work whether direct or indirect.

Employees and any job applicants will receive equitable and fair treatment regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation (Protected Characteristics). We undertake to comply with all relevant statutory requirements in respect of non-discriminatory practice, and with partner/funder performance expectations on diversity and equal opportunities.

As such, this policy sets out Carers First's approach to equal opportunities and the avoidance of discrimination at work. It applies to all aspects of employment with the charity, including recruitment, pay and conditions, training, appraisals, promotion, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment. This policy covers all employees, consultants, contractors, casual workers and agency workers.

It also critically sets out our approach to ensuring we deliver services for carers that are accessible, culturally sensitive and inclusive; and that are designed and improved in co-production with carers, ensuring they reflect their specific needs. As such, we will engage with people and communities to ensure we are reaching carers who may be experiencing barriers to accessing services and support; ensuring equality of access for all.

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## Responsibility for this Policy

Carers First's Board of Trustees are ultimately accountable for the implementation and operation of this policy and plans and for monitoring their effectiveness.

Day to day responsibility for implementation and monitoring lies with the Chief Executive and the Senior Leadership Team.

All Carers First staff, volunteers and board members have an obligation to ensure the positive application of this policy in all aspects of their own work. Wilful breaches of the policy will be treated as a disciplinary matter.

Staff, carers, and other stakeholders will be made aware of this policy, and of their right to fair and equitable treatment. This will be achieved through:

- Ensuring this policy is available to all staff in accessible formats; making sure there is an open dialogue around diversity in staff onboarding
- Providing staff with training to understand the importance of diversity within Carers First; including the need to combat discrimination in any form; and including modern slavery and unethical working practices.
- Checking, understanding and implementation of the policy through regular staff surveys, staff briefings, team meetings and quality audits.
- Ensuring we promote and embed a fully accessible informal and formal complaints process, resolving people's concerns at the earliest stage wherever possible, with a You Said We Did approach..
- Ensuring contractors are informed of the policy as part of their induction to the service; including the requirement to combat modern slavery and unethical working practices, in line with Carers First's Modern Slavery Statement.
- Having a clear statement on equality, diversity and inclusion, and ensuring our approach is actively communicated to carers, embedded in everything we do.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and Carers First may amend it at any time.

## Policy Purpose & Aims

The policy is intended to set out the general framework through which Carers First seek to ensure:

- Full consideration of diversity and equality issues in the design of new projects, services and other initiatives.
- Engagement with people, communities and community groups/leaders, to ensure we reach sometimes marginalised groups and individuals, and remove the barriers accessing services

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- An environment in which staff, contractors, carers, board members and volunteers feel valued and respected and are:
  - treated fairly
  - recognised and supported on ability and valued for their contributions
  - given equity of access to opportunities for growth and advancement
- Protection of staff, carers and board members against harassment, discrimination, and intolerance.
- Fair and transparent recruitment and selection procedures which ensure that all job and board appointments are made on individual merit alone.
- The provision of training and development opportunities on an equitable basis for all employees, supporting every single person to maximise their individual potential. The application of consistent employment practices which treat people fairly based on their individual merits and abilities.
- Consideration of appropriate positive action initiatives, where there is an evidenced need, to promote equality of access for members from certain groups where these groups are under-represented either among carer groups or at any level within the workforce.

### **Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability**

The Chief Executive Reports to the Board of Trustees will include data and information on diversity in relation to both services and employment.

Carers First will measure staff and carer perceptions of the charity's effectiveness in promoting diversity through qualitative monitoring tools such as:

- Probationary Review survey
- Exit survey
- Staff surveys
- Carers survey
- Carer Forums
- ISO9001 assessments

### **Accessible, Inclusive Services for All**

In order to ensure that we deliver accessible, inclusive services, it is important to understand what we mean by the term inclusion (and also equality and diversity) as set out within this policy. Terms such as equality will have legal definitions (for example under the Equality Act) but also various broader, societal definitions. The term 'equity' however recognises that, in order to achieve true equality, it requires more than 'treating people the same'. For the purposes of this policy, the following National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) definitions provide useful context;

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**Equality** means making sure every individual has equal opportunities. By being conscious of and actively challenging bias or prejudice we make sure no-one is treated less favourably because of who they are or what makes them different from other people. This requires a proactive approach to make reasonable adjustments that address the visible and invisible barriers people face.

**Equity** means treating people in ways that make sure they are not unfairly prevented from accessing resources and opportunities nor that others have an unfair advantage. Simply providing the same opportunities to everyone is not an effective way to create equality of outcomes...rather than giving everyone the same thing, it is about giving people what they need for fair access. This is about removing inequalities to make sure everyone has the chance to realise their ambitions.

**Diversity** means having differences within an organisation or setting. Diversity recognises we are all different in many ways. People with differing identities, backgrounds and experiences should all have equitable access to resources and decision-making. Some people prefer to use the term 'representation' to focus on how organisations should be reflective of the society we live in and the communities we serve.

**Inclusion** means being proactive to make sure people of different backgrounds, experiences and identities feel welcomed, respected, and fully able to participate. It is not only about creating a diverse environment but also about making sure that a culture exists where individuals can be their full selves.

As part of the above, we are committed to listening to people; as individuals, and as part of a community with its own unique characteristics. In order to ensure equitable, accessible and inclusive services for carers, we will;

- Ensure our workforce reflects the diversity of the carers and communities we support
- Engage with people, communities and community groups/leaders, to ensure we reach marginalised groups and individuals, and remove the barriers to accessing services
- Co-design services with carers; ensuring they are shaped by their needs
- As part of an equality impact assessment approach, ensure our services and carers' accessibility needs have been fully assessed; with support available at times that work for carers, including for example out-of-hours online support for working carers. Ensure that the accessibility offer includes a variety of options and accessible formats such as BSL videos, text to speech assistive technology, google translate and interpreters when needed.

Our Co-Production Approach sets out a broad range of mechanisms for consulting with carers in order to shape and improve our services; which fully supports this policy.

### Discrimination

We will not tolerate discrimination in any form and are committed to addressing any direct and/or indirect discrimination within the charity.

Employees must not unlawfully discriminate against or harass other people including current and former employees, volunteers, job applicants, carers, suppliers, and visitors. This applies in the workplace, outside the workplace (when dealing with carers, suppliers, or other work-related contacts), and on work-related trips or events including social events.

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Carers First recognise that individuals who are perceived to have any of the Protected Characteristics, or associated with someone who has a protected characteristic, may suffer discrimination, and therefore have a legal right to protection. Carers First will, where appropriate, take positive action to help redress the effects of discrimination. Any positive action initiatives will be legally compliant and consistent with Carers First's approach of making all carers and staff feel valued and respected.

The following forms of discrimination are prohibited under this policy and are unlawful:

- **Direct discrimination:** treating someone less favourably because of a Protected Characteristic. For example, rejecting a job applicant because of their religious views or because of their sexual orientation.
- **Indirect discrimination:** a provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone but adversely affects people with a particular Protected Characteristic more than others and is not justified. For example, requiring a job to be done full-time rather than part-time would adversely affect women because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement would be discriminatory unless it can be justified.
- **Harassment:** this includes sexual harassment and other unwanted conduct related to a Protected Characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Harassment is dealt with further in Carers First's Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy.
- **Victimisation:** retaliation against someone who has complained or has supported someone else's complaint about discrimination or harassment.
- **Disability discrimination:** this includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability.

### Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment, promotion, and other selection exercises such as redundancy selection will be conducted on the basis of merit, against objective criteria that avoid discrimination. Shortlisting should be done by a minimum of three panel members.

Vacancies should generally be advertised to a diverse section of the labour market. Advertisements will be inclusive, avoiding stereotyping or using wording that may discourage particular groups from applying.

Job applicants should be treated fairly, ensuring talented candidates are attracted and welcomed. We will not ask questions which might suggest an intention to discriminate on grounds of a Protected Characteristic. For example, applicants should not be asked whether they are pregnant or planning to have children.

We will seek to break down the barriers that prevent access to job opportunities. Job applicants should not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made, except in the very limited circumstances allowed by law: for example, to check that the applicant could perform an

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intrinsic part of the job (taking account of any reasonable adjustments), or to see if any adjustments might be needed at interview because of a disability. Where necessary, job offers can be made conditional on a satisfactory medical check. Health or disability questions may be included in equal opportunities monitoring forms, which must not be used for selection or decision-making purposes.

### **Disabilities**

If the employee is disabled or becomes disabled, Carers First encourage the employee to tell Carers First about their condition. Every effort to make reasonable adjustments will be made when the charity is aware of an employee's disability.

It may be pertinent to inform Carers First of any allergies, medication or conditions an employee has that could affect their Health and Safety or others at work.

Line Managers may be required to make notes of conversations and confidentially share these notes with the HR Team.

### **Part-time and Fixed-term work**

Part-time and fixed-term employees should be treated the same as comparable full-time or permanent employees and enjoy no less favourable terms and conditions (on a pro-rata basis where appropriate) unless different treatment is justified.

### **Breaches of this Policy**

Carers First take a strict approach to breaches of this policy, which will be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Procedure. Serious cases of deliberate discrimination may amount to gross misconduct resulting in dismissal.

If the employee believes that they have suffered discrimination the employee can raise the matter through Carers First's Grievance Procedure or Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy. Complaints will be treated in confidence and investigated as appropriate.

The employee must not be victimised or retaliated against for complaining about discrimination. However, making a false allegation deliberately and in bad faith will be treated as misconduct and dealt with under Carers First's Disciplinary Procedure.

For carers and wider customers, Carers First will use robust mechanisms that ensure people's concerns are listened to, treated seriously and acted upon, such as our Informal and Formal Complaints Policy and Process; and our wider related policies and procedures such as Whistleblowing or Safeguarding if relevant. We will continue to use our Co-production Approach to ensure we are continuously listening and acting upon feedback from those who use our services, as part of our preventative, pro-active approach.