

Equality and Diversity Policy

Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations
Befrienders Skye and Lochalsh

Introduction

Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations (SLCVO) support third sector groups, people and public bodies to make a difference in their communities by:

- Delivering and developing Third Sector Interface Services on behalf of the Highland Third Sector Interface in Skye and Lochalsh
- Delivering and developing voluntary befriending services in Skye and Lochalsh (Befrienders Skye and Lochalsh)

Befrienders Skye and Lochalsh is a voluntary befriending service run by SLCVO. The service is open to adults living in Skye and Lochalsh affected by social isolation or loneliness. Working in partnership with Highland Hospice the service provides range of befriending opportunities.

For more information see www.slcvo.org.uk and www.befriendersskyeandlochalsh.com

Policy Purpose

This policy provides guidance as to how SLCVO in its employment practices and service provision will take full account of

- The Equality Act 2010,
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974,
- Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000
- Fixed-term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002
- The Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 (Appendix A)

Statement of Intent

Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations is firmly committed to diversity in all areas of its work. We believe that we have much to learn from diverse cultures and perspectives, and that diversity will make our organisation more effective in meeting the needs of all our stakeholders.

We are committed to developing and maintaining an organisation in which differing ideas, abilities, backgrounds and needs are fostered and valued, and where those with diverse backgrounds and experiences are able to participate and contribute.

We will:

- Provide equality, fairness and respect for employees and volunteers of Skye and Lochalsh CVO and Befrienders Skye and Lochalsh
- Not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation

- Oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities
- Regularly evaluate and monitor our progress towards diversity.

Details of Policy

It is the policy of SLCVO and Befrienders Skye and Lochalsh to operate within the principles of equality and diversity in all aspects of its work. This includes employees, clients and volunteers. The organisation is committed to ensuring that no person receives less favourable treatment or reduced access to services on the grounds of gender, age, disability, race, nationality, ethnicity, marital status, sexuality, family responsibility, trade union activity, class, political or religious belief.

We will:

- Ensure a copy of this policy will be made available to any applicant for a post within the organisation and that all our staff and trustees involved in the recruitment process are aware of this policy and have received training and support.
- Undertake to treat all applicants for positions within the organisation fairly and not discriminate against a person on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed unless it is relevant to the post applied for. Decisions relating to our selection for interviews and appointment will always be based on the requirements outlined in Volunteer Role Descriptions and Person Specifications and decisions on the suitability of for a role will always be undertaken by at least two people within the organisation.
- Only request information and a PVG check where it is necessary and relevant to the position sought. Where the position requires such a check, we will make this clear in the informal discussions, application form and interviewing process. Throughout the recruitment process when receiving information that shows a conviction, we will take into consideration:
 - Whether the conviction is relevant to the position being offered
 - The seriousness of the offence revealed
 - The length of time since the offence took place
 - Whether the applicant has a pattern of offending behaviour
 - Whether the applicant's circumstances have changed since offending took place
 - Whether they are barred from working with the particular client group
- Create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.
- Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities. Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice. Sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

- Ensure that all employees, volunteers and clients are aware that discrimination, harassment, abuse or intimidation of others will be taken seriously and will be acted upon, this may result in disciplinary action being taken, which may include dismissal from role.
- Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
- Monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion. Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality, diversity and inclusion policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice.
- Review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.

Monitoring and reviewing the policy

This policy will be monitored regularly, a review of this policy will take place within a year of its adoption to ensure its effective operation.

Date of Policy: 01/03/2023

Policy updated: 19/03/2024

Next Review Date: 01/03/2026

Appendix A

In its employment practices and service provision Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations will take full account of the following legislation:

The Equality Act 2010

- It is unlawful to treat somebody less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic i.e. Race; age; disability; gender reassignment; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; marriage and civil partnership; and pregnancy and maternity
- It is unlawful to discriminate against somebody because they associate with another person on grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation
- It is unlawful to discriminate against somebody because others think they possess one of these protected characteristics: Age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation
- It is unlawful to have a rule or policy that applies to everyone but disadvantages people with the following protected characteristics: Age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation; marriage and civil partnership
- Employees can complain about behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at them on the basis of the following protected characteristics: Age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation
- Employers are potentially liable for harassment of their staff by people they don't employ on the basis of the following protected characteristics: Age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation
- It is unlawful to treat somebody badly (victimisation) because they have made or supported a complaint or grievance under the Act (applies to all protected characteristics)

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 aim 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 aim 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 Asylum and Immigration Act 1996

This places a responsibility on employers to ensure that all employees are not in breach of immigration rules. It covers the checks that an employer must do to ensure that employees are eligible to work in the UK, checking passports, visas etc.

