The Coroners' Courts Support Service

Defining Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Introduction[1]

Equality, diversity and inclusion affect all of us in some way or another. However, there are some people who may be more affected than others and this is the reason why protected characteristics were developed to ensure we do our very best to be aware of the negative impact discrimination can have on some, leaving them feeling under-valued and treated differently because of who they are. This could be due to race, class, religion or belief, sex, gender, age, sexual orientation and disability or a combination of these.

The Coroners' Courts Support Service (CCSS) believes that everyone can make a positive difference through volunteering and working within the voluntary sector.

Like many voluntary organisations, we continue to learn and challenge ourselves to embed equality, diversity and inclusion in our everyday practice and behaviours.

Our Equal Opportunity and Diversity Policy

Our policy is to ensure that no witness or family member attending an Inquest, employee, volunteer, trustee, Advisory Committee member or job applicant receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, religion, ethnic or national origin, age, sex, marital status, sexual preference or disability, or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable.

Selection criteria and procedures are regularly reviewed to ensure that individuals are selected and treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities. Employees and volunteers will be given equal opportunity and, where appropriate, special training to enable them to progress within the organisation.

Further information can be found in both our Staff and Volunteer Handbooks.

Defining equality, diversity and inclusion

There is no standard set of agreed definitions for terms like equality, diversity and inclusion. However, the CCSS recognises that:

- Equality 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. Equality means ensuring everyone 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 others. However, simply providing the same opportunities to everyone is not an effective way to create equality of outcomes. Equality of outcomes highlights that rather than giving everyone the same thing or treating them the same, 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 and requires a proactive approach to make reasonable adjustments that address the visible and invisible barriers people face

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[1] https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/organisation/equity-diversity-and-inclusion/get-started-with-equity-diversity-and-inclusion 030221

- 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. The CCSS 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 ensuring a culture exists where individuals can be their full selves.

Intersectionality

We all have overlapping identities including, but not limited to, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sex, class and sexual orientation.

Taking an 'intersectional' approach to equality, diversity and inclusion requires us to understand that these multiple forms of discrimination are experienced simultaneously, in different ways by people of different backgrounds.

Why this matters for our organisation

Everyone deserves to be treated equally, fairly and with dignity. However, inequalities in society make this harder for some people. The systems and structures our society have created, privilege some and do not work for others.

The CCSS trustees, staff and volunteers do not always reflect the communities our organisation serves.

Staff, volunteers and others involved in our work, may experience discrimination, prejudice and harassment because of who they are and the groups and communities they are associated with. As a result of this, people are prevented from accessing opportunities, resources and of becoming decision-makers in the same way others can.

To achieve change, the CCSS and all who volunteer and work within it need to recognise and understand how people are excluded and disadvantaged and change the existing ways of working and our behaviours.

By removing barriers that exclude, the people within the CCSS are more effective at changing our communities for the better and we will all benefit from a more just, equitable and inclusive society.

What do we know about inequality in the voluntary sector?

Injustice exists across society at large, which includes the voluntary sector. In spite of the sector seeking to have a positive impact on society, it does not always live up to these ethical principles.

The sector can be reluctant to acknowledge that there is inequality in it. It is also important to recognise inequality will not always be visible to people who do not experience it first-hand.

It is necessary for everyone, especially those without direct experience of injustice, to listen, understand, and educate themselves on inequality in order to help overturn it.

Overall strategy[2]

The CCSS will:

- Recognise that a diverse workforce also needs an inclusive environment.
- Ensure that initiatives and policies have the support of the trustees and senior management.
- Remember that managing diversity and developing a culture of inclusion is a continuous process of improvement, not a one-off initiative.
- Keep up to date with the law and review policies through our ISO9001 process and through consultation.
- Design guidelines and provide training for line managers to help them respond appropriately to diversity needs.
- Link diversity management to other initiatives such as Investors in People (IIP) and ISO9001 Quality Management.
- Prioritise collecting and using good quality people data to identify barriers and solutions.
- Provide equality and diversity training to our staff and volunteers

Workplace behaviour

- Train all employees to understand and engage with inclusion in how they do their jobs, work with colleagues, volunteers and others outside of the CCSS.
- Reflect respect and dignity for all in the way we demonstrate the organisation's values and ensure these are reflected in the way the organisation and its employees and staff operate on a daily basis.
- Describe desirable behaviours to gain positive commitment.
- Make clear that everyone has a personal responsibility to uphold the standards.
- Embed equality, diversity and inclusion in line managers' roles as they have a key role to play, behaving in an inclusive way and contributing to diversity goals.
- Focus on fairness, inclusion and transparency, ensuring that merit, competence and potential are the basis for all decisions about recruitment and development, and be alert to the influence of conscious and unconscious biases.
- Ensure mechanisms are in place and initiated to deal with all forms of harassment, bullying and intimidating behaviour, making clear that such behaviour will not be tolerated and setting out the consequences of breaking the organisation's standards of behaviour.

Communication

- Develop an open culture with good communication channels based on open dialogue and active listening.

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[2] https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/relations/diversity/factsheet#6430

- Ensure appropriate channels for employee and volunteer voice and that different groups feel able to access them.
- Use different and accessible methods to keep people up to date with diversity policies and practices.
- Actively seek people's ideas and take action on feedback.

Learning and development

- Build equality, diversity and inclusion concepts and practices into staff training courses, management training and team building programmes to increase awareness of the need to handle different views, perceptions and ideas in positive ways.
- Consider awareness-raising programmes, such as 'lunch and learn' sessions, about various aspects of diversity to help people appreciate difference.
- Include diversity issues in induction programmes so that all new employees know about the organisation's values and policies.
- Train line managers to help them understand the issues and drive their support for organisational and operational policies and practices.

Measure, review and reinforce

- Regularly audit, review and evaluate progress, using quantitative and qualitative data on both diversity and inclusion, to highlight where barriers exist (for example, via recruitment data) and show the impact of initiatives, making appropriate changes to activities if needed.
- Use employee and volunteer surveys to evaluate initiatives, to find out if policies are working for everyone, and to provide a platform for improvement.
- Include diversity and inclusion objectives in job descriptions and appraisals and recognise achievement. For example, staff surveys could ask questions about the team culture and the perception of equality of opportunity.
- Benchmark progress against other organisations and explore what others are doing to adopt and adapt ideas where appropriate.
- Network with others from inside and outside the organisation to keep up-to-date and to share learning.

The following resources provide information about the lack of diversity and the inequalities at different levels of the voluntary sector:
- Acevo and Voice4Change England have published a report on racism in the charity sector
- Voice4Change have a section on the state of the BAME sector
- NCVO published research into the volunteer experience, including who volunteers, called Time Well Spent. You can read their blog about the diversity of volunteers and what further research they are doing
- The Institute of Fundraising published a benchmark of equality, diversity and inclusion in the fundraising profession
- ACEVO published a summary of evidence on how the charity sector thinks about diversity

- Baljeet Sandhu, a Clore Social Leadership fellow, undertook research on how those with lived expertise engage in social change
- The Charity Commission have carried out research into the characteristics of trustees called Taken in Trust
- The ACF has published a report on how foundations can promote equity, diversity and inclusion.

Taking action on equality, diversity and inclusion

Everyone has a role to make sure the CCSS is an inclusive place for all which reflects the diversity of our society. It is important everyone reflects on their own experiences, assumptions and behaviours and is proactively inclusive in creating space for those often excluded.

This includes acknowledging what power and privilege we have and how we can be active in addressing inequalities in our organisations.

Our people and those in leadership positions have a responsibility to take action on equality and improving inclusion and we all need to be held to account on this. Senior leaders need to identify existing ways of working which exclude individuals and prevent them from participating fully.

This is vital because those in leadership positions within the CCSS hold power and should:
- model inclusive behaviours

- actively challenge discrimination and injustice

- make sure there are adequate resources to support effective action

- make sure there are safe and effective processes for addressing discrimination

- commit to building an equitable organisational culture.

The CCSS trustees, along with the CCSS director, set the direction and strategic commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Organisational actions and decision-making should be informed by, and carried out in consultation with, those facing discrimination and prejudice. It reduces the risk of making inappropriate assumptions or taking ineffective steps.

Equally, measures should be put in place to make sure people who experience discrimination are not required to take on a disproportionate amount of responsibility for making positive change happen.

Find more information on taking action on equality, diversity and inclusion below:
- NCVO published the Charity Ethical Principles as a framework for the ethical execution of charitable purpose - including how they value and improve diversity in their governing bodies, workforce and volunteers.
- NCVO has guidance on trustee diversity and questions to guide a board discussion on diversity.

- Working to resolve conflict in the workplace and community between competing equality claims, see practical guidance and research published by brap and EquallyOurs.

What are organisations in the voluntary sector doing about it?
- The Institute of Fundraising has published a case for equality, diversity and inclusion.
- ACF Stronger Foundations initiative has set out nine characteristics of excellent practice in diversity, equity and inclusion practices.
- CharitySoWhite is working to make sure the charity sector takes the lead to root out racism.

- The Lived Experience Movement (also known as LEx Move) is a collective impact network connecting, supporting and strengthening the capacity of lived experience leaders.
- ACEVO and the Institute of Fundraising have published eight leadership principles to address the racial diversity deficit in charity leadership.

Learn more

Here are some starting points for learning more about equality, diversity and inclusion terms and concepts:

- Find out more about representation – NCVO trustee Kiran Kaur and her co-founder of GirlDreamer Amna Akhtar have blogged about why they prefer the term to diversity.

- If you work in a foundation, the ACF report Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: The Pillars of Stronger Foundation Practice includes their definitions.

- Learn more about how society needs to change to achieve disabled people's equal participation, the Social Model of Disability and the Cultural Model of Deafness in this guide from Inclusion London.

- If someone uses an unfamiliar term, you may find a definition on this A-Z produced by HiveLearning.