

# Putting Together An Equal Opportunities Policy

➤ Equal Opportunities (EO) is about ensuring that your organisation, from its decision making procedures through to any services it might provide, are accessible to everyone. It is also about ensuring that not only does your organisation not discriminate in these things (directly or indirectly) but that it actively opposes discrimination and promotes good practice. EO is not about treating everybody the same but is about ensuring that people's differences are recognised and taken into account. EO is a vital part of any voluntary or community organisation and affects the whole range of the organisation's activities. Most policies cover some or all of the following topics:

- Recruiting staff and volunteers
- The membership of Management Committees or Trustees
- Access
- Publicity and information
- Complaints
- Monitoring and Reviewing Services
- Training and induction

Organisations need to comply with the following Laws:

Disability Discrimination Act  
Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000  
Sex Discrimination Act 1975  
Equal Pay Act 1970  
Protection from Harassment Act 1997  
Human Rights Act 1998  
Data Protection Act 2000

Some policies start with a statement about their commitment to Equal Opportunities. These may or may not include groups of people within society who may be likely to be discriminated against or treated unfairly.

It may be useful to ask some questions about your organisation. The answers to these may form the basis of what you include in your policy.

- **How will we make sure our organisation is used by different groups of people?**  
Are the people who use the service representative of the local community  
e.g. in terms of age, gender, disability, ethnicity etc.
- **How will we ensure that our organisation is accessible?** – not just whether it has wheelchair access, but also its location, opening times, how it is publicised. How will you ensure that people are made welcome whoever they are and whatever their background?
- **How will we make sure that people know about our services and that it is available**

in an easy to understand way?

- **How do we ensure that our management committee or Trustees come from a wide range of backgrounds?**
- **How will we ensure that we treat our staff and volunteers fairly and make the most of each individual's potential?**
- **Do you consult with the people who use your services?** – how do you make sure it is responsive to their needs?
- **How will we measure what we do to achieve any of the above?** – this will be how you monitor staff, volunteers, trustees and clients to see who uses your service and whether your recruitment attracts a broad range of people.
- **How do we deal with situations where a client or service user feels they have been discriminated against or harassed?** How do we deal with discrimination by or against staff or volunteers or members of the management committee?
- **Who will be responsible for making sure that we keep to our Policy?** – you will need to review it annually and take any action needed to improve any weaknesses and ensure that you are keeping up to date with legislation.

➤ **More information:**

Equality Direct – helpline for employers on legal requirement and good practice.  
Tel: 0845 600 3444 or visit their website at: [www.equalitydirect.org.uk](http://www.equalitydirect.org.uk)

Human Rights Act – Help Desk at the Home Office 0171 273 2166

Council for Racial Equality – Elliot House, 10-12 Allington Street, London, SW1E 5EH.  
Tel: 020 7828 7022

**NVS has a range of books on the subject of Equal Opportunities including:**

Anti Discrimination Handbook

From Barriers to Bridges

The Equal Opportunities Handbook, Phil Clements & Tony Spinks



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