

EQUALITY, EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Resource and policy template



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This document has two parts:

- ✓ Part 1 gives some background guidance and some resources to help you consider what is best for your organisation.
- ✓ Part 2 is a link to a policy template for your organisation to change and use, with removable notes to guide you.

Part 1: Developing your policy

What is equality, equity, diversity and inclusion?

Equality, equity, diversity and inclusion (often shortened to EEDI) is the term used for policies and practices to ensure fair treatment and opportunity.

The terms around EEDI are used in slightly different ways depending on context, but when putting together a policy these definitions are helpful to consider:

- **Equality** means ensuring that people have equal opportunities. Organisations should ensure that people are treated fairly and are not treated less favourably because of their protected characteristics.
- **Equity** means ensuring people are not unfairly prevented from accessing resources or opportunities, and also that others do not benefit from unfair advantages. For example, an equitable approach to project planning would consider what changes might be needed to help people get equal outcomes from a project, service or process, and might mean - e.g. providing different opening hours, facilities or support for key groups of clients.
- **Diversity** is about recognising and respecting differences. This can mean working with and including people with different protected characteristics, but can cover other factors like class background, nationality and working style. A diverse environment is one with a wide range of backgrounds, life experiences and mindsets.
- **Inclusion** means creating an environment where everyone feels welcome and valued. An inclusive environment can only be created once issues of bias, prejudice and inequality are identified and actively challenged.

What are the legal requirements around EEDI?

In the UK, the primary legal obligations around equality, diversity, and inclusion are set out in the Equality Act 2010. This Act brings together elements of equalities law that were previously addressed by separate legislation. It prohibits discrimination based on nine protected characteristics:

- Age.
- Disability.
- Gender reassignment.
- Marriage and civil partnership.
- Pregnancy and maternity.
- Race.
- Religion or belief.
- Sex.
- Sexual orientation.

The Act requires organisations, in their role as both employers and service providers, to treat everyone equally and take steps to prevent discrimination against any of these characteristics.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is responsible for upholding the Equality Act and investigating complaints of discrimination.



Intersectionality

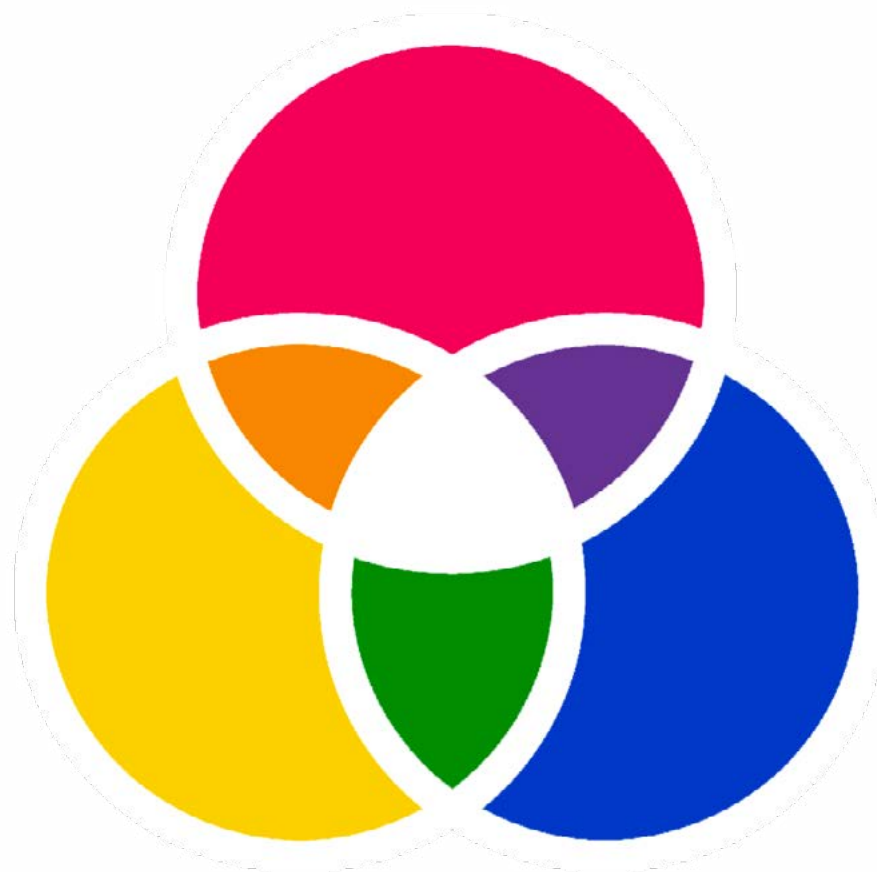
People will have overlapping identities and may be at risk of experiencing discrimination under more than one of the nine characteristics and across different contexts. Taking an intersectional approach means considering situations where multiple forms of discrimination may compound inequalities and create unique barriers that might be overlooked if we assess each characteristic in isolation.

Exceptions for charities

Charities are not exempt from the Equality Act, but are allowed to restrict their services to people with a particular protected characteristic if it is included in their governing document, and either

- it is objectively justified, or
- it is done to prevent or compensate for disadvantage linked to the protected characteristic.

The Equality Act includes additional exemptions for all organisations, including occupational requirements that may allow you to limit roles to people with specific protected characteristics. It also allows certain forms of positive action to address underrepresentation and disadvantage.



Key terms to understand from the Equality Act 2010:

Direct discrimination: Treating someone less favourably than another due to a protected characteristic.

Indirect discrimination: Applying a policy or practice that appears neutral but disadvantages people with a protected characteristic.

Positive action: Taking steps to encourage applications or participation from underrepresented groups, as long as it doesn't involve discriminating against others.

Duty to make reasonable adjustments: Employers and service providers must make reasonable changes to accommodate disabled employees, clients and members of the public.

Reasonable adjustments can be for physical or mental health conditions. The duty to make adjustments is owed to all disabled employees and all disabled people who want to access your services. It applies regardless of whether the organisation is aware that someone is disabled.

The legal duty is 'anticipatory', which means you must think in advance (and on an ongoing basis) about what disabled people with a range of impairments might reasonably need, such as people who have a visual impairment, a hearing impairment, a mobility impairment, or a learning disability.

Victimisation: Taking action against someone because they have raised a complaint about discrimination.

Why have an equality, equity, diversity and inclusion (EEDI) policy?

Organisations must follow equalities law, both as employers and as providers of services. Whilst there is no legal requirement to have an EEDI policy, laying out your organisational commitments, priorities and processes in a specific document is definitely good practice.

- ✓ Discussing and agreeing your approach to EEDI helps show that you understand and are committed to following equalities law. Current and potential staff, volunteers, trustees and organisational members will want to know that you are compliant with the law, as will service users, partners and funders.
- ✓ Having an EEDI policy shows that you have considered the ways in which issues around equality, equity, diversity and inclusion may apply to your particular client group and team, and lets people know what to do if they have experienced, witnessed, or are concerned about discrimination or unfair treatment in your organisation.
- ✓ If properly implemented and regularly reviewed, your EEDI policy can be one of the elements that helps to make your organisation a safe, accessible, positive space for everyone.

Developing your policy

Your board is ultimately responsible for setting the direction and overarching strategic commitments to equalities, diversity and inclusion in your organisation. Creating a safe and inclusive environment for service users, volunteers, staff and other visitors will require involvement and commitment from everyone. Every organisation is different and will have different concerns, biases or priorities that need discussion and action as part of your EEDI policy. Creating and/or updating your policy should be a collaborative process. Take time to talk to the people you work with, do research, and understand any equalities data you may have collected. Think about who you want to reach with your work, as well as what sort of environment you want to create for staff and volunteers.

Equalities, diversity and inclusion will affect many areas of your work, so you should make sure that your EEDI policy links to other policies and procedures. Examples of these are Recruitment, Data Protection, Bullying and Harassment and/or Code of Conduct.

As well as these policy commitments, consider how your organisation and its leadership will:

- ✓ Model inclusive behaviours.
- ✓ Actively challenge discrimination and injustice.
- ✓ Ensure there are resources and commitments in place to support effective action.
- ✓ Establish and use effective processes for addressing discrimination.
- ✓ Make an action plan including what steps will be taken to make sure the policy is put into everyday practice.
- ✓ Communicate your organisation's approach to EEDI and the steps you are taking to make sure your workplace and service are accessible and welcoming to all.
- ✓ Commit to building an equitable organisational culture.

Further resources and reading

- [Equality and Human Rights Commission \(EHRC\) Guidance for Voluntary and Community Organisations.](#)
- [Specific information for Charitable and Religion or Belief Organisations.](#)
- [Get Started with Diversity and Inclusion from NCVO.](#)
- [Guidance on recruitment and protected characteristics from Acas.](#)
- [Exceptions where Equality Law applies differently from EHRC.](#)
- [Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion from Acas.](#)
- [Acas Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion policy template](#) – we used lots of this document as the basis for our template as Acas is an expert on employment law.
- [Acas guidance on reasonable adjustments.](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#) – full text of the Act for reference/interest.

Tower Hamlets

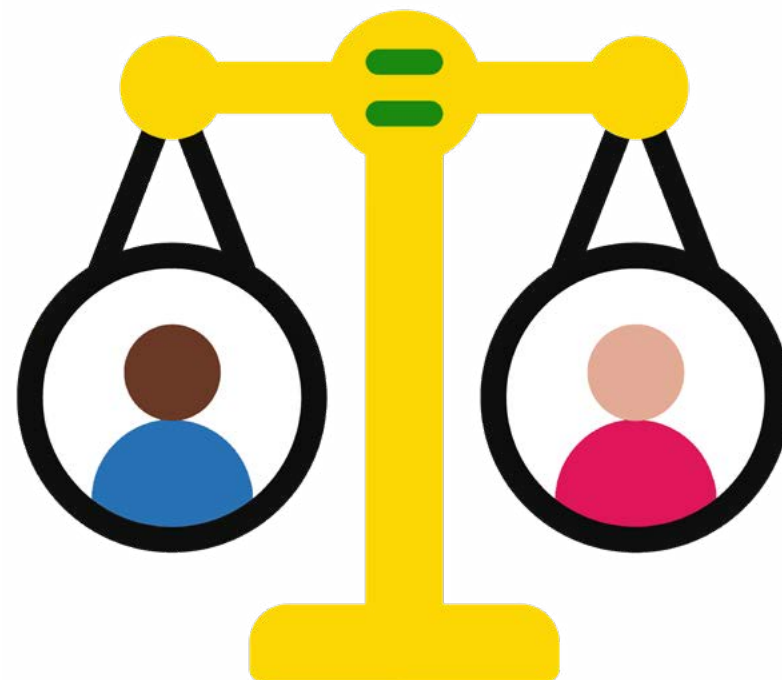
There are 6 equalities networks in Tower Hamlets:

- [Ethnic Minority Network.](#)
- [Disabled People's Network.](#)
- [Interfaith Forum.](#)
- [LGBT+ Forum.](#)
- [Older People's Reference Group.](#)
- [Women's Network.](#)

[The Equalities Hub](#) provides a central strategic focus for these networks, responding to the community's needs and issues.

[Real](#) is a Disabled People's Organisation in Tower Hamlets that can provide guidance on disability inclusion.

Tower Hamlets Together also has an [Anti-Racism and Equity Board](#).



Part 2 - Template

Equality, equity, diversity and inclusion policy

This template is designed for voluntary and community organisations to edit, customise and adopt as their own. Please take the time to read all sections and add, remove and change the document to include information specific to your own organisation, the people and issues you work with, and priorities you have identified.

Note:

- **Red [text in square brackets]** should be edited/customised before final sign off.
- **Blue [text in square brackets]** are notes to help you customise the document].
- **Bold text** is to draw attention to other policies that will help you to implement your EEDI policy and to be a good employer.



If you would like to discuss any aspect of this policy or need help completing it, Tower Hamlets CVS can help. Please email us at info@thcvs.org.uk.