



Equality and Diversity Policy

Purpose and Scope

Love Squared is committed to the promotion of equal opportunities and diversity through the way we manage the organisation and provide services to the community and to our children, families, staff, practitioners and volunteers. We recognise that each individual is unique and so we value and take account of people's different backgrounds, knowledge, skills and experiences. We also recognise that there are huge systemic barriers and inequalities which are both historic and current, and we want to be part of a movement of change in order to try and support overcoming this in everything we do. In order to express this commitment, we develop, promote and maintain policies that will be conducive to the principles of fairness and equality in the workplace and throughout the organisation. We want to be a best practice organisation, and be proactive, innovative, and imaginative about challenging inequality.

This Policy is for and applicable to employees, sessional/ casual workers, contractors, volunteers, job applicants and board/ trustees, stakeholders in the community, partners and service users including children, young people and their families.

We are committed to providing equality of opportunity for all, irrespective of the nine protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage or civil partnership status
- pregnancy or maternity
- race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

We are also committed to promoting the equality of those with the following characteristics:

- caring responsibilities
- economic hardship / poverty
- gender identity

Our commitment

Our Equality and Diversity Policy sets out our commitment to creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for everyone who works within, volunteers for, and accesses Love Squared services including our service providers, and wider stakeholders. We are committed to instilling equality and diversity among our wider workforce and working towards eliminating discrimination for all children and families who often face intersectional inequalities and discrimination.

Recognising, embracing and valuing difference leads to improvements for all, including: a more vibrant staff and volunteer population, a better working and volunteering environment, and the ability to attract and retain the very best people as well as ensuring that we are enabling our children, young people and families to have their best possible chance to thrive, fulfil their potential, stay safe from harm and have their voices heard.

Whilst we are fully committed to compliance with all relevant equality legislation, (including the [Equality Act 2010](#), Codes of Practice and best practice guidance), this policy builds on the statutory position to ensure effective policies and practice that promote equality and inclusion, inspire trust and confidence but also tries to work with principles and approach of what we can always be doing better, recognizing systemic barriers and trying to unpick these at every opportunity. Whilst we are not a public authority, we are also committed to Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (Public Sector Equality Duty) and to operate in accordance with this.

Working across local authorities, as our main hub is in Bristol, we are committed and uphold the Bristol Charter Chapter, focusing on quality across Bristol. For more information please visit [the Bristol Equality Charter](#).

Abiding Principles of this Policy

We aim to:

- Promote equality of opportunity
- Celebrate and value diversity
- Eliminate unlawful direct and indirect discrimination
- Consider the impact of structural inequality
- Be proactive and imaginative in how we approach equality & diversity
- Promote an environment in which people feel empowered and fulfilled
- Ensure that all of our activities are aligned to and follow the spirit of the Bristol Equalities Charter.

- Have a culture in which everyone who works or volunteers for us or who accesses our services is treated with respect, valued and rewarded for what they contribute with zero tolerance towards discrimination at every level.
- Ensure that everyone who works or volunteers with us, as well as those who apply to work or volunteer with us, are treated fairly and are not discriminated against on any grounds, including those protected by the Equality Act 2010.
- Take any discrimination/sexual harassment complaints seriously, respond sensitively and quickly and, if proven, ensure that the action taken is thoughtful, expedient and measured.
- In seeking to achieve a diverse workforce at all levels, ensure that no employee, job applicant or candidate for promotion will be disadvantaged or treated less favourably because of conditions or requirements that are not related to the job.
- Ensure that staff recruitment is openly advertised, using communication channels and language that will both reach and engage under-represented groups.
- Ensure that our volunteer recruitment uses messaging and advertising methods appropriate to our target audience, including under-represented groups.
- Not tolerate any behaviour from any of our people which breaches our Equality and Diversity Policy; any such behaviour will be challenged.
- Ensure that serious offences such as discrimination, such as those in relation to a protected characteristics— serious offences including harassment, bullying, or victimisation will be treated as gross misconduct and may lead to disciplinary action including dismissal from employment or volunteering service without notice in accordance with our Disciplinary Policy.
- Every business case for major structural change is subject to an equality review with the intention of identifying any positive, negative or neutral impact the proposal may have on people with protected characteristics (as defined in the [Equality Act 2010](#)). This includes service users, staff and practitioners/volunteers who will be subject to the proposed changes or affected by them.
- Recognise systemic inequality and that this is often intersectional, subtle, and pervasive and we will try and ensure that we are proactive looking to see what we could do better, differently to be part of a movement of positive change.
- We will pro-actively tackle discrimination or disadvantage, and aim to ensure that no individual or group is directly or indirectly discriminated against for any reason regarding employment, volunteering or accessing our services including for children, young people, and wider community stakeholders and partners.
- Ensure that all staff, volunteers and trustees are aware of the duty on them to

treat colleagues, stakeholders' children, families and partners with dignity at all times, and to never discriminate against or harass anyone associated with Love Squared in any capacity.

- Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawfulness. discrimination by fellow employees, volunteers, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities.
- Ensure that where we see discrimination aimed at our service users, we will challenge and ensure that they have advocacy and that their voices are heard.
- Ensure that we do everything we can to promote positive imagery of communities and people who often face systemic inequality and that we will do this across all channels of communication available to us.
- Provide information in a way that is accessible, with attention to individual needs when these are brought to our attention.
- Meet in premises with facilities that are physically accessible to those participating; or make suitable alternative provision which renders meetings and training accessible and taking into account preference of those people with access needs.
- Make training in discrimination awareness and equal opportunities available.
- Ensure images present within our advertising and branding materials reflect a diverse audience in a positive way that challenges stereotypes.
- Celebrate diversity through storytelling in social media and branding on website and promotional materials.
- Work with a social model of disability.
- Ensure that vulnerable service users are specifically asked about the barriers they feel are preventing them from achieving equality of opportunity and that appropriate measures are discussed and implemented with an attitude that values dignity and respect.
- Make reasonable adjustments in line with the Equalities Act where such legislation is relevant to those with protected characteristics.

We all have a personal responsibility to:

- Read and understand this policy and act in a manner that is consistent with our values and behaviours at all times.
- Be willing to complete equality and diversity learning when starting volunteering with us, as well as completing refresher training on a periodic basis.
- Report any instances of behaviour that is contrary to this policy to the member of staff who you feel most comfortable talking about it with.
- Be proactive about looking at how we can work together to challenge systemic inequality, looking at how we can each ourselves be impacted by intersectional and systemic discrimination and bias and how we can take small or big actions to change and challenge this in our LL family and wider community.

What to do if you feel that you have ever been treated in a way, or see someone or something else that you do not feel is in line with this policy:

If you ever feel you have been treated in a way, or see someone or something else that is contrary to this policy, please be encouraged to talk in confidence to the member of the team who you feel most comfortable with who will then cascade this information (with your consent) to the SLT. If the complaint is about the SLT or you do not feel your complaint will be received by the SLT to the board in a way that is satisfactory, the board will then initiate a grievance procedure in line with our Grievance policy and will take measured, considered and sensitive action.

Any proven breaches of policy will be regarded as misconduct, except for serious offences such as discrimination on protected characteristic grounds and serious offences including harassment, bullying, or victimisation which will be treated as gross misconduct and may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from employment or volunteering without notice.

Complaints of any kind will be monitored at board meetings and any outcomes/action recorded and findings drawn on in policy reviews.

Definitions

Equality can be described as breaking down barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity and access for all groups both in employment, and to goods and services; the basis of which is supported and protected by legislation. Equality is about valuing a person 'as an equal' and treating people according to their needs and characteristics to achieve an equal or fair outcome – it's not necessarily about treating everyone the same.

Diversity is defined as celebrating differences and valuing everyone. Each person is an individual with visible and non-visible differences and by respecting this everyone can feel valued for their contributions which is beneficial not only for the individual but for the wider organisation.

Direct discrimination occurs where a person is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics set out above. For example, rejecting an applicant on the grounds of their race because they would not "fit in" would be direct discrimination.

Indirect discrimination occurs where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice is applied equally to all groups of people but puts a particular group sharing a protected characteristic at a disadvantage when compared with other people. For example, a requirement to work full time may put women at a disadvantage because they generally have more childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement would need to be objectively justified.

Discrimination by association is a type of direct discrimination. It occurs where a person is treated less favourably because they associate with someone who possesses a protected characteristic.

Perception discrimination is also a form of direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic. If you discriminate against people because you think they are transgender or LGBTQ, for example, then they will be protected even if they do not have these protected characteristics.

Harassment can be described as unwanted behaviour, including for example, emails, remarks or gestures, which are intended or have the effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person. This can be related to gender, sexuality, race, religion or other "protected characteristics" and it includes, but is not limited to, sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment may be both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in the case of allegations of sexual assault. 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.

Victimisation broadly refers to derogatory treatment directed towards someone who has made or is believed to have made or supported a colleague's complaint under the Equality Act. It can also include situations where a complaint hasn't yet been made but someone is victimised or treated unfairly because it's suspected they might make one.

Exceptions to this policy

Discrimination by or against a member of staff, practitioners, job applicants, trustees or service users is generally prohibited unless there is a specific legal exemption.

There are certain circumstances when organisations might be within their legal rights to treat an individual less favourably and where these instances will not be counted as discrimination.

For example, a refuge for Indian women who are victims of domestic violence. In this case, we might be justified in wanting to employ only Indian women workers on the grounds that the female victims in the refuge would find it less difficult to communicate with and relate to workers of the same racial group or where because of a disability it is more appropriate to match a child to someone of a particular gender.

For advice about whether such exceptions are applicable you should contact your volunteer manager, supervisor or coordinator and such exceptions should be thoughtfully and sensitively considered and ensured that they are legal, ethical and justifiable.

Legislation

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that we do not unlawfully discriminate under:

- (a) The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974;
- (b) The Employment Rights Act 1996;
- (c) The Human Rights Act 1998;
- (d) The Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000;
- (e) The Fixed-Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002;
- (f) The Civil Partnership Act 2004;
- (g) The Work and Families Act 2006;
- (h) The Equality Act 2010;
- (i) Race Relations act 1976;
- (j) Disability Equality Duty;
- (k) Gender Equality Duty;
- (l) Racial equality code of practice for employment;
- (m) Sex discrimination act 1975;
- (n) Equal Pay act 1970;
- (o) Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 and;
- (p) Any other relevant legislation in force from time to time relating to discrimination in employment and the provision of goods, facilities or services.

For some Further information

- [Equality and Human Rights Commission](https://www.acas.org.uk/)
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