

## **Equality Policy**

**SOTO Inspires CIC** is committed to encouraging equality and diversity among our workforce, and eliminating unlawful discrimination.

The aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and our young people and their families, and for each representative of SOTO to feel respected and able to give their best.

The organisation - in providing its services is also committed against unlawful discrimination of our young people or the community.

The policy's purpose is to:

- provide equality, fairness and respect for all in our team, regardless of frequency in participation.
- 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 (gender) and sexual orientation
- oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of contract, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for more regular work, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities

The organisation commits to:

- encourage equality and diversity in the workplace as they are good practice and make business sense
- 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 team members are recognised and valued

This commitment includes training team leaders and all other tutors about their rights and responsibilities under the equality policy. Responsibilities include volunteers conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in our environment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination

All tutors should understand they, as well as their team leaders, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their agreement, against fellow members, customers, young people and the community.

- take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow members, customers, young people, visitors, the community 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 procedures, and any appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

Further, sexual harassment may amount to 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

- make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all team members, 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
- decisions concerning staff being based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act)
- review contractual practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law
- monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality and diversity, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality policy

Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues

The equality policy is fully supported by senior management and has been agreed with trade unions and voluntary team representatives