

Policy Statement:

The Write Time acknowledges that everyone is different and that as a business we will always be opposed to any form of discrimination. Equality of opportunity is about recognising, respecting and valuing the differences of diversity that we each bring to work, learning, and to volunteering. This commitment underpins and impacts every area of activity and influences how the organisation works and what it does. The Write Time recognises that many people in our society experience discrimination or lack of opportunity for reasons which are not fair, just, or reasonable.

These include race, religion, national and ethnic origin, political beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, HIV status, and marital status, responsibility for dependants, geographical origins, social class, income level, or criminal record. The Write Time is committed to a policy of equality of opportunity which respects the identity, rights, and values of each individual. The Write Time is positively committed to opposing all direct and indirect discrimination in the organisation.

Access to this policy

This document will be made available to any learner, client, employee, visitor, or additional stakeholder that requests to see it. The policy will be available in either hard copy or electronic format.

A Glossary of Terms has been included at the end of the document to explain some of the terms used in this policy.

Our Vision

The Write Time is committed to the principles of Equality and Diversity for its customers, employees, stakeholders, and visitors. Our vision for equality and diversity is clear; we want to achieve excellence through inclusion. The Write Time values for this policy stance are based on integrity, inclusion, transparency, and fairness of our service delivery to our learners and clients as well as the people we employ and interact with within the nature of conducting our work.

The Write Time embraces equality and diversity through its values, aims and objectives, which are reflected in the actions and targets as set out in the range of plans and strategies The Write Time has committed itself to:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination.
2. Promote equality of opportunity.
3. Promote equality of access; and
4. Promote good relations between diverse communities

The Legal Framework

The Write Time acknowledges its responsibilities as set out in the **Equality Act 2010**. The Act protects people who have a 'protected characteristic'. The relevant characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Identity
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour and nationality
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation.

The Equality Act was introduced on 1st October 2010. It brings together over a hundred separate pieces of legislation, providing a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all.

The nine main pieces of legislation that have been replaced are:

- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- The Equality Act 2006, Part 2
- The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007

The Write Time will ensure that policies and procedures are compliant with any forthcoming legislation; Codes of Practice and guidance published by national equalities bodies and Commissions.

Discrimination occurs when a person or group of people are treated on certain grounds less favourably than another. For example, this might occur based on a person's age, disability, gender, gender identity, marital status, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, culture, sexual orientation, or other differences. It must be remembered that individuals can experience less favourable treatment for more than one reason.

There are instances when the law allows for people to be treated differently. This is when a particular requirement or condition is objectively justifiable e.g. where the holder of the job provides individuals with personal services and those services can only be provided by particular sex or the same racial group.

Discrimination can be direct, indirect, associative, perceptive, intentional, or unintentional, and can be caused by individuals, groups or institutions.

Note: See the Glossary of Terms at the end of this policy for a more detailed explanation of different types of discrimination.

The Equality Act 2010 imposes a duty on employers and service providers to make “reasonable adjustments” to accommodate people’s disabilities. To promote diversity, we endorse the Social Model of disability which addresses the disadvantages faced by those with disabilities of whatever kind in employment, or access to our services and premises.

Note: See the Glossary of Terms at the end of this policy for a more detailed definition of disability.

Institutional racism is defined in the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report as “the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping.” At an Institutional level, prejudices become embedded in policies, practices, procedures, and criteria for decision-making. These discriminate with the effect of excluding some people in favour of others. This could lead to unequal treatment, and inequitable distribution of opportunities, power, and resources, which in turn could deprive some people of a better quality of life. This collective failure of an organisation to provide appropriate and professional service or employment conditions can also be because of a person’s age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and belief. At an individual level, a person may hold negative attitudes and use language that could result in inappropriate discriminatory behaviour or outcomes, which are unacceptable.

Achieving Equality

The Write Time will integrate equality of opportunity and respect for diversity into all aspects of its operational activity.

To achieve our aims, we will:

- Positively promote equality of opportunity and respect for diversity within any leadership, management, or senior management role.
- Promote a culture that will encourage the challenging of all forms of unfair discrimination, whether intentional, unintentional, institutional, or otherwise.
- Establish clear targets for community improvements within areas serviced by The Write Time.
- Engage with and listen to the views of our local communities, learners, service users, and stakeholders to assist in the development of our future equality agenda.
- Incorporate equality of opportunity into all policies, plans and strategies from the conception.
- Develop services that are appropriate and accessible to all members of the community.
- Provide appropriate training and development in equality and diversity issues for our employees and volunteers (based on need).
- Review, self-assess, audit and report progress annually on our equalities work.

- Work to develop procedures to respond to and address all forms of harassment and victimisation.
- Work with our partners in the statutory, voluntary, and private sectors to ensure the best outcomes for people who live, work and visit the communities in which we operate.

Equality and Diversity in Service Provision

The Write Time's customers, employees, additional stakeholders, and visitors can expect:

- The design and delivery of appropriate, accessible, and effective services to all members of the community.
- To have provided them with clear and accessible information about our provision in a variety of appropriate formats which meets the needs of all members of the community.
- The use of effective systems for challenging, reviewing and monitoring our provision delivery to ensure that quality and equality are continuously evaluated and improved and to ensure that all sections of the community are receiving fair access and outcomes.
- That we ensure that all our employees and volunteers understand what equality in service provision means by providing specific training (based upon need).
- That we engage with and listen to all sections of the community in identifying needs and communicating ideas on the way The Write Time delivers its provision.
- That we monitor and evaluate service uptake concerning age, disability, gender, and race.

Equality and Diversity in Recruitment, Procurement and Contracting

To ensure best practice and to promote our values The Write Time will aim to:

- Ensure that contractors, suppliers, volunteers, and partners are aware of our position on equality and are clear about their obligation to provide services that are free from discrimination, harassment, or victimisation.
- Recognise and promote the application of national guidelines and advice, in line with our own contracting and sub-contracting procedures.
- Make sure that our recruitment, selection, and tendering processes positively address and include equality considerations that are in line with the procedures mentioned above.
- Provide training for relevant staff in equalities issues for procurement.

Equality and Diversity at Work

The Write Time is a local employer and as such recognises that a representative workforce provides greater sensitivity to the needs of our community. Therefore, we have a key role to play in tackling inequalities and discrimination in the workplace. To ensure that equality underpins all aspects of our employment policies, procedures and practices, we aim to:

- Ensure that our employment, training and development policies, procedures and practices comply with this policy and do not discriminate intentionally or unintentionally against any group or individual.
- Monitor our employment processes by age, disability, gender, and racial group and take action to address any apparent inequalities.
- Recruit employees in a manner which is fair and open.
- Ensure employees are aware of their responsibility to apply this policy.
- Eliminate discrimination in the provision of training and development to ensure that all employees can realise their full potential and contribute to the development of The Write Time.
- Ensure that the content of all training and development activities reflects our commitment to equality of opportunity and diversity.
- Promote a culture of fairness and respect in all employment policies, procedures, and practices.
- Take positive action to encourage under-represented groups to apply for posts or specific training.
- Ensure pay structures reward all employees fairly, with an equal pay policy in place.
- Recognise that employees have the right to work in a supportive, safe, and harassment-free environment and all complaints are dealt with robustly.
- Make reasonable adjustments, wherever possible, to enable the employment and redeployment of staff with disabilities.

Consultation

This policy document outlines The Write Time's commitment to consulting with a wide range of stakeholders including customers, employees, business partners, the trustees and local community representatives.

The Write Time recognises that there are some groups of people we may not have engaged with over time and that their views may therefore be under-represented in any consultation exercises we have carried out. We recognise the value of gaining a variety of perspectives from our local communities and we will:

- Provide information in accessible formats and consider whether we can offer support for those who need help to participate in consultation we have organised.

- Provide practical advice, information and contacts for staff that are engaged in a consultation process, this will attempt to provide an inclusive element of all groups who should be consulted.
- Use existing networks and community/partner organisations where appropriate to seek advice, views and opinions.
- Be creative in the variety of consultation methods we use.
- Assess our success in reaching 'hard-to-reach groups by including this as a criterion in our evaluation of consultation.

We will undertake regular employee surveys to measure satisfaction levels concerning the working environment and the conditions we provide, and to ensure that we are continuing to develop and maintain an anti-discriminatory culture across the organisation.

A shared responsibility

Within The Write Time, all employees have a part to play in challenging discrimination and in implementing this policy. If anyone witnesses a discriminatory incident at work, they have a duty of care to others to challenge such behaviour and practice.

The Managing Director is responsible for providing leadership in the implementation of this policy. All employees are responsible for promoting equality and are accountable to the senior management for ensuring equality of opportunity and respect for diversity in all The Write Time provisions, services and employment.

All Managers are responsible for implementing the policy in their service areas, allocating specific resources to ensure the delivery of equality objectives concerning service provision and employment. They are responsible for ensuring that their employees are adequately informed, trained and supported to ensure that their duties are carried out under this policy.

All managers are responsible for implementing equality in service provision and employment and for providing support for employees to work together to achieve equality. Chris Murray will be responsible for coordinating the development, implementation, review, and evaluation of this.

All employees are responsible for ensuring that they play their part in implementing this policy. They will also be responsible for improving their awareness of the barriers to equality in service provision and employment, working towards the elimination of these barriers and for performing their duties under this policy.

Any Contractors, Partners, Suppliers and Volunteers are to be made aware of our position on equality and be clear about their obligations to provide services that are free from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation. Failure to abide by these requirements will be treated as a serious breach of trust and commitment.

Any breach of this policy will be dealt with through The Write Time disciplinary procedures. Serious offences such as direct discrimination, harassment or victimisation will be treated as misconduct or gross misconduct and in extreme cases may result in dismissal.

The Write Time is dedicated to providing training (on at least an annual basis) for all employees around removing discrimination and harassment and promoting equality and diversity in the workplace.

Monitoring and Measuring Progress

The Write Time will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy through consultation with customers, employees, and community representatives.

The Write Time Senior Management will review this policy, at least annually, to ensure it is appropriate and responsive to relevant legislation. Progress made towards any set targets or goals will be monitored and reported each year to Managing Director.

How to provide feedback

The Write Time welcomes feedback (comments, compliments, and complaints) on how well we are implementing this policy in the services we deliver to the local community. For general comments and compliments, or if you believe that you have been the subject of unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation by The Write Time will then you should first contact the centre manager.

If you believe that a manager has unlawfully discriminated against someone or failed to treat someone with respect, then you should report to the Managing Director.

If a member of staff feels that they have been discriminated against, victimised, or harassed, they should speak to their Line Manager in the first instance or if not appropriate, then to other members of the Senior Management Team.

Any allegations of this nature will be taken very seriously, investigated, and appropriate action taken.

Appendix 1: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ACTION PLAN

A practical and realistic plan, with an agreed timetable showing how the policy will be implemented and by whom.

AGE

The Government wants to prohibit unfair practices based on inaccurate assumptions, to remove the barriers which people of all ages face if they want to work or undertake vocational training.

ASSOCIATIVE DISCRIMINATION

Also known as discrimination by association, this is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic. This applies to race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, disability, gender reassignment and sex.

COHESIVE COMMUNITIES

A cohesive community is one, which enjoys:

1. A sense of belonging for all members of the community;

2. The different backgrounds of people are valued and appreciated;
3. Equal access to the opportunities life presents;
4. Working towards developing relationships between people from diverse backgrounds in work, schools, and local neighbourhoods.

DIRECT DISCRIMINATION

This is treating a person, without justification, less favourably than another, particularly because of one's feelings, assumptions, or prejudices about the characteristics, attributes, or circumstances of that person. This can include certain forms of harassment or abuse.

DISABILITY

The definition of a disability is broad: "A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities." Under the Equality Act, "substantial" is taken to mean "more than minor or trivial" rather than "very large".

DIVERSITY

Diversity means "variety". Valuing diversity means valuing people and recognising that everyone is unique/different but of equal worth.

EQUALITY ACT 2010

The Equality Act 2010 provides a cross-cutting legislative framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all; to update, simplify and strengthen the previous legislation; and to deliver a simple, modern, and accessible framework of discrimination law which protects individuals from unfair treatment and promotes a fair and more equal society.

Much of the Equality Act came into force in October 2010; however other provisions in the Equality Act will come into force at different times to allow time for the people and organisations affected by the new laws to prepare for them. For the latest information about the Equality Act, visit the Government Equalities Office website.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

An EIA is a tool for identifying the potential impact of a council's policies, services and functions on its residents and staff. It can help staff provide and deliver excellent services to residents by ensuring that they reflect the needs of the community.

EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

This means treating people fairly without bias or discrimination and always within the law. Everyone should be entitled to the same opportunities without regard to race, gender, sexual orientation, religion/belief, disability, age, or personal circumstances.

HARASSMENT

Defined as: Unwanted conduct, which has the purpose of violating another person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

INDIRECT DISCRIMINATION

This is applying, without justification, a request or condition which, on the face of it applies to everyone but which in practice, forms a greater obstacle to a person, or group of persons, with particular characteristics, attributes or circumstances.

MONITORING

The process of collecting, analysing, and evaluating information to measure performance, progress or change.

PERCEPTIVE DISCRIMINATION

Also known as discrimination by perception, this is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. This applies even if the person does not possess that characteristic.

PREJUDICE

Means “pre-judgment”, forming a view about a person in advance. For example, racial prejudice is having a negative opinion or attitude about an individual or group based solely on their race or skin colour.

PROCUREMENT

The contractual or other arrangements The Write Time makes to obtain goods, works or services from an outside organisation.

RACISM

All those ideas, beliefs, actions, customs, practices, and policies have the effect of disadvantaging and/or discriminating against people because of their skin colour, culture or ethnic origin.

SINGLE EQUALITIES SCHEME

A timetabled and realistic plan setting out how The Write Time will meet its aims in this policy.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION

This term describes what happens to people who are deprived of good quality housing, suffer from unemployment, low incomes, poor health or live in areas of high-level crime.

SOCIAL INCLUSION

This is when all members of the community have equal access to health, social care, and educational opportunities that many others take for granted.

UNWITTING RACISM

This can arise because of a lack of understanding, ignorance, or mistaken beliefs. It can arise from well-intentioned but patronising words or actions. It can arise from unfamiliarity with the behaviour or cultural traditions of people or families from minority ethnic communities.

VICTIMISATION

Treating people less favourably because of action they have taken under or in connection with the new legislation – for example, making a formal complaint of discrimination or giving evidence in a tribunal case.

WHISTLEBLOWING

A procedure by which an employee of The Write Time can formally raise serious concerns about inappropriate conduct or activities within the organisation, directly with Senior Managers.