

Model Action Plan

This is a suggested action plan to help ensure the implementation of your organisation's Equal Opportunities Policy.

You should consider having a separate action plan to tackle certain areas of potential discrimination such as race or disability, particularly if you have identified that certain groups are under-represented in the organisation.

1st Step: Audit your organisation

➤ **What is the audit?**

The audit is a useful way of establishing where your organisation is with regard to equal opportunities and diversity issues. It will help you build a picture of the organisation's current practice, identify the main issues and priorities for action and provide the starting point from which you can measure your progress in the future.

➤ **Who will undertake the audit?**

It needs to be an individual or a team with the necessary expertise and skills, such as having:

- a thorough understanding of equal opportunities and diversity issues,
- knowledge of the voluntary sector,
- experience of how such organisations operate at all levels,
- experience of policies and procedures,
- knowledge of good practice in these areas,
- excellent communication skills.

They need to be provided with the necessary time and resources.

➤ **Is everyone aware that the audit is taking place?**

Make sure that everyone is aware of their involvement (such as completing questionnaires or contributing to an advisory or working group) and of the timescale for it.

➤ **Consider all areas of the organisation.**

- Policy and Planning

- Recruitment and selection
- Retaining and developing staff
- Retirement
- Management Committee members and volunteers, consultants and trainers

➤ **Ask people about the organisation's culture**

One way of getting the views of people within the organisation is through a short questionnaire (see the example on page 31)

You could ask them:

- If they feel they or others are readily accepted and valued;
- If they feel they have been discriminated against or harassed or bullied;
- If they feel that all groups and individuals receive fair treatment at work;
- If they think that the recruitment processes are fair;
- If they know if the organisation has an equal opportunities policy;
- If so, are they aware of the what the policy says;
- If they feel that the whole organisation including senior management and Management Committee are committed to equal opportunities;
- If they feel that the organisation meets the employees' access requirements.

➤ **Check on all policies and procedures**

- Look at the detail of the five areas of the organisation mentioned above and how they operate, following suggested questions below. You may want to add to the areas of consideration as relevant for your organisation.
- Consider the responses. Do they indicate that an equal opportunities approach is:
 - 1) missing,
 - 2) in development,
 - 3) in place but needs improvement or
 - 4) in place and working well.
- Decide on what are strengths of the organisation and where action needs to be taken.

The Association has drawn up this Action Plan in order to deliver the Equal Opportunities Policy.

Organisation Audit

An audit of the organisation was undertaken by [name the individual or team responsible for this].

The aim was to get a picture of the Association's current position and where priorities will need to be made, as well as providing a starting point from which we can measure progress.

As part of the audit the Management Committee, employees and volunteers were asked about the organisation's culture through written surveys [or focus groups etc.]. Details of these along with the collated results are detailed in the appendix.

The audit was completed on [state the date].

	Equal Opportunities Approach <small>(state whether missing, in development, in place but needing improvement, in place & working well)</small>	Action required?
<p>Policy and planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the organisation have an equal opportunities policy? • Does the policy cover all areas of possible unfair discrimination, under legislation and good practice? • Is the policy well publicised within the organisation? • Is there an action plan with a timetable? • Is progress on the plan regularly reviewed? • Is a staff working group [and/or union representatives if one is recognised] consulted about the action plan? • Does the Management Committee 		

<p>and all managers demonstrate their commitment to the policy in all areas of their responsibility?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are all workers aware of who is accountable for making sure the policy is implemented?• Do publicity materials promote positive images of the organisation's workers?• Does the organisation's publications (such as newsletters, annual reports) mention the progress made in equal opportunities?• Does the organisation have any positive action initiatives to develop workers from under-represented groups?		
<p>Recruitment and Selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is there an agreed recruitment and selection process?• Are job applications encouraged from		

<p>a diverse range of applicants, especially those that are currently under-represented?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are vacancies publicised widely?• Are advertisements written clearly, without jargon and state that applications from all sections of the community are welcome?• Do advertisements avoid language which seems to gear the vacancy to a certain age group?• Are clear job descriptions and person specifications prepared for all posts?• Do the specifications contain any non-essential requirements such as qualifications which potentially discriminate against a particular group of people?• Do the specifications focus on skills and aptitudes needed for the post rather than attributes which might imply someone of a certain age, such		
---	--	--

<p>as a specified length of experience?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are application forms used and are questions about age/date of birth and other unnecessary age-related information removed from the form?• Do the shortlisting and interview procedures focus on the person specification?• Are reasonable adjustments made in the workplace to overcome physical and non-physical barriers that may disadvantage disabled applicants?• Are all those involved in the recruiting process aware of the equal opportunities policy in practice?• Have they all received equality training?• Are salary levels, conditions and grades fairly set (e.g. through a job evaluation scheme) and checked to ensure equal pay and to avoid any disparities?		
---	--	--

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the organisation make sure that specific needs are met, such as for disabled employees?• Is the recruitment process at every stage monitored and recorded?• Does the Management Committee regularly receive monitoring reports?• Are the interviewers involved throughout the recruitment process?• If you use a recruitment agency, does it act in accordance with your equal opportunities policy.		
<p>Retaining and Developing Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are development opportunities planned around the individual and their own work priorities?• Does all training including induction take account of equality and diversity issues, and that all Management Committee members and staff know their rights and responsibilities?		

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are opportunities for promotion made known to all staff and available on a fair and equal basis?• Are decisions on promotion and career management based solely on objective and related criteria.• Are there clear procedures for maternity pay and leave, parental and carers' leave and paternity leave?• Are flexible working arrangements available at all levels of the organisation e.g. for time off for family or religious needs?• Are reasonable adjustments made in the workplace to overcome physical and non-physical barriers that may disadvantage disabled employees?• Does the organisation have an anti-harassment/anti-bullying policy?• Are procedures for dealing with discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation clear and well- | | |
|---|--|--|

<p>publicised?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is staff turnover monitored?• Does the Management Committee regularly receive staff turnover monitoring reports?• Are there clear procedures for supervision and appraisal, and do they show a clear commitment to equal opportunities?• Are these procedures carried out for all staff at all levels within the organisation?• Is there equality in the application of the organisation's employment policies e.g. disciplinary and grievance, absence, redundancy, leave and holidays.		
<p>Retirement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the organisation have a normal retirement age below the default retirement age of 65, and if so can it		

<p>be objectively justified?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the retirement policy follow the notification procedure as required under the age discrimination legislation? • Are workers over the age of 65 aware of their right to request not to retire? 		
<p>Management Committee members, volunteers, consultants and trainers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are all members, volunteers, consultants and trainers informed about the equal opportunities policy? • Does the Management Committee reflect the diversity of the local community? • Are reasonable adjustments made to overcome physical and non-physical barriers that may disadvantage disabled Management Committee members, volunteers, consultants and trainers? 		

Step 2: Set out the Plan

➤ Set objectives

Equality objectives now need to be set out within the plan with clear targets and key actions to be taken. The objectives and actions need to be **realistic and achievable** for your organisation, in order to be a meaningful tool for improvement.

You may want to consider the action plan over a **one-year period** or longer, thereby identifying short and long-term objectives. For example a short-term objective may be setting up an agreed recruitment policy and procedure. A longer-term objective may be to recruit new Management Committee members, particularly encouraging people to join from particular groups currently under-represented on your MC such as women or the disabled.

The action plan should contribute to the business plan and you may want to incorporate objectives within it.

From the list of areas that the audit has identified that action is required, **prioritise** the most urgent and important issues. Consider what else the organisation will be doing over the same period as identified in the business plan that could impact on the planning. Check that each prioritised objective is SMART i.e. **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, **T**ime bound.

The plan should also set out **who is responsible** for each objective, the **resources** required (people, equipment, time, internal costs, external costs such as publicity, consultants), **timescales** and methods of **measuring** progress (who will benefit and how).

NOTE: The Disability Discrimination Act states that an employer must make **reasonable adjustments** if they are aware that the employee or job applicant is a disabled person. Factors such as the cost of the adjustment, size and turnover of your organisation, its resources may be taken into account when considering whether changes or adjustments are reasonable.

If you cannot remove or alter all the physical features of your premises you should have a plan and costings of when and how you are going to carry these alterations out. If access is unavoidably limited, this information should be made clear e.g. in the application pack.

However it must be remembered that some adjustments need not be costly, such as providing adequate lighting and lack of background noise which may assist people who use lip reading to understand what is being said; providing audio descriptions or large print documents to assist

visually impaired people; by making sure floors are uncluttered, even and without thick carpet to assist wheelchair users and people with mobility difficulties; producing clear signage and information in plain English, and using pictures or photos to support and explain the message for learning disabled people.

Priorities for Action

It was agreed by the Management Committee on [state date] that the following areas are the Association's current priority for action.

Action required	Person Responsible	Resources required	Timescale	Target
Policy & Planning e.g. changing images on the organisation's website to promote positive images of a diverse workforce				
Recruitment & Selection e.g. changing the methods by which jobs are advertised				
Retaining & Developing Staff e.g. developing a training policy				
Management Committee members, volunteers, consultants and trainers e.g. ensuring that all MC members receive equality training				

Step 3: Monitor, review and evaluate

The review process should show how policies impact on staff, and the recruitment of Management Committee members and volunteers. You should have clear definitions for the **success criteria or goals** that you are setting out to achieve. It should include analysis of statistical data which can help show trends, and qualitative feedback from employees and service users on policies and services.

One way of producing this data to help assess the impact of the policy is through **surveys, questionnaires, focus groups, spot checks or monitoring**.

You should record and produce monitoring data such as undertaking ethnic, sex, disability and age monitoring of current workers and Management Committee members and of all job applicants. In addition you could consider monitoring sick leave/absences and reasons; disciplinary action/grievances; hours that staff work; rates of pay and training received.

Monitoring can check on numbers and e.g. how applicants heard about the job. Be careful about wording, for example it would not be acceptable to ask people if they have any impairments but you could ask if they consider themselves to be a disabled person or if they have any access requirements.

It is better to monitor at fixed intervals, such as quarterly. Different areas will need more frequent monitoring than others. Regular progress reports should be sent to the Management Committee. Data collected can be compared to regional, national or local statistics such as from the census, local authority or the Office for National Statistics at www.statistics.gov.uk.

NOTE: It must be remembered that the information gathered should be treated as **confidential**. For example, monitoring forms included in application packs should be detached from the application form and stored anonymously. Always be clear **why** you are collecting data and **who** is going to analyse it, and respect people's sensitivities.

The Management Committee ideally need to be involved in the subsequent review and evaluation process, looking at the detail of the equality work, the performance so far, particular strengths and areas requiring further action, and what the next steps are to be. Ideally this should take place annually and would also involve the staff working group.

Evaluation of the Action Plan

The action plan objectives were reviewed by the Management Committee on [state date].

Action required	Person Responsible	Outcomes achieved	Evidence	Areas for further improvement
Policy & Planning			e.g. all management committee members and staff have undertaken equal opportunities training	
Recruitment & Selection			e.g. increase in applicants from BME groups	
Retaining & Developing Staff			e.g. 'dignity at work' policy produced	
Members, volunteers, consultants and trainers			e.g. organisation has mapped the diversity of the local community and monitoring data shows that it is reflected in volunteers	

Step 4: Repeat steps 1 to 3

The cycle of audit, prioritise, act and review would then again repeat itself, and continue ideally annually.

Following the review, an updated audit of the organisation was undertaken by [name the individual or team responsible for this].

The audit was completed on [state the date].

It was agreed by the Management Committee on [state date] that the following areas are the Association's current priority for action.

Etc.....

PEACe, June 2006

LVSC's Personnel, Employment Advice and Conciliation Service

The material in this document does not give a full statement of the law, nor does it reflect changes after June 2006. It is intended for guidance only and is not a substitute for professional advice. No responsibility for loss occasioned as a result of any person acting or refraining from acting on the basis of this material can be accepted by the author or by LVSC.

Example Internal Questionnaire (based on the version in the *Arts Council Respond: A practical resource for developing a race equality action plan*)

The Association asks for your views as part of its review of diversity and equal opportunities within the organisation.

Statement – PLEASE TICK A RESPONSE	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
People from diverse backgrounds and different ages are readily accepted at the Association.			
People from diverse backgrounds and different ages are treated fairly at the Association.			
I do not feel harassed or bullied at work.			
I do not feel that I have been discriminated against at work.			
I am aware of the Association's equal opportunities policy.			
I understand how to put the equal opportunities policy into practice within my work.			
The Association takes equal opportunities seriously.			
Under-represented groups are able to progress at the Association and they receive fair treatment based on their merits.			
People of all ages are able to progress at the Association and they receive fair treatment based on their merits.			

Our recruitment processes do not discriminate against people from particular groups or ages.			
I feel valued by my colleagues in the organisation.			
I feel fully equipped and trained to carry out the requirements of my job.			
I have been able to make progress in my job at a pace which matches my abilities.			
I feel I can discuss my career development with my line manager.			
I feel I am appropriately rewarded for the work I do.			
The Association is making progress on equal opportunities and diversity.			
There is real commitment at the highest level of the Association to improve our performance on equal opportunities.			
We learn from other organisations within the voluntary sector about better ways of doing things.			