



Equality and diversity policy

August 2008

HRSC 13

Equality and diversity policy

August 2008

Victim Support Single Charity
Hallam House, 56-60 Hallam Street

London W1W 6JL

© Victim Support

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of Victim Support.

Primary audience:	Victim Support Single Charity
Action:	For implementation
Status:	Final
Review date:	August 2009

Contents

		Page
1	Introduction and background	4
1.1	The aim	4
1.2	Policy statement	4
2	Legislative background	5
2.1	Gender	5
2.2	Gender identity	6
2.3	Marital status	6
2.4	Race	6
2.5	Disability	6
2.6	Age	6
2.7	Religion or Belief	7
2.8	Sexual orientation	7
3	Who this policy affects	7
3.1	Role of managers	7
3.2	Role of employees	7
3.3	Role of volunteers	7
4	Equality and diversity duties	8
4.1	Equality duties	8
4.1.1	Race equality duty	8
4.1.2	Disability equality duty	8
4.1.3	Gender equality duty	8
5	Victim Support’s ‘values and common understandings’	10
5.1	Respect	10
5.2	Diversity	10
5.3	Vibrancy and innovation	10
5.4	Commitment and integrity	11
5.5	Quality and continuous improvement	11
6	Victim Support’s diversity statement	11
7	Victim Support’s equal opportunity statement	11
8	Associated documentation	11
9	Further help	12

I Introduction and background

The success of Victim Support depends on our people. Capitalising on what is unique about individuals and drawing on their different perspectives and experiences will add value to the way we deliver our services.

By accessing, recruiting and developing people from the widest possible talent pool Victim Support can gain an insight into different communities and generate greater creativity in anticipating victim and witness needs. Victim Support will constantly strive to create a productive environment, representative of and responsive to different cultures and groups, where everyone has an equal chance to succeed.

Victim Support is the independent national charity which helps people cope with crime. Our services are free and available to everyone, whether or not the crime has been reported and regardless of when it happened. We also work to promote and advance the rights of victims and witnesses. To achieve this, we need to make sure that Victim Support puts anti-discriminatory practices into effect in both employment and service delivery.

Victim Support's commitment to equality and diversity is more than promoting equal opportunities and eradicating discrimination. We are actively committed to encouraging and promoting the positive contribution of our diverse membership and users of the service. We will ensure that this is reflected in our practices, policies and services provided.

A commitment to this policy is required by all members of the organisation.

1.1 The aim:

- work towards the elimination of discrimination (whether direct, indirect or through victimisation or harassment)
- create a positive culture throughout where equality, diversity and respect is a core value and at the centre of all our activities
- ensure members are engaged with development and implementation of policies and procedures
- encourage positive action to overcome disadvantage and discrimination
- ensure the highest possible standards are achieved in delivery of our services and employment practices and the promotion of equality and diversity through our work internally and externally.

1.2 Policy statement

The promotion of diversity and the genuine equality of opportunity for all are central to ensuring fair employment and high quality service provision. In pursuing this, Victim Support will ensure that in the development and use of employment procedures and practices, no person or group of people will suffer detrimentally in recruitment, promotion and dismissal; in the access to training facilities or other benefits or, will endure discriminatory behaviour in their everyday work, or when they are in receipt of services from Victim Support. Victim

Support shall continue to actively work towards eliminating discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender, gender identity, race, sexual orientation, religion or belief.

Victim Support must work towards a culture where discriminatory behaviour by its employees, volunteers and trustees are routinely challenged in a polite and constructive manner so the person making them has a chance to correct their behaviour. If they are unwilling to change their behaviour, then disciplinary action should result and/or their continued engagement with Victim Support should be considered as set out in section 8 of this policy. This is to help all the range of diverse communities that we serve view Victim Support as an organisation that is relevant to their needs, which will not act in a way that is discriminatory or offensive, and which is attractive to work or volunteer for.

All complaints of discrimination will be sensitively investigated and, if proven, will result in appropriate action for the perpetrator. Any employees that are found to breach this policy could be subject to disciplinary procedures and/or their continued engagement with Victim Support should be considered.

2 Legislative background

This policy also embodies the principles contained in the following legislation:

- Equal Pay Act (EPA) 1970
- Sex Discrimination Acts (SDA) 1975 & 1986
- Race Relations Act (RRA) 1976
- Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 & 2005; and
- The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Codes of Practice on Employment
- The Human Rights Act 1998 and the European Convention on Human Rights
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 and 2007
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- Race Relations Act (Amendment) 2000
- Civil Partnerships Act 2004
- Equality Act 2006
- Gender Equality Duty 2007
- Disability Equality Duty 2006
- Race Equality Duty 2002

The diversity of the communities we serve is reflected at all levels within our workforce through:

2.1 Gender

Women and men are fully and properly represented and rewarded for their contribution at all levels of the organisation through:

- challenging gender stereotypes
- supporting employees in balancing their life at work and at home.

2.2 Gender identity

Employees who plan to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone gender re-assignment are protected against all forms of discrimination and harassment. Victim Support will take positive steps to support a transgender person and ensure they are treated with dignity and respect.

2.3 Marital status

Employees are treated fairly and equally in the workplace irrespective of their marital or family status.

2.4 Race

The racial and cultural diversity of our communities is represented at all levels of the organisation through:

- challenging racial stereotypes
- understanding, respecting and valuing racial and cultural difference and perspectives
- encouraging and enabling members of minority ethnic groups to volunteer or work for Victim Support at all levels.

2.5 Disability

The abilities of disabled people are recognised and valued at all levels of the organisation through:

- focussing on what employees can do rather than on what they cannot
- challenging stereotypes about people with disabilities and in particular, not making false assumptions that disabled people are unable to do certain things
- making appropriate adjustments in the workplace so that all employees can reach their full potential regardless of any disability.

2.6 Age

Age diversity within the workforce is promoted and valued through:

- challenging age stereotyping, recognising that the new ideas and fresh approaches can come from anyone irrespective of their age
- recognising the benefits of a mixed-age workforce

2.7 Religion or Belief

Employees are treated fairly in the workplace irrespective of their religious beliefs, faith or lack of belief. Employees are also expected to recognise the individual freedom of belief and right to protection from intolerance and persecution of other individuals and groups.

Note: The expression of beliefs and opinions should not contravene Victim Support's values or its capability to carry out its work.

2.8 Sexual orientation

People are treated fairly in the workplace irrespective of their sexuality through:

- respecting the rights of everyone irrespective of whether or not they are open about their sexuality
- respecting different lifestyles even if someone's different lifestyle conflicts with one's own religious or cultural beliefs
- challenging negative stereotypical views
- celebrating and welcoming significant lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) events in the same way that similar events of importance to heterosexual people e.g. marriage, are celebrated.

3 Who this policy affects

Victim Support believes that it is the responsibility that everyone involved in Victim Support should uphold strong working practices. This is to ensure that an environment of equality and diversity is maintained and celebrated throughout employment and service delivery. Our commitment to equality and diversity means that everyone involved with Victim Support has a duty to:

- promote equality and diversity in the delivery of Victim Support's services
- ensure that everyone associated with Victim Support is treated in a non-discriminatory way
- promote a welcoming environment in which individuals from all backgrounds feel welcome, valued and respected
- promote the equality and diversity policy.

3.1 Role of managers

Managers have an additional responsibility to:

- ensure systems, procedures and services do not discriminate
- set a positive example in everything they do
- listen to and respect others, and not dismiss their problems as "trivial"
- discourage discrimination that is based on speculation and rumour
- observe people and stop inappropriate behaviour immediately
- support and implement action that Victim Support takes to improve diversity and equal opportunities, where that action has been agreed as national policy
- encourage employees to maximise their contribution to the work of Victim Support
- promote and implement diversity within the management of service provision
- provide appropriate training programmes in order to put our Equality and Diversity policy into practice
- support, protect and provide training to volunteers and trustees.

3.2 Role of employees

Every employee has a responsibility to:

- challenge any behaviour that could be interpreted as unfair discrimination
- understand what is expected of them in terms of performance, the standards they seek to achieve, behaviour and conduct towards others.
- set a positive example in everything they do
- listen to and respect others, and not dismiss their problems as “trivial”
- discourage discriminatory speculations and rumours
- observe people and challenge any behaviour that could be interpreted as unfair discrimination.

3.3 Role of volunteers

Every volunteer has a duty to:

- attend appropriate training provided by Victim Support around diversity and equality issues
- not discriminate unfairly against service users in the provision of services or other members of the organisation.
- set a positive example in everything they do
- listen to and respect others, and not dismiss their problems as “trivial”
- discourage discriminatory speculations and rumours
- observe people and challenge any behaviour that could be interpreted as unfair discrimination

4 Equality and diversity duties

Diversity is about valuing all the visible and non-visible differences and recognising and accepting that everyone, irrespective of age, disability, gender, gender identity race, sexual orientation, religion or belief has something to offer. Just because on the surface people don't all look, think or act the same, does not mean that they cannot positively contribute towards achieving the organisation's objectives, or be in receipt of the organisation's services.

Equality is driven by legislation and compliance.

Diversity is ethically and morally right and it goes beyond the agenda of equality including social justice and fairness. It is driven by our business needs and our business drivers as well as our organisational values.

Victim Support will strive to harness peoples' differences and to create a productive environment in which everyone feels valued, where their talents are being fully utilised and in which organisational goals are met.

Our Equality and Diversity scheme, therefore, needs to be both proactive and positive.

4.1 The equality duties

Victim Support is an independent charity but has made a commitment to work towards the same guidelines and legislation as a public authority.. As a service provider, it is unlawful to discriminate in providing goods, facilities or services to the public on the grounds of sex, race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief. Victim Support's Equality and diversity scheme 2008-11 has set out our timescales for achieving the requirements of the duties.

4.1.1 Race equality duty

The Race Relations Amendment Act (RRAA) was introduced in response to the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report. It places a duty on all public sector institutions to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity
- promote good race relations between persons of different racial groups, across their activities.

The race equality duty requires institutions to 'build in' equality considerations in all of their functions to pre-empt unlawful discrimination and promote equality.

4.1.2 Disability equality duty

Amendments to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) made in December 2006 place an obligation on all public bodies to promote disability equality and eliminate unlawful discrimination.

The new duty marks a significant shift in equality law and will require institutions to develop an anticipatory and proactive approach to disability equality in all of their relevant functions and activities.

4.1.3 Gender equality duty

From 6th April 2007 public bodies have a new duty to promote gender equality across its activities. The duty requires organisations to be proactive in promoting gender equality and preventing discrimination

The Gender Equality Duty is made up of three parts. Victim Support must have 'due regard' when carrying out its functions of the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination
- eliminate harassment
- promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

There are also developing legal obligations in respect of other equality themes for religion/belief, sexuality and age. Whilst there are no equality duties in respect of these strands, there may be in the future. Therefore Victim Support has decided that the Equality and Diversity Scheme should address all six diversity themes.

As part of the process of fulfilling the duties we will also be carrying out equality impact assessments. Equality impact assessments will enable us to identify whether our policies, procedures and services have an adverse impact on any particular group. This will ensure Victim Support meets the victims and witnesses needs and we are meeting our legal obligations.

As an organisation we will also ensure we regularly review our policies and procedures and develop monitoring systems to evaluate our equality and diversity provision. We want to ensure that members and service users are not discriminated in any way and we address their needs.

5 Victim Support’s ‘values and common understandings’

Victim Support’s values and common understandings are at the heart of what we do and these make up the core values of Victim Support, we expect all the members within the organisation to share these values.

5.1 Respect

- Value and acknowledge all individuals and the contribution they can make
- Treat others fairly
- Trust, transparency and honesty

5.2 Diversity

- Celebrate and embrace the differences and potential of all members of society
- Strive to ensure inclusiveness in all our behaviours, actions and communications
- Be accessible, relevant and inclusive in the services we offer

5.3 Vibrancy and innovation

- Energy, passion and enthusiasm
- The place to be – exciting and attractive
- Innovative and ground breaking solutions and services
- Ahead of the game
- Creative
- Adaptable and mobilised
- Agile
- Take and manage risk

5.4 Commitment and integrity

- Know yourself and know Victim Support
- Be true to yourself and the cause
- Principles before profit and profile
- Manage personal/corporate tension

- Clarity of purpose throughout the organisation
- Honesty, openness and fairness

5.5 Quality and continuous improvement

- Achieve the best in all we do – always for the benefit of victims and witnesses
- Be clear about minimum standards
- Be quality-driven and continuously seek improvement
- Monitor and measure

6 Victim Support’s diversity statement

Victim Support has a diversity statement that builds on these values and works towards fair treatment for everyone with whom it works.

Victim Support takes pride in being a diverse organisation, enriched by the participation of all individuals and communities. It is recognised that prejudice and discrimination continues to result in unfair treatment for many people.

The statement is “*Diversity matters and we value it* “and in addition to the values and common understandings, all members of the organisation should ensure that we value and see the benefits of being an inclusive organisation.

7 Victim Support’s equal opportunities statement

Victim Support is an equal opportunities employer. Our policy is to ensure that no victim, witness, employee, volunteer, trustee or job applicant receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic or national origins, age, gender, gender identity, marital status, sexual orientation or disability, or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown as justifiable. Selection criteria and procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are selected and treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities. Employees will be given equal opportunity and, where appropriate, appropriate training to enable them to progress within the organisation.

Victim Support Board of Trustees is committed to a programme of action to make this policy effective and will bring it to the attention of all employees at within Victim Support.

8 Associated documentation

This Policy should be read in conjunction with all Victim Support’s policies, procedures and mandatory documents. Equality and diversity is an integral part of all policies and practices within the organisation.

For breaches of the policy and/or act of discrimination:

- Recruitment policy
- Disciplinary procedure.

For circumstances where the employee considers they have been the subject of harassment or discrimination:

- Grievance procedure
- Bullying and harassment procedure.

For circumstances where a service user considers they have been the subject of harassment or discrimination:

- Complaints procedure.

9 Further help

Further assistance and advice can be obtained from the HR Department at the National Centre.

Title: Equality and diversity policy
Author: Diversity Council
Date: August 2008
Review date: August 2009
Publisher: Diversity Council

