

NORTH OF TYNE VOLUNTEERING AREA OF EXCELLENCE

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI) FOR VOLUNTEERS

ALIGNMENT WITH THE HEALTH CHECK FOR VOLUNTEER-INVOLVING ORGANISATIONS

The Health Check for Volunteer-Involving Organisations considers whether you have the policies and procedures in place to support your volunteers. This includes the extent to which you have an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy in place which takes account of your volunteers.

All volunteer-involving organisations should have a clear understanding of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in order to ensure that their processes are transparent and demonstrate that the organisation respects, values and welcomes difference.

HOW EDI BENEFITS AN ORGANISATION

There are six key ways in which diversity recruitment benefits an organisation:

- it widens the pool of potential volunteers for the organisation
- having a range of volunteers from different backgrounds, cultures and careers can increase the skill base of your organisation
- groups your organisation serves may relate more easily to a diverse range of volunteers
- it may help your organisation to meet specific commitments to involve all sectors of your community and/or to facilitate interaction between different sectors
- it will help to improve the cultural competence of your organisation and staff
- it can enrich the delivery of your organisational aims

WHAT DOES EDI MEAN IN PRACTICE?

It is important that we understand what equity, diversity and inclusion means and particularly why the word "equity" is used rather than "equality". Equality relates to ensuring that people are treated fairly and given equal access to opportunities and resources. Equity relates to the distribution of resources on the basis of need.

Our society is not balanced equally between all members so:

- Equity represents attempts to correct imbalances through the creation of more opportunities for those who have historically had fewer.
- Diversity involves recognition, respect, valuing of difference and the celebration of all its positive aspects.
- Inclusion refers to the fact that every individual has a right to be respected and appreciated as a valuable member of their community regardless of any ability, disability or healthcare need.

The Equality Act 2010 offers protection to individuals against discrimination, both direct and indirect. It recognises that individuals are not defined by single characteristics and should not be treated on that basis. The Equality Act 2010 applies to all employees and employers providing services. Volunteering may be considered as a service and, as such, organisations that involve volunteers should offer them



NORTH OF TYNE VOLUNTEERING AREA OF EXCELLENCE

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI) FOR VOLUNTEERS

protection from discrimination, harassment or victimisation on the basis of characteristics protected under the Act.

There are nine categories/characteristics in the Act that are defined as protected categories:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

It is also important to understand the terms used around EDI. These include:

Intersectionality: the ways in which systems of inequality based on gender, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class and other forms of discrimination "intersect", creating unique dynamics and effects.

Direct discrimination: where an individual receives less favourable treatment than others on the basis of one or more of the protected characteristics listed above.

Indirect discrimination: where provisions, criteria or practices are applied consistently but where they create unjustifiable disadvantages for people from particular backgrounds.

Disability discrimination: where employees/service providers fail to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of disabled people.

Harassment: any conduct which is designed to violate the dignity of a person.

CREATING EDI IN YOUR ORGANISATION

Creating EDI in your organisation should begin from within. You should plan your volunteer induction training knowing that hands-on support for increasing practices is essential. You should define your desired outcomes from the start, setting expectations and holding your volunteers accountable. A code of conduct may help with this. You should make your mission and values clear from the start and any issues arising should be dealt with promptly. You should communicate clearly how important volunteer roles are in your community and you can help those with limited English language skills who would like to volunteer by creating interactive training methods and visual materials. Always remember that individuals may have a range of different needs and requirements based on their culture or religion and plan in advance for them e.g. if you are planning to serve food or beverages, check whether any of your volunteers have dietary restrictions.



NORTH OF TYNE VOLUNTEERING AREA OF EXCELLENCE

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI) FOR VOLUNTEERS

PROMOTING EDI THROUGH YOUR ORGANISATION

There are a number of ways in which your organisation can promote EDI:

- Have a clear EDI policy for your organisation and nominate a named individual responsible for monitoring it and ensuring that you are fulfilling your duty of care to your volunteers; Build accessibility into your recruitment processes, thinking about the language, cultural references, images, venues and social media you use for engagement:
- Consider why you may not be reaching some elements of your community: look at the demographic base of your current volunteers and assess whether they reflect your service, community and values
- Create opportunities that accommodate the needs of the individual, offer flexibility and consider creating a volunteer action plan to help support reasonable adjustments
- Ensure that every volunteer enjoys regular support relevant to themselves and their role, both planned and available on request
- Develop training and support processes for volunteers and staff that help to create a welcoming, inclusive environment where all individuals feel that they have ownership of the environment and are accountable for it.

REMOVING BARRIERS

There are a number of ways in which you can remove barriers for potential volunteers including:

Reviewing recruitment processes: Are your processes relevant to the role you are offering and have you considered what barriers there may be for some individuals or groups? This should encompass all of the recruitment process including references, DBS, application forms, interviews and training.

Make reasonable adjustments: Adjust processes and environments in a way that has relevance for the role and the individual in line with your capacities and resources. Be clear about your expectations and undertake monitoring to ensure that all agreements are being honoured by all parties.

Embed anti-racism in your processes: Anti-racism must be rooted in action and by taking positive steps to eliminate racism at individual, structural and institutional levels.

Implement top-down EDI policies: EDI must encompass the whole organisation and should be reflected in the actions and interactions of the trustees and/or board of directors. It should not be left as the sole responsibility of the named staff lead on EDI. EDI policy should be at the heart of all interactions.

Useful tips to consider:

- Paying out-of-pocket expenses
- Offering a variety of different types of volunteering opportunities requiring various levels of skill and commitment
- Organising transport where necessary
- Ensuring that buildings are fully accessible



NORTH OF TYNE VOLUNTEERING AREA OF EXCELLENCE

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI) FOR VOLUNTEERS

- Making it clear in recruitment literature that volunteering is open to all
- Targeting recruitment campaigns at specific under-represented groups (known as "positive action")
- Adopting non-rejection policies for people who want to volunteer and linking volunteers into alternative opportunities
- Adapting roles to suit an individual volunteer's needs (known as "reasonable adjustment")
- Providing appropriate training and support
- Minimising the amount of form filling and bureaucracy directly involving volunteers

If you want to discuss the content of this guide please contact the volunteer centre supporting your area who will offer a "health check" to see where your organisation is now in terms of EDI and where you would like it to be. The health check is a practical self-assessment tool that we use to offer you support, agree an action plan and help you achieve the changes you want to make.

North Tyneside [About Us - VODA](#)

Northumberland [Volunteering – NCVA \(northumberlandcva.org.uk\)](http://northumberlandcva.org.uk)

Newcastle [About | Volunteer Centre Newcastle](#)

Connected Voice [Volunteering Newcastle | Connected Voice](#)

