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# **Designing, Planning, and Developing an Equality Policy**

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# Designing, Planning, and Developing an Equality Policy and Action Plan

## Introduction

This practical guide aims to assist organisations in the charity, community, voluntary sectors, private, and public sectors to design and implement effective equality policies and action plans. By following this comprehensive guide, organisations can promote fairness, inclusivity, and compliance with legal requirements, enhancing their operational effectiveness and societal impact.

## 1. Definition and Importance

### What is an equality policy?

An equality policy is a formal document that outlines an organisation's commitment to promoting equality and preventing discrimination. It sets out the principles and practices that ensure all individuals are treated fairly and with respect, regardless of their background or characteristics such as age, sex, race, marriage/civil partnership, gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, religion, or belief and pregnancy/maternity.

### Equality policies are crucial for several reasons:

- **Legal compliance:** Ensuring the organisation meets national and international legal standards.
- **Workplace harmony:** Creating a positive and inclusive work environment.
- **Reputation management:** Enhancing the organisation's reputation and public image.
- **Operational efficiency:** Leveraging diverse perspectives to improve decision-making and problem-solving.

### Legal Requirements and Benefits

Organisations must comply with various legal frameworks that mandate equality and non-discrimination, such as the Equality Act in the UK. Benefits include:

- Avoiding legal penalties and fines.
- Attracting a diverse talent pool.
- Enhancing employee satisfaction and retention.
- Improving service delivery and community relations.

### **An effective equality policy typically includes:**

- A statement of commitment to equality and non-discrimination rooted in organisational values.
- Definitions of key terms such as equality, equity and inclusion.
- The 9 protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010.
- Different types of unlawful behaviour- discrimination, harassment and victimisation with examples of each
- The scope of the policy, specifying who it applies to (employees, volunteers, service users, etc.).
- Specific objectives and goals that the organisation aims to achieve.
- Procedures for reporting and dealing with discrimination and harassment.
- Responsibilities of staff and management in promoting equality.
- Monitoring and review mechanisms to ensure the policy remains effective and relevant.

## **2: Designing an Equality Policy**

### **Conducting Needs Assessments**

A needs assessment helps identify the specific equality issues within your organisation. Steps to assess your organisation's needs include:

1. Gathering data on the current demographics of your staff and service users.
2. Conducting surveys and focus groups to understand experiences and perceptions of equality within the organisation.
3. Reviewing existing policies and practices to identify gaps and areas for improvement.
4. Engaging stakeholders to gain insights and support for the policy.

## Key Elements of an Effective Policy

### **Vision, Mission, and Values**

The policy should reflect the organisation's core vision, mission, and values, demonstrating a commitment to equality and inclusion.

### **Specific Objectives and Goals**

Set clear, measurable objectives and goals to address identified needs. These should be aligned with the overall strategic goals of the organisation and include targets for improvement.

### **Use Clear and Simple Language**

Ensure the policy is written in a clear, concise, and accessible manner, avoiding jargon and technical terms that may be difficult for non-native English speakers.

### **Ensure Accessibility for All Staff**

Translate the policy into relevant languages and provide formats accessible to individuals with disabilities (such as in an accessible font size and style)

For an equality policy to be an effective tool to support an organisation's commitment to EDI, it needs to come to life. It needs to be threaded throughout all processes, procedures, practices and people development.

In the next section, we will consider what actions could be generated from a policy and look at how to build an action plan to support it.

### 3: Planning an Action Plan from the Policy

If you have stated in your policy...	What do you already have in place to support this?	What further actions could you take?
That all applicants will be treated fairly in the recruitment and selection process		
that discrimination, harassment and victimisation will not be tolerated in the organisation		
that you would like employees to feel supported and empowered to be their authentic selves		

Once you know what actions you would like the organisation to take, you are ready to map out a strategy.

## Strategic Planning

- Define short-term and long-term goals
- Assign roles and responsibilities
- Identify resources required
- Create a timeline and milestones
- Set up monitoring and evaluation mechanisms

Improvement Area:

- Action:

- Responsible Parties and roles:

- Resources Needed:

- To be completed by (date):

- How to measure impact?

## 4: Practical Implementation

## **Communication and Dissemination**

- Once there is a policy in place and relevant processes, procedures etc, you are ready to share it across the organisation.
- Create a communication strategy to disseminate the policy and action plan to all stakeholders. Use various channels such as emails, meetings, and intranet announcements to ensure widespread understanding and engagement.
- Consider visual aids, infographics, and videos to enhance understanding, especially for those with limited English proficiency.
- Develop training programmes to educate staff about the policy and their roles in promoting equality. This can include workshops, e-learning modules, and ongoing professional development.

## **Monitor and Review**

- Encourage feedback from all staff members. Create forums for discussion and ensure everyone has the opportunity to contribute to the policy's implementation.
- Establish regular review processes to monitor the policy's effectiveness. This can include annual reviews, staff surveys, and focus groups.

## **Collect and Analyse Data**

- Regularly collect data on key metrics such as staff diversity, incident reports, and training participation. Analyse this data to identify trends and areas for improvement.

## **Additional support information**

### **Specific Considerations for Different Sectors**

Tailor policies to address the diverse needs of the communities you serve. Ensure the policy is inclusive of all demographic groups and considers factors such as socioeconomic status, cultural background, and language. Depending on which sector you work in (voluntary, private, public), you will have different considerations.

#### **Voluntary Sector - Resource Constraints (often but not always)**

Implementing policies with limited resources requires creativity and prioritisation. Focus on high-impact actions that can be achieved with minimal financial investment, such as training volunteers and leveraging community partnerships.

#### **Private Sector- Regulatory Compliance**

Ensure the policy meets all relevant legal requirements and standards. Regularly review and update the policy to reflect changes in legislation and best practices.

#### **Public Sector-Public Accountability**

Public sector organisations are accountable to the communities they serve. Transparency and public trust are paramount, so ensure the policy is publicly accessible and regularly reviewed in consultation with stakeholders. Public sector organisations have obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty which will need to be built into the policy and action plan.

Address the wide-ranging needs of public service users. Ensure the policy covers all aspects of public service delivery and promotes equality across all functions and departments.