



Underground Lights - Our policy on diversity and equality

Policy Information	
Organisation	Underground Lights
Scope of policy	The policy covers compliance with legislation that protects the rights of individuals and advances equality of opportunity for all.
Policy operational date	December 2018
Date of approval	December 2018
Date of last review	August 2019, October 2022, November 2023, February 2024 - no changes, March 2025
Date of review	March 2026

Statement of intent

Underground Lights seeks to create a culture based on principles of honesty, integrity, respect and the realisation of individual potential. We welcome diversity in the people we provide a service to and in our workforce. Diversity is not just seen as something to aim for but as something to be valued and an asset in delivering different services to different people. Unequal treatment, prejudice or harassment of an employee or member is unacceptable and unwanted in our organisation.

Underground Lights recognises that certain groups and individuals are discriminated against in society and is committed to ensuring that equal opportunity becomes an integral feature of all its activities. Underground Lights aims to eliminate discrimination on grounds of race, ethnicity, religion or beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex reassignment, marital status, AIDS/HIV status, disability, age and history of mental health or addiction problems.

Underground Lights is committed to anti-discriminatory practice and providing equal access to its services irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion or beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex reassignment, marital status, HIV/AIDS status, disability, or history of addiction problems.

We acknowledge that many of our members face discrimination and disadvantage, thus preventing them from fulfilling their potential. Through promoting diversity and widening access to our services we will

challenge these barriers and help our members to transform their lives. We actively encourage people who have experienced homelessness and/or mental distress to apply for staff roles or volunteering opportunities in accordance with our member-led ethos. If they are successful in their application we will provide additional support, to enable them to fulfil the role successfully.

We are committed to eliminating discrimination and encouraging diversity amongst our staff team, volunteers and members. We recognise and value difference, and recognise and seek to redress inequality and disadvantage. We know that to offer the highest quality services we need a diverse workforce wherein each employee and volunteer feels respected, valued and able to give of their best. By ensuring that we access the widest pool of potential employees and volunteers we will recruit the best people possible for all roles within Underground Lights.

We recognise that true diversity and equality may require positive action to help redress the effects of discrimination. Any positive action initiatives will be legally compliant and consistent with our approach of making all members, volunteers and staff feel valued and respected.

Scope

Underground Lights' Diversity and Equality policy applies equally to the following areas:

- The delivery of services to our members.
- The recruitment and support of volunteers.
- The recruitment, employment, training and development of staff.
- The recruitment and activities of the Board of Trustees.

Policy objectives

- Underground Lights is committed to ensuring that all of our employees, volunteers and applicants for employment or as volunteers are protected from unlawful discrimination.
- We will ensure equality of access to our services and will take positive action to enable people experiencing discrimination and disadvantage to fully engage with our services.
- We will give full consideration of diversity issues in the design of new projects, services and other initiatives.
- We will operate fair and transparent recruitment and selection procedures, ensuring that all appointments as employees or volunteers are made on the basis of fair and objective criteria.
- Person and job specifications shall be limited to those requirements necessary for the effective performance of the job or placement.
- All candidates short-listed for any vacancy must meet the criteria outlined in the person specification. Any disclosure of health problems, including mental health or addiction problems will be discussed constructively and in enough detail at the interview to determine whether or not this is likely

to affect the person's ability to undertake the duties outlined in the job description. It may be necessary to ask the candidate for permission to contact their general practitioner or consultant. Underground Lights will make reasonable changes to the workplace and to employment arrangements so that any person with a disability is not at any substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled people.

- We will ensure that everyone working for us as an employee, volunteer or trustee is treated fairly and equally.
- We will provide training and development opportunities for staff and volunteers on an equitable basis enabling all to maximise their individual potential, determined through an appraisal process and in accordance with our strategic aims.
- We will protect our members, staff, volunteers and trustees against harassment, discrimination and intolerance.

Implementation

The trustees are responsible for the day to day implementation of the policy, monitoring its effectiveness, reviewing and developing it where necessary. Monitoring and review will take place annually and will be a regular item at trustee meetings. Each employee, volunteer and trustee is responsible for their own compliance with this policy and breaches will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary action.

Employees, volunteers or trustees who feel they have been discriminated against should raise the matter through the Underground Lights Complaints Policy and procedures.

Volunteers who feel they have been discriminated against should initially raise the matter with a senior member of staff.

Members who feel they have been discriminated against should initially raise the matter with an appropriate member of staff or volunteer.

In all cases the aim should be to resolve the matter informally. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome or the complaint is very serious, then the relevant grievance or disciplinary process should be followed.

All employees, volunteers and trustees have a right to equality of opportunity and a duty to implement this policy. Discrimination is a serious disciplinary matter which will be treated as gross misconduct.

Appropriate training and guidance will be provided to develop equality and diversity within Underground Lights and copies of the policy will be made freely available.

The Equality Act and Definitions of Discrimination

Equality Act 2010

Underground Lights is committed to ensuring within the framework of the law that our workplaces and activities are free from unlawful or unfair discrimination because of Protected Characteristics as defined by the Equality Act. 2010.

These protected Characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity

What is discrimination?

- **Direct discrimination** – when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a Protected Characteristic.
- **Associative discrimination or discrimination by association** – direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a Protected Characteristic.
- **Discrimination by perception** – direct discrimination against someone because it is thought that they possess a particular Protected Characteristic even if they do not actually possess it.
- **Indirect discrimination** - occurs where an individual's employment is subject to an unjustified provision criterion or practice which e.g. one sex or race or nationality or age group finds more difficult to meet, although on the face of it the provision, criterion or practice is 'neutral'.
- **Harassment** – unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. Employees may complain of such offensive behaviour even if it is not directed towards them personally.

- **Harassment by a third party** – harassment of employees by third parties such as customers or clients.
- **Victimisation** – when an employee is treated less favourably because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010 or are suspected of doing so.

At Underground Lights, we are committed to maintaining a safe and respectful environment, free from any form of sexual harassment. We have a zero-tolerance policy towards any behaviour that constitutes sexual harassment, including unwanted advances, inappropriate remarks, or any conduct of a sexual nature that could make members, volunteers, or staff feel uncomfortable, threatened, or demeaned. All incidents are taken seriously and will be addressed promptly through our established safeguarding procedures. Members, volunteers and staff are encouraged to report any concerns without fear of judgment or retaliation. Reports will be handled with sensitivity and confidentiality, ensuring the safety and well-being of everyone involved. We continuously review our policies to uphold the highest standards of safety and respect for all individuals.