



Equal Opportunities Policy

Somerset Rail to Trail Project

Transforming S&D Rail Links CIC

August 2020, Review Date August 2022

Introduction

Transforming S&D Rail Links CIC is committed to identifying and eliminating all forms of discrimination, providing equal opportunities to all, promoting diversity throughout our organisation, and encouraging all persons to treat each other with respect.

What is Discrimination?

Discrimination can be direct or indirect:

- Direct discrimination occurs when one person is treated less favourably than another on grounds relating to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, sex, race or sexual orientation.
- Indirect discrimination occurs when a requirement is imposed which can be complied with by a smaller proportion of persons of a particular group, age, religion, disability, than persons in another group and which is not objectively justifiable in the given situation. Examples of indirect discrimination:
 - Demanding technical qualifications for a job which are not strictly necessary, or
 - Sending only full-time employees on training courses.

Discrimination can occur when there is a perception of belonging to, or by way of association, to a particular group or characteristic.

Policy Statement

The aim of this policy is to provide equality and fairness for all in line with the Equality Act 2010. To ensure that no person or groups of people employed by, applying for jobs with, or in receipt of services from Transforming S&D Rail Links CIC will be directly or indirectly discriminated against because of:

- race, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion or belief
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy or maternity
- sexual orientation
- marital or civil partnership status

- gender
- disability
- age
- domestic responsibilities
- class or social background
- part-time or full-time employment status
- temporary, permanent or fixed-term contract status
- or unrelated criminal offences.

Transforming S&D Rail Links CIC will actively use its influence to promote understanding and harmony between diverse persons and groups of people. We will work with other agencies and organisations to eliminate discrimination, harassment and abuse. We are committed not only to our legal obligations but also to the positive promotion of equality of opportunity in all aspects of employment, service delivery and partnership working.

Service Delivery

Transforming S&D Rail Links CIC will ensure that, in all service delivery planning and commitment, care is taken to provide services of equal quality to all customers. We will endeavour to eliminate unintentional discrimination in the way we provide information and services.

Recruitment & Promotion

Advertisements for posts will give sufficiently clear and accurate information to enable potential applicants to assess their own suitability. Transforming S&D Rail Links CIC is a recognised 'Disability Confident' employer and we are committed to increasing the diversity of our workforce, through improving access to under- represented groups.

We will actively monitor the recruitment and promotion paths of all employees in a way which will allow equality of opportunity. Any promotion will be based on merit alone. Where it is necessary to ask questions relating to personal circumstances, these will be related purely to the job and asked to all candidates. Employment practices, including the writing of job descriptions/person specifications, interviewing and decision-making criteria, will be reviewed regularly to ensure that bias and discrimination are eliminated.

Transforming S&D Rail Links CIC will embrace flexible employment practices in line with statutory requirements. In addition, we recognise that employees' circumstances may change over time and are therefore committed to adapting working practices where possible. We will ensure that requests for changes to working practices will be treated on an individual basis. Transforming S&D Rail Links CIC recognises the skills and expertise of its employees and understands the need to retain them.

Staff Training & Professional Development

In accordance with the above, formal and informal professional development opportunities, in-service training and qualifications will be equally accessible to all.

All employees will be encouraged to discuss training needs/opportunities and career prospects with their line manager.

Trustees and managers will undertake training opportunities, where necessary, to develop understanding of managing diversity including what constitutes discrimination and anti-discrimination measures.

All employees will attend training programmes that will increase their knowledge/skills and understanding of attitudes to work within a diverse society. Such training will include skills to challenge deliberate and unintentional discriminatory practice. It will be mandatory for all employees and trustees to attend Equality and Diversity Awareness training within 6 months of joining the organisation and a refresher session every 3 years after that.

Training regarding this policy is incorporated into the induction programme for every new member of staff. Further training will be provided as necessary to all members of staff, including managers, in accordance with changes in statutory legislation or as the policy is reviewed.

Code of Behaviour

All staff are expected to be familiar with the equal opportunities policy and to conduct themselves accordingly.

It is acknowledged that discrimination and harassment may occur unintentionally due to a general lack of understanding; however it is essential that there is a culture in which positive challenge to inappropriate or discriminatory behaviour is part of normal practice.

Transforming S&D Rail Links CIC will not tolerate any behaviour towards its staff, volunteers and customers that it considers to be discriminatory, offensive or abusive and reserves the right to withdraw services or contact from persistent abusers.

Harassment & Victimisation

Any deliberate act of discrimination by any employee in the course of their duty will be treated as a disciplinary offence, as set out in our staff handbook.

Acts of deliberate discrimination by volunteers or any external organisations will be taken seriously and the organisation will ensure that a full investigation takes place and appropriate action is taken.

Any complaints of discrimination against an employee will be pursued through the Grievance Procedure as detailed in our staff handbook.

Monitoring

Transforming S&D Rail Links CIC is fully committed to incorporating this policy into everyday practices and procedures throughout the organisation. Monitoring will be rigorous and continual through employees, customers, volunteers and partners

being vigilant and encouraged to be vocal through our monitoring and evaluation. Any opportunities identified where improvements can be made will be written into Work Plans and will be reviewed regularly.

Responsibilities

Transforming S&D Rail Links CIC recognises our legal responsibilities to comply with all statutory legislation:

Ultimate responsibility for the implementation of this policy and its review and maintenance in line with current legislation rests with the Board of Trustees.

The Directors are responsible for overseeing the implementation and monitoring of this policy and for ensuring that all managers are aware of the policy and are adhering to their responsibilities.

All managers must take responsibility for ensuring that employees and volunteers under their supervision are made aware of and understand this policy. Managers are responsible for taking appropriate action if any conduct that is not in compliance with this policy is reported to them. Managers must also ensure their own behaviour and conduct models best practice at all times.

All employees and volunteers have a role to play in promoting equality and taking responsibility for ensuring their own behaviour and actions comply with and support this policy.

Policy Revisions

This policy will be reviewed every three years and amended as necessary, or earlier in accordance with any forthcoming legislation. All employees and volunteers should pass suggestions or recommendations for the revision of any aspect of the policy through normal channels to the Directors.

Associated Documents

Equality Analysis Policy Staff Handbook
Volunteer Handbook