



Equality & Diversity Policy Equality & Diversity Policy

Statement of Commitment

Sen Talk believes that following a policy of equality and diversity will benefit not only the individual but also enrich the whole organisation.

Equality is one of Sen Talks' core values and the Board and staff are committed to ensuring that equality is integral to all its policies and practices. Equality is essential to ensuring that services are accessible to all those people who need our help.

Sen Talk recognises that diversity among service users and staff brings positive benefits to the organisation's work and is committed to challenging all forms of discrimination and unfair disadvantage in every aspect of its work and working practices.

Sen Talk aims to provide equality of opportunity for anyone who comes into contact with the organisation and to ensure that no-one is treated less favourably because of their gender, gender reassignment status, marital / civil partner status, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origins, age, disability, sexual orientation, HIV status, employment status, religious or political beliefs, parental or carer status or any unrelated criminal offence. Harassment or bullying will be challenged and not tolerated.

We are committed to:

- Opposing all forms of discrimination – including individual and institutional, direct, indirect (discrimination against someone because there is a policy or rule that disadvantages anyone with a particular characteristic) and associative discrimination (direct discrimination against someone because they associate with someone with a particular characteristic).
- Challenging the false beliefs about different groups in society inherent in racism, sexism, heterosexist, homophobia, ageism, xenophobia and assumptions regarding disability.
- Promoting and celebrating the diversity of all the people with whom we work, valuing their contributions and ensuring they are given the opportunity to realise their full potential within Sen Talk.

Sen Talk will work hard to ensure that:

- The different needs and expectations of employees, service users and volunteers are met.
- Our services are accessible, high quality and offered on a fair and equitable basis.
- We recruit and retain the best staff possible by eliminating all forms of discrimination in recruitment and employment.
- We promote and value diversity in all that we do.
- Sen Talk will assess the current composition of its workforce and establish targets to take positive steps to achieve a workforce and services that reflect the communities in which we work.

As a result of this, we will:

- Increase, where appropriate, the number of employees and service users from black and minority groups.
- Make posts more accessible to, and increase the number of, people with disabilities.
- Encourage age diversity in the workforce.

This policy applies to all aspects of employment and service delivery including the workforce, existing and potential service users and anyone providing goods, services and facilities to Sen Talk. We will constantly monitor and evaluate our progress in order that we continually improve our practice.

Principles

Sen Talk will not discriminate on the grounds of gender, marital status, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, HIV status, employment status, religious or political beliefs, parental or carer status or any unrelated criminal offence. (Specific justifiable exclusion criteria may apply to certain employment areas. These will be legal, open and service-related).

Sen Talk will offer access to and provision of services on a fair and equitable basis that meet the individual needs of service users. Targets will be set, based on the location and there will be a focus on outreach into local communities to increase access. Under-represented groups will be taken into account in the development of new services. Outcomes will be regularly monitored and evaluated.

Sen Talk aims to be an equal opportunity employer and ensure that all those eligible to work for us have equal opportunities to do so on the basis of ability, qualifications and fitness for their role. This is achieved by implementing good employment practices. Every employee has responsibility for the implementation of the policy.

Sen Talk is committed to developing an organisation in which all service users, workers and visitors enjoy equal rights. Measures to promote these rights are designed to ensure that no group is systematically denied them. Sometimes the different rights and needs of different groups will appear to conflict. Reconciling these apparent differences is an important part of the equal opportunities policy and practice.

The Equality Act 2010 requires Sen Talk to oppose discrimination, furthermore Sen Talk aims to mirror best practice in implementing the act.

The principles in equality and diversity will be reflected in our practice relating to:

- Service delivery
- Employment, Recruitment and Professional Development
- Governance
- Partnership
- Practice

Service Delivery

Services will be accessible to those who want them, within the constraints of available resources. There will be fair access for everyone, which will sometimes mean tailoring our services for particular groups. For example, specific services may be offered for women or a particular ethnic group.

Access will be interpreted widely to include physical access to buildings and services and the ability to gain information in different forms e.g. Braille, tapes for visually impaired people and in different community languages.

Sen Talk will give active support to service users to enable real involvement in service development and decision-making.

Where clients face harassment or discrimination in their community or from another service provider, Sen Talk will support them and represent them if appropriate, in any action they may wish to take.

Sen Talk will monitor and review all systems and procedures used in the provision of services to ensure equality of opportunity, responsiveness, sensitivity and accessibility. Take-up of services will be monitored, and targets will be set to ensure that services reflect their communities.

Employment, Recruitment and Professional Development

Annaliese Boucher is responsible for the communication, promotion, implementation and monitoring of the equality and diversity policy in service areas, including where appropriate, in the wider community. They will communicate the policy to staff; ensure that staff understands their responsibilities; ensure that no discrimination takes place and deal appropriately with any breaches. Annaliese Boucher will ensure that there is no scope for discriminatory practice.

Sen Talk values its staff and will provide them with the skills and training necessary to do their job well and the opportunities to progress in the organisation. Mandatory training and guidance to all employees will be provided to ensure that the commitment to equal opportunities is known and understood.

All employees have a responsibility to support colleagues in relation to the policy by raising concerns and fears through the appropriate channels. If any member of staff feels they have been treated unfairly, they have the right to get complaints of harassment investigated, see the Harassment and Bullying Policy for further details. If any member of staff feels that they have been treated unfairly, they can contact Annaliese Boucher, or any other relevant organisation, all of whom are expected to take the grievances seriously, to treat information confidentially, investigate fully and ensure that no victimisation takes place.

There are several related policies, which also embody the principles of equality and diversity. These include: The Bullying and Harassment Policy and Disciplinary & Grievance Policy and Procedures.

Governance

Sen Talk will develop a governance structure that reflects the communities in which we work and ensure that the commitment to equality and diversity is reflected in the induction and training of trustees and committee members.

Trustees and committee members will actively demonstrate their understanding, belief and support of the policy through their communications and actions on behalf of the organisation.

Partnership

Sen Talk will work with partners to develop good practice on issues of access. Companies, individual consultants or contractors entering contracts with Sen Talk will be expected to comply with Sen Talk equality and diversity policy.

Compliance with The Policy

All Sen Talk Trustees, staff and volunteers will be expected to comply with the equal opportunities policy.

- Serious breach of the policy by staff will be dealt with under the disciplinary and grievance procedure.
- Serious breach by a volunteer will be dealt with through a one-to-one meeting with the Sen Talk Management Committee.
- Serious breach by a Trustee will be dealt with through a report to the Board by the Chair or the Chief Executive as appropriate.

Monitoring and Review

The Board of Trustees will monitor the overall success of the policy by assessing its impact on the organisation's efforts to improve service delivery and employment practice.