

## **Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunities Policy**

### **Introduction and Purpose**

InterAct's mission is to empower children, young people, vulnerable adults, and families to build confidence, develop skills, improve wellbeing, and create positive opportunities for their future. Equality, diversity, and inclusion are fundamental to achieving this mission.

Many of the individuals and families supported by InterAct face barriers arising from disability, neurodivergence, mental ill health, social disadvantage, discrimination, exclusion, or other challenges. InterAct recognises that people may require different levels and types of support in order to participate fully and achieve positive outcomes.

InterAct is committed to creating an environment in which every individual is treated with dignity, fairness, respect, and compassion. We value diversity and recognise that different experiences, backgrounds, perspectives, identities, and abilities strengthen our organisation and the communities we serve.

We are committed to ensuring that nobody is disadvantaged, excluded, or treated less favourably because of who they are or because of their personal circumstances.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- promote equality, diversity, and inclusion throughout the Charity;
- ensure compliance with relevant legislation and good practice;
- prevent discrimination, harassment, victimisation and exclusion;
- support accessible and inclusive services;
- promote fairness in employment and volunteering practices;
- foster a culture of dignity, respect and belonging; and
- support positive outcomes for all individuals who engage with InterAct.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to everyone who works for or on behalf of InterAct (including employees, trustees, volunteers, students on work placements, and self-employed contractors we may engage), and in part, to job applicants, service users and other stakeholders.

The principles of this policy apply to all aspects of InterAct's activities, including service delivery, recruitment, volunteering, training, meetings, events, communications and decision-making.

## Definitions

**Equality** means ensuring that individuals are treated fairly and are not disadvantaged because of their personal characteristics or circumstances.

**Diversity** is about recognising, valuing and taking account of people's different backgrounds, knowledge, skills, and experiences.

**Inclusion** means creating environments where individuals feel welcomed, respected, valued, supported and able to participate fully.

**Equal opportunities** means ensuring that everyone has a fair opportunity to participate, contribute, and succeed. InterAct recognises that achieving equal opportunities does not always mean treating everyone in exactly the same way. Some individuals may require additional support, reasonable adjustments, or alternative approaches to overcome barriers and achieve equitable outcomes.

**Discrimination** means treating someone less favourably than someone else because of one or more protected characteristics. However, it can also take place because:

- Someone associates with a person with a protected characteristic, which is known as discrimination by association.
- Someone is believed to possess a protected characteristic (even though they do not), which is known as discrimination by perception.

**Direct discrimination** is excluding or treating an individual or group less favourably due to a protected characteristic, e.g., excluding a person from applying for a role unfairly and/or unlawfully because of a disability that has no bearing on their ability to perform in the role or harassing an individual due to their protected characteristics (see below).

**Indirect discrimination** is excluding or treating an individual or group less favourably by putting those with a protected characteristic at a disadvantage, e.g., making a policy where a dress code negatively affects certain employees who are unable or unwilling to adhere to the policy due to religious beliefs. Indirect discrimination is less obvious than direct discrimination and may happen unintentionally.

**Harassment** is unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

**Sexual harassment** is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.

**Victimisation** refers to unfair treatment or adverse action taken against an individual because they have made a complaint, raised a grievance, or supported someone else in raising an issue related to discrimination, harassment, or similar illegal or unethical activity.

## Legal and Regulatory Requirements

This policy has been developed with reference to:

- Equality Act 2010\*;
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Data Protection Act 2018;
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR);
- Children Act 1989;
- Children Act 2004;
- Care Act 2014;
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006;
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974;
- Charity Commission guidance.

\* The Equality Act 2010 protects individuals from discrimination on the grounds of:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex; and
- sexual orientation.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Board of Trustees**

The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for ensuring that InterAct:

- complies with relevant equality legislation;
- promotes equality, diversity, and inclusion throughout the organisation;
- allocates sufficient resources to support the implementation of this policy;
- monitors equality-related risks, concerns and trends; and
- considers equality, diversity, and inclusion in strategic decision-making and governance.

### **Chief Executive Officer**

The CEO is responsible for:

- promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion throughout the Charity;
- ensuring policies, procedures and practices support inclusion and accessibility;
- managing serious concerns relating to discrimination or victimisation;
- ensuring staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities;
- reporting significant equality-related issues to the Board of Trustees where appropriate.

### **Managers**

Managers are responsible for:

- implementing this policy within their areas of responsibility;
- promoting inclusive and respectful environments and addressing inappropriate behaviour;
- supporting reasonable adjustments where appropriate; and
- ensuring concerns are reported and addressed appropriately.

### **Staff and Volunteers**

All staff and volunteers are responsible for:

- treating others with dignity, fairness and respect;
- promoting inclusive practice;
- challenging discrimination and inappropriate behaviour where appropriate;
- complying with this policy;
- supporting accessibility and participation; and
- reporting concerns relating to discrimination, harassment or exclusion.

### **Service Users, Families and Carers**

InterAct encourages all service users, families and carers to contribute to creating an environment that is welcoming, respectful and inclusive.

All individuals accessing InterAct services are expected to treat others with dignity and respect.

## Policy

### Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in Service Delivery

InterAct is committed to ensuring that its services are accessible, welcoming, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of the individuals, families, and communities it serves.

The Charity recognises that some individuals may face barriers to participation due to disability, neurodivergence, communication needs, mental ill health, financial circumstances, cultural factors, social disadvantage, caring responsibilities, or other personal circumstances.

InterAct will seek to:

- promote dignity, respect, choice, and independence;
- ensure services are delivered fairly and without unlawful discrimination;
- consider equality, diversity, inclusion, safeguarding, and wellbeing together;
- identify and address barriers that may affect participation or outcomes; and
- continually review services to ensure they remain relevant, accessible, and effective.

When designing, reviewing, or delivering services, InterAct will consider the needs of individuals with disabilities, neurodivergence, communication needs, mental ill health, cultural differences, caring responsibilities, financial barriers, and other factors that may affect participation.

### Employment, Volunteering and Recruitment

InterAct is committed to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion throughout its recruitment, employment, volunteering, and development practices.

Recruitment and selection decisions will be based on:

- skills;
- qualifications;
- experience;
- suitability for the role; and
- the ability to fulfil the requirements of the position.

InterAct will seek to ensure that:

- vacancies are advertised appropriately;
- recruitment processes are fair and transparent;
- selection decisions are objective and evidence-based;
- volunteers are treated fairly and consistently;
- development opportunities are accessible;
- training opportunities are available fairly; and
- promotion and progression decisions are based on merit.

One of our charitable aims is to support personal development, confidence building, employability, and participation. Therefore, opportunities may be created that support the development of service users, volunteers, or existing staff, provided this is lawful and consistent with the Equality Act 2010.

## **Charity Partnerships and Working Relationships**

InterAct recognises that achieving equality, diversity, and inclusion requires collaboration with a wide range of organisations, suppliers, funders, community groups, professionals, contractors, and partner agencies.

The Charity seeks to develop and maintain positive working relationships with organisations that share its commitment to dignity, respect, inclusion, safeguarding, equality of opportunity, and non-discriminatory practice.

InterAct will seek to:

- work with organisations, suppliers, and partners that demonstrate a commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion;
- ensure that procurement and partnership decisions are based on objective, transparent, and non-discriminatory criteria;
- challenge discriminatory, exclusionary, or inappropriate behaviour where concerns are identified; and
- work collaboratively with partners to promote positive outcomes for the individuals, families, and communities served by InterAct.

InterAct will not knowingly enter into, maintain, or support relationships with organisations or individuals whose conduct, policies, or practices are inconsistent with the values and principles set out within this policy.

Where concerns arise regarding the conduct of a supplier or partner organisation, the Charity will seek to address these concerns appropriately and proportionately. This may include discussion, clarification of expectations, corrective actions, review of arrangements, or, where necessary, the termination of the relationship.

## **Accessibility and Reasonable Adjustments**

InterAct recognises that inclusion is often achieved through small practical adjustments that enable individuals to participate (in employment, volunteering or our activities) fully and safely. Depending on individual needs and available resources, examples of inclusive practice may include:

- adapting communication methods to meet individual needs. For example:
  - using clear, accessible, and non-technical language;
  - providing information in accessible formats, including large print, easy-read, visual, electronic, or alternative communication formats;
- allowing additional time for activities, meetings, assessments, or decision-making;
- adapting activities to accommodate physical, mental, or other needs;
- making reasonable adjustments to recruitment, training, employment, etc., processes;
- involving parents, carers, support workers, advocates, or other individuals where appropriate;
- seeking feedback from service users, families, carers, staff, and volunteers to identify barriers and opportunities for improvement.

InterAct recognises that reasonable adjustments will vary according to individual circumstances and that not every adjustment will be appropriate or practicable in every situation. Requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis, balancing individual needs, available resources, safety, and the effective delivery of services.

## **Preventing Discrimination, Harassment and Victimisation**

InterAct is committed to maintaining environments in which individuals are treated with dignity and respect.

The Charity will not tolerate:

- discrimination;
- harassment;
- bullying;
- victimisation;
- intimidation;
- hate incidents;
- exclusionary behaviour; or
- conduct that undermines the dignity or wellbeing of others.

This applies to behaviour that occurs:

- in person;
- online;
- in any situation connected with InterAct.

InterAct recognises that preventing discrimination, harassment, and victimisation requires clear communication and shared understanding. Therefore, the Charity will seek to ensure that:

- staff understand their responsibilities through induction, supervision, training, policies, procedures, and codes of conduct;
- trustees understand their governance responsibilities relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion;
- service users, families, carers, and other stakeholders understand the standards of behaviour expected when engaging with InterAct;
- codes of conduct and behavioural expectations are communicated clearly and accessibly; and
- concerns can be raised safely and without fear of retaliation.

InterAct recognises that some individuals accessing its services may require additional support, reminders, modelling, or accessible communication in order to understand behavioural expectations.

The Charity will also take reasonable and proportionate steps to prevent harassment and sexual harassment by:

- promoting a culture of dignity, respect, inclusion, and accountability;
- providing appropriate training and awareness;

- maintaining clear policies and procedures;
- communicating behavioural expectations;
- encouraging early reporting of concerns;
- responding promptly to incidents and complaints;
- monitoring trends and emerging risks;
- investigating concerns fairly and appropriately; and
- taking corrective action where necessary.

Where appropriate, InterAct will assess and manage risks relating to discrimination, harassment, bullying, and sexual harassment. This may include undertaking risk assessments, reviewing activities or environments, implementing additional safeguards, modifying working practices, or introducing other preventative measures.

### **Training and Awareness**

InterAct recognises that promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion requires ongoing learning, awareness, and reflection.

The Charity will seek to ensure that staff, volunteers, trustees, and others working on behalf of InterAct understand:

- their responsibilities under this policy;
- relevant equality legislation;
- inclusive practice;
- accessibility considerations;
- safeguarding and equality links;
- professional conduct expectations; and
- the importance of creating welcoming and respectful environments.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion may be addressed through:

- induction;
- training;
- supervision;
- team meetings;
- policy updates;
- guidance and resources; and
- continuous professional development activities.

## Procedure: Raising Concerns and Complaints

InterAct encourages individuals to raise concerns where they believe they have experienced, witnessed, or become aware of discrimination, harassment, victimisation, exclusion, or other behaviour inconsistent with this policy.

Concerns may be raised with:

- a manager;
- the CEO;
- a trustee;
- a safeguarding lead; or
- through the Charity's Comments, Compliments and Complaints Procedure.

All concerns will be considered fairly, sensitively, and confidentially as far as reasonably possible.

Individuals who raise genuine concerns in good faith will not be treated unfavourably for doing so.

Where concerns involve safeguarding matters, the Charity's safeguarding procedures may also be followed. Contact details below:

- CEO/Safeguarding Lead-Vickie Perkins [vickie.perkins@interact.org.uk](mailto:vickie.perkins@interact.org.uk)
- Chair of trustees- Caroline Clements [caroline.clements@interact.org.uk](mailto:caroline.clements@interact.org.uk)
- Deputy Safeguarding Mark Hagon [mark.hagon@interact.org.uk](mailto:mark.hagon@interact.org.uk)

## Non-Compliance

InterAct expects all staff, service users, families, carers, visitors, partner organisations, and others engaging with the Charity to contribute to an environment that is welcoming, inclusive, respectful, and free from discrimination, harassment, bullying, and victimisation.

Where behaviour falls below the standards expected by the Charity, InterAct will take appropriate and proportionate action to address the matter.

For staff, volunteers, trustees, contractors, and others acting on behalf of the Charity, action may include:

- informal advice, guidance, or training;
- formal disciplinary action;
- termination of employment or volunteering arrangements; and/or
- referral to external agencies where appropriate.

For service users, families, carers, visitors, and other stakeholders, action may include:

- discussion and clarification of expectations;
- implementation of behavioural agreements or support plans;
- temporary or permanent suspension from activities; or
- referral to external agencies, including safeguarding or law enforcement agencies, where necessary.

InterAct recognises that some individuals accessing its services may have disabilities, neurodivergence, communication needs, mental ill health, trauma histories, or other vulnerabilities which may affect behaviour, understanding, or communication. In such circumstances, the Charity will seek to respond in a supportive, proportionate, trauma-informed, and person-centred manner whilst maintaining the safety, dignity, wellbeing, and rights of others.

## **Data Protection and Equality Monitoring**

InterAct is committed to respecting privacy and handling personal information lawfully, fairly, and transparently.

In order to understand whether its services, employment practices, volunteering opportunities, and governance arrangements are accessible and inclusive, the Charity may collect, monitor, and analyse equality and diversity information where it is lawful and appropriate to do so.

The Charity may use equality monitoring information to:

- understand the diversity of individuals engaging with InterAct;
- identify barriers to participation or access;
- assess whether particular groups may be underrepresented;
- support service planning and improvement;
- inform funding applications and reporting requirements; and
- monitor the effectiveness of this policy.

InterAct will seek to monitor the composition of its workforce, volunteers, trustees, and service users and compare this, where appropriate, with the communities it serves. This information will help the Charity identify any significant disparities and consider whether additional action may be required to improve accessibility, participation, representation, or inclusion.

Any equality monitoring information collected will:

- be processed in accordance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018;
- only be collected where there is a legitimate purpose for doing so;
- be treated confidentially;
- be accessed only by authorised individuals;
- normally be used in an anonymised or aggregated format wherever possible; and
- not be used to make unfair or discriminatory decisions about individuals.

Individuals are not normally required to provide equality monitoring information unless there is a legal requirement to do so.

## **Monitoring and Review**

InterAct is committed to continually improving equality, diversity, equity and inclusion throughout the organisation.

The Charity will monitor and review:

- service accessibility;

- participation and engagement;
- complaints and concerns;
- recruitment and volunteering practices;
- staff and volunteer feedback;
- training and development activities;
- equality-related risks; and
- opportunities for improvement.

Feedback from service users, families, carers, volunteers, staff, trustees, and partner organisations will be considered as part of this process.

This policy will be reviewed periodically and updated where necessary to reflect changes in legislation, guidance, organisational learning, and good practice.

## Version Control

**Author:** Policy Pros

**Policy Owner/Contact Email:**

**Document classification:** Internal

**Version Number: 1**

Change history

Version 1 [23/06/26] Initial issue of combined ED&I and Equal Opportunities policies

**Approved Date:** June 2026

**Approved By:** Vickie Perkins (CEO) and Caroline Clements (Chair-Trustees)