Equality and Diversity Strategy: Different but Equal

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1. Aims:

Why me? wants to embed Equality and Diversity in everything that we do.

We want to be a diverse organisation in which everyone is valued for their individuality and there is equality of opportunity and equality of access.

Why me? recognises that in our society power is not held equally and that groups and individuals have been and continue to be discriminated against on many grounds.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that Why me? does not perpetuate discrimination, actively challenges it and provides an inclusive environment for all who work for or with us.

This strategy has been written in consultation with Why me? staff, trustees and volunteers.

2. Definitions and Policy Statement:

Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents, and believing that no one should have poorer life chances because of where, what or whom they were born, what they believe, or whether they have a disability. Equality recognises that historically, certain groups of people with particular characteristics e.g. race, disability, sex and sexuality, have experienced discrimination.¹

Diversity is any dimension that can be used to differentiate groups and people from one another. It is about empowering people by respecting and appreciating what makes them different. Diversity allows for the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It means understanding one another by surpassing simple tolerance to ensure people truly value their differences.²

Equality and Diversity are key to everything that Why me? does, as an employer, a service provider, a workplace and a volunteering organisation. Enacting Equality and Diversity makes Why me? a stronger, more inclusive and more just organisation.

3. Scope:

It is illegal under the Equality Act of 2010 to discriminate against the following characteristics:

Age


² Global Diversity Practice, http://www.globaldiversitypractice.co.uk/what-is-diversity-inclusion/
Disability
Gender and gender reassignment
Marriage and civil partnership
Pregnancy and maternity
Race - including ethnic origin, national origin, nationality and colour
Religion or belief, including non-belief and philosophical beliefs
Sex
Sexual orientation

However, Why me? acknowledges that this list is not exhaustive of all the ways in which discrimination can exist and will strive to challenge discrimination in all of its forms. Why me? also acknowledges both direct and indirect discrimination and aims to tackle both.

Furthermore, Why me? acknowledges that these characteristics are not mutually exclusive and that some people face multiple disadvantages due to belonging to multiple disadvantaged groups and that will create specific forms of discrimination which may require specific forms of support. We also acknowledge the importance of diversity of thought, as well as diversity of characteristics.

4. Principles:

Different but equal:
- We all have different perspectives, skills, knowledge and cultures. While different, none are better.
- Equality is not treating everyone the same. We are different so have different needs.
- We will take an enabling person centred approach to individual needs and making necessary adjustments
- We will focus on equality of opportunity
- We will try to avoid making assumptions about people's experiences as assumptions are generally unhelpful.

Forever learning:
- Equality is what we aspire to. Enacting equality is an ongoing process and we will never have ‘achieved it’.
- We will be reflexive about the levels of diversity within the organisation.
- We will embrace learning and growth and continuously try to improve our understanding of Equality and Diversity
- We will continuously challenge the stereotypes that we hold

Embedded approach
- Diversity is a golden thread that runs throughout the organisation. Our approach will be an everyday enactment through culture as well as strategy.
- Leadership is key to realising an inclusive culture

Representation:
- It is important that our organisation is representative of the diversity in our society in its people and its presentation through resources
• It is important that we do not ‘tokenise’ people to speak on behalf of one identity group in which there will be much diversity

**Everyone having a voice:**
• We want to foster a safe and open environment in which each person feels that they have a voice
• It is important that there are clear routes for raising concerns
• We will be transparent, whilst maintaining confidentiality

**Equal access:**
• We want to make our service, our employment and our volunteering opportunities as widely accessible as possible
• We must be able to spot patterns that demonstrate unconscious bias or institutional discrimination