

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Introduction

The Spinal Injuries Association (SIA) is committed to encouraging a dynamic and inclusive working environment and culture, to eliminating unlawful discrimination and promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion in its own policies, practices, and procedures and in those areas in which it has influence. The aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and our members, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

This applies to the charity's professional dealings with staff, volunteers, trustees, members, and any other people it has dealings within the course of its business. SIA intends to treat everyone equitably and with same attention, courtesy, and respect regardless of any protected characteristic and will not unlawfully discriminate against anyone on these grounds. Protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender), sexual orientation.

We are committed to creating a more inclusive SIA, where we benefit from a variety of perspectives and better reflect the communities we serve, to make smarter decisions and better support people affected by spinal cord injury.

Policy & procedure

Purpose and aims

This policy sets out our commitment to:

- SIA that is free from discrimination and prejudice.
- Treat all people, regardless of their background, with dignity and respect – this includes: our people, those with whom we interact (e.g. service users) and other stakeholders.
- Comply with UK equalities legislation and our other external obligations including: equality standards set by contracts, regulatory requirements, accreditations and good practice schemes.
- Make our people aware of their responsibilities, and know how and where to seek support to actively uphold and champion equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- Ensure that we attract and retain people from the widest possible diversity of backgrounds and experiences to and at all levels of the organisation.
- Actively promote our services and opportunities to a wide range of diverse communities from all backgrounds to ensure we are able to reach as many people as we reasonably can.
- Ensure robust diversity-related data collection to better understand our people and audiences.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- all our people including staff, volunteers and trustees
- all of SIA's work

Regulation and legislation

In developing and implementing its Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policy, SIA is committed to complying with the relevant provisions of The Equality Act 2010 and with all current and any future anti-discrimination legislation and associated codes of practice.

SIA commits to encourage equity, diversity and inclusion in the workplace creating a working environment promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.

Forms of discrimination

The following are the kinds of discrimination which are prohibited conduct and are against SIA's policy:

(a) Direct discrimination

This occurs when a person or a policy intentionally treats a person less favourably than another on the grounds of race, sex, pregnancy, and maternity, marital or civil partnership status, gender reassignment, disability, religion or beliefs, age or sexual orientation.

(b) Indirect discrimination

This is the application of a policy, criterion or practice which the employer applies to all employees, but which is such that:

- It is detrimental to a considerably larger proportion of people from the group that the person the employer is applying it to represents;
- The employer cannot justify the need for the application of the policy on a neutral basis; and
- The person to whom the employer is applying it suffers detriment from the application of the policy.

Example: A requirement that all employees must be 6ft tall if that requirement is not justified by the position would indirectly discriminate against employees with an oriental ethnic origin, as they are less likely to be able to fulfil this requirement.

(c) Discrimination on the basis of a disability

There are two forms of unlawful discrimination on the basis of a disability:

1. Where a person treats a disabled person unfavourably because of something arising in consequence of their disability and this treatment cannot be justified as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
2. Where there has been a failure to comply with a duty to adjust for disabled persons.

Where a provision, criterion or practice puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in relation to a relevant matter in comparison with persons who are not disabled, SIA will take reasonable steps to avoid the disadvantage. Where a physical feature puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled, SIA will take

reasonable steps to avoid the disadvantage. Where a disabled person would, but for the provision of an auxiliary aid, be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled, SIA will take reasonable steps to provide the auxiliary aid.

(d) Harassment

This occurs when a person is subjected to unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating their dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

(e) Victimisation

Victimisation occurs where a person is subjected to a detriment because they have carried out a 'Protected Act'. The following are Protected Acts:

1. bringing proceedings under the Equality Act 2010;
2. giving evidence or information in connection with proceedings under the Act;
3. doing any other thing for the purposes of or in connection with the Act;
4. making an allegation (whether or not expressed) that another person has done something in breach of the Act

SIA will not unlawfully discriminate, nor victimise or harass, during its professional dealings those groups of people with protected characteristics and will comply with its duty to make adjustments for disabled persons.

Employment and training

As an employer, SIA will treat all employees and job applicants equally and fairly and not discriminate unlawfully against them. This will, for example, include arrangements for recruitment and selection, terms and conditions of employment, access to training opportunities, access to promotion, grievance and disciplinary processes, demotions, selection for redundancies, references, work allocation, exit interviews and any other employment related activities. Insofar as it is appropriate to do so, this policy will also apply to anyone undertaking work experience at SIA.

SIA will make opportunities for training, development, and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.

(a) Recruitment and selection

SIA recognises the benefits of having a diverse workforce and will take steps to ensure that:

- it endeavours to recruit from the widest pool of qualified candidates possible;
- employment opportunities are open and accessible to all on the basis of their individual qualities and personal merit;
- where appropriate, positive action measures are taken to attract applications from all sections of society and especially from those groups which are under-represented in the workforce;
- selection criteria and processes do not discriminate unjustifiably on the grounds of any protected characteristic; other than in those instances where SIA is exercising permitted positive action;
- wherever appropriate and necessary, lawful exemptions (genuine occupational requirements) will be used to recruit suitable staff to meet the special needs of particular groups;
- any recruitment agencies acting for SIA are aware of its requirement not to discriminate and to act accordingly.

(b) Conditions of service

SIA will treat all employees equally and create a working environment which is free from discrimination and harassment and which respects, where appropriate, the diverse backgrounds and beliefs of employees. Terms and conditions of service for employees will comply with anti-discrimination legislation. The provision of benefits such as working hours, maternity and other leave arrangements, performance appraisal systems and any other conditions of employment will not unlawfully discriminate against any employee. Where appropriate and necessary, SIA will endeavour to provide appropriate facilities and conditions of service which consider the specific needs of employees which arise from a protected characteristic or their responsibilities as carers.

(c) Promotion and career development

Promotion within SIA will be made without unlawfully discriminating and will be based solely on merit. The selection criteria and processes for recruitment and promotion will be kept under review to ensure that there is no unjustifiably discriminatory impact on any group. Whilst positive action measures may be taken in accordance with the relevant anti-discrimination legislation to encourage under-represented groups to apply for promotion opportunities, recruitment or promotion to all jobs will be based solely on merit. All employees will have equal access to training and other career development opportunities appropriate to their experience and abilities. However, SIA will take appropriate positive action measures (as permitted by the anti-discrimination legislation) to provide special training and support for groups which are under-represented in the workforce and encourage them to take up training and career development opportunities. SIA will comply with its duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees.

Equity in service delivery

SIA provides services for disabled people, their families, and other stakeholders. Our aim is to make our services available to all people on an equal basis. SIA will aim to provide these services without unlawfully discriminating against, during its professional dealings, those groups of people with protected characteristics.

Equity of access

SIA recognises the importance of providing equal access to our services among our client group. We aim to:

- consult service users and constantly monitor and review the accessibility of our services, actively seeking ways of improving access
- identify areas of service provision which are not being widely accessed and/or groups within the wider community who are not accessing our services

We will aim to monitor the users of our services in terms of the protected characteristics to measure our degree of success in achieving equal access. Where this monitoring indicates the under-representation of a particular group in the users of our services, SIA will endeavour to adopt policies to make our services available to this group. In addressing these issues, SIA aims to achieve equality of access through:

- use of technology and equipment
- adjustments to premises
- review of procedures
- advertising and targeted promotion of services
- review of the way in which information is presented

Monitoring will also include assessing how the equity, diversity and inclusion policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

Promoting equity, diversity and inclusion

SIA is committed to promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace as well as in those areas in which it has influence. Staff, trustees, and volunteers will be informed of this Equity, diversity and inclusion policy and will be provided with EDI training appropriate to their needs and responsibilities. All staff members, trustees and volunteers must comply with the policy. All those who act on SIA's behalf will be informed of this EDI policy and will be expected to pay due regard to it when conducting business on SIA's behalf. In all its dealings, including those with suppliers, contractors and recruitment agencies, SIA will seek to promote the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion. SIA will make every effort to reflect its commitment to EDI in its marketing and communication activities.

Advice and Support on Discrimination

Internal:

Head of people and operations

d.bracher@spinal.co.uk

External contacts include:

a) Equality and Human Rights Commission

London

Fleetbank House

2-6 Salisbury Square

London

EC4Y 8JX

Helpline Telephone Number:

Phone: 0808 800 0082

Textphone: 0808 800 0084

Website: www.equalityhumanrights.com

b) Citizens Advice Bureau

3rd Floor North

200 Aldersgate Street

London

EC1A 4HD

Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

c) Community Legal Services Direct

Telephone: 0845 345 4 345

Website: www.clsdirect.uk

Responsibilities

The **Board of trustees** are responsible for championing equity, diversity and inclusion and ensuring that the policy is consistent with the fundamental principles and that resources, support and leadership is provided to ensure this policy can be meaningfully implemented.

The **Senior leadership team (SLT)** are responsible for championing this policy on behalf of the Board of Trustees and ensuring compliance with policy and the effective development, implementation and monitoring of equity and diversity objectives and related action.

The **Head of people and operations** is the policy owner and is responsible for ensuring that this policy is fit for purpose and up to date. The head is responsible for the development, monitoring and updating of this policy, supporting the communication and implementation of this policy.

Managers and the SLT are responsible for implementing the policy and role modelling inclusive behaviour and providing support to their staff and volunteers.

Our people are responsible for championing equity, diversity and inclusion, understanding how the policy relates to their role, and reporting cases of discrimination, harassment, and unfair treatment.

All employees and volunteers are expected to pay due regard to the provisions of SIA's equity, diversity and inclusion policy and are responsible for ensuring compliance with it when undertaking their jobs or representing the charity. Unlawful acts of discrimination or harassment by employees or volunteers will result in disciplinary action. Failure to comply with this policy will be treated in a similar fashion.

Unlawful acts of discrimination or harassment by those acting on behalf of SIA will lead to appropriate action including termination of services where appropriate.

Complaints of discrimination

SIA will treat seriously, and will act where appropriate, all complaints of unlawful discrimination or harassment made by employees, trustees, volunteers and other third parties. All complaints will be investigated in accordance with SIA's grievance or complaints procedure.

Policy Owner (responsibility)	Head of people and operations
Review schedule	Every two years
Date of last review	July 2024
Date of next review	July 2026
Approval level	SLT (if any changes)
Related policies	Complaints policy, Grievance policy, Whistleblowing, EDI strategy and plan