



Equal Opportunities Policy

1 Introduction

Sound Resource (SR) has a wide and diverse population of participants, trustees, freelance staff, audience, volunteers, and partner organization staff. This diversity is one of the organisation's greatest strengths. In order to consolidate and build upon this diversity, it is essential that equality of opportunity and the absence of unfair discrimination be at the core of all SR activities.

SR recognises the link between equality and quality and will not unfairly discriminate in the general treatment of participants, trustees, volunteers, partner organisation staff, or the contracting of freelance workers, on the basis of:

race, colour, ethnicity, ethnic origin, national origin, pregnancy, gender, marital status, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, transgender status, responsibility for dependents; trade union or political activities, or age.

We also recognise that socioeconomic status, caring responsibility, mental health, and other factors (not covered in current law) affect an individual's ability to access the benefits of singing with others.

We aim to create a welcoming environment free from unintentional or intentional discrimination. SR recognises that equality of opportunity and good race relations are fundamental components of a civilised society.

The aim of our Equal Opportunities Policy is to ensure that no participant, trustee, freelance staff member, audience member, mentee, volunteer, or contractor receives less favourable treatment on the grounds stated above.

Our policy is to establish and maintain an operational environment that respects and values each other's differences. We see these differences as an asset, as they improve our ability to meet the needs of the people who access our projects and services.

In the operation of the charity, we will treat everyone fairly and courteously at all times.

We will challenge discrimination and lack of opportunity in our own aims, policies and practices, and will help other organisations and individuals to do the same.

SR has adopted this policy as a means of ensuring that these aims are met and maintained.

2 Objectives of the policy

SR is committed to promoting and developing equality of opportunity in all its functions and will seek to do this by:

- 2.1 Enshrining these principles in our aims and values; our projects are inclusive, participatory and accessible
- 2.2 Ensuring that everyone knows we have an Equal Opportunities policy, and the importance that we attach to it, both to comply with legal requirements, and to practise sound management.
- 2.3 Ensuring that all team members are aware of their personal duty not to discriminate, and to challenge discrimination.
- 2.4 Ensuring that all marketing and promotional activities treat all people fairly, equally and respectfully.
- 2.5 Providing equal opportunities in taking on contractors and managing contracts.
- 2.6 Providing equal opportunities in recruitment, training and development for volunteers.
- 2.7 Encouraging all team members to take advantage of suitable opportunities for training and development.

Responsibility

Trustees have responsibility for ensuring that SR operates within the legal framework for equality and for implementing the policy throughout the charity. However, each member of the SR community is responsible for preventing unfair discrimination which it is within their control to prevent.

The Secretary is responsible for keeping the committee informed of all developments in this area and for making appropriate team members aware of any specific responsibilities that relate to their activities as part of SR, particularly team members with supervisory responsibilities and those responsible for developing and implementing policies and procedures.

3 The legal framework

The Equality Act 2010 replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single act. It covers nine protected characteristics, which cannot be used as a reason to treat people unfairly. Every person has one or more of the protected characteristics, so the act protects everyone against unfair treatment.

The protected characteristics are:

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

The act prohibits unfair treatment in the workplace (recruitment and employment), when providing goods, facilities and services, when exercising public functions, in the disposal and management of premises, in education and by associations (such as private clubs).

The Equality Act sets out the different ways in which it is unlawful to treat someone, such as direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, victimisation and failing to make a reasonable adjustment for a disabled person.

Unlawful discrimination can take the following forms:

Direct discrimination is treating one person less favourably than another in the same or similar circumstances or segregating them from others solely because they are, for example, a lesbian, a gay man, or because they have a disability or illness. Refusing to employ someone who has the required skills because they are deaf or pregnant would constitute such discrimination.

Indirect discrimination occurs where there is a requirement or condition which applies equally to everyone but which, in practice, has an adverse impact on a particular group, and cannot be justified. For example an unnecessary physical or age requirement can discriminate against women or disabled people. Another example would be the setting of language tests, where language skills or fluency are not really needed for a job.

Disability discrimination occurs where an individual is unjustifiably disadvantaged for a reason connected with his or her disability, unless discrimination cannot be avoided by making reasonable adjustment. A person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. An example of discrimination would be failure to recruit a wheelchair user without first considering whether the working arrangements or premises can be easily adapted to suit his or her needs.

Discrimination by association occurs when there is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.

Perception discrimination occurs when there is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic.

Abuse and/or harassment. Discrimination also covers actions which amount to abuse and/or harassment of people or groups of people because for example they are a member of a national, racial or ethnic minority group, a woman, a lesbian, a gay man, or have a disability or illness.

Victimisation occurs when a person is treated less favourably or is discriminated against because for example he/she has pursued or intends to pursue their rights in respect of alleged discrimination.

Institutional racism (Macpherson Report 1999) is the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen in the processes or attitudes and behaviour, which amount to discrimination, to unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping that disadvantages minority ethnic people. A **racist incident** is any incident, which is perceived to be racist by the victim, or any other person.

Discrimination in any of the forms stated above is unacceptable, regardless of whether there was any intention to discriminate or not.

3.1 Harassment

SR recognises that its participants, trustees, freelance staff, audiences, volunteers, and partner organization staff and contractors have the right to an environment free from intimidation caused by harassment.

Harassment occurs when someone's actions or words are unwelcome and violate another person's dignity or create an environment that is intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive. Harassment is unacceptable and, where proven, will be treated as a serious complaint.

SR's Complaints Policy sets out the procedure for dealing with complaints.

3.2 Health & Safety

SR recognises and accepts responsibility for providing, so far as is reasonably practicable, a safe and healthy environment for its participants, trustees, freelance staff, audiences, volunteers, and partner organization staff and contractors. The first point of contact for health and safety issues is the Charity Manager.

4 Operation of Sound Resource Charity

SR aims to ensure that our singing projects are accessible to all. All team members will be made aware of the disadvantages associated with a range of conditions including mobility impairments, mental health problems, learning disabilities and autism. Reasonable adjustments will be made to facilitate access to projects where required.

4.1 Premises

SR will make every effort to ensure that premises used are accessible and inviting to all members of the community.

4.2 Communications

SR will ensure that communications about the charity reflect the needs of different groups. This includes access or lack of access to computers and the internet, the language needs of different communities, and special communication needs of people with sensory impairments. Communications will be provided in different formats to reflect this. Songs are taught by ear.

4.4 Travel

SR recognises that not everyone has access to personal transport, or is able to use it, and will plan our activities with this in mind. Travel expenses may be available for certain projects.

4.5 Purchasing and sponsorship

SR reserves the right not to purchase goods and services or accept sponsorship from agencies whose activities are contrary to the principles outlined in this policy.

4.6 Promotion

SR reserves the right not to promote activities or services that are contrary to the principles outlined in this policy.

5 Equality and Diversity of Volunteers

SR is committed to providing genuine equality of opportunity within the organisation for volunteers. By developing interesting and vibrant volunteer roles we hope to enable volunteers for SR to enjoy a positive experience gain new and useful skills (where appropriate).

5.1 Publicising Vacancies

In selecting the most effective methods for publicising vacancies, the committee should carefully consider any under-represented groups and how best to target them. In all role advertisements SR will include a statement that it aims to be an Equal Opportunities organisation.

5.2 Selection

All team members involved in recruiting volunteers should be fully aware of their responsibilities under SR policy and legislation with regard to equal opportunities. More than one person should be involved in recruitment, to minimise the possibility of subconscious prejudice or stereotyping.

6 Complaints

All acts of discrimination will be treated as a serious complaint. Anyone who wishes to make a formal complaint will have access to the Sound Resource Complaint Procedures.

7 Training and team development

There will be an ongoing commitment to ensuring SR complies with relevant legislation. Training will aim to go beyond compliance and empower the team to act positively and equitably by creating and maintaining an environment where equality of opportunity is promoted.

8 SR policies and procedures

All other SR policies support our total commitment to equality and diversity.

9 Monitoring

The ethnic, gender and age composition of our participants, volunteers and committee members will be monitored. After monitoring, positive action will be taken to increase diversity.

10 Implementation and monitoring

Monitoring of this policy and its implementation is the responsibility of the Trustees.

All participants, members, volunteers, contractors, mentees and trustees will be required to support our Equality and Diversity Policy. Copies of this policy will be freely available to all on the SR website

SR reserves the right to revise and reissue these guidelines to comply with any future legislation.