

# **Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (WWT) takes a proactive approach to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) which stems from the Social Model of Inclusion.

The Social Model takes the focus away from the individual and gives it to the environment (this could be a person, policy or place), with the belief that it is environmental barriers that cause a person to become disadvantaged. WWT can remove such barriers by making reasonable adjustments, providing training, and incorporating aids and adaptations to promote inclusion. Although this model was originally designed with disability in mind (the social model of disability), the general principles have been revised to prevent the discrimination of those with other protected characteristics and identities.

Discrimination has no place within WWT, and we recognise the importance of ensuring the principles of EDI inform key decision-making at every level. This Policy provides a clear and strong direction so that our trustees, staff, volunteers, partners and stakeholders know what to expect from us.

### **1. DEFINITIONS**

#### **1.1 WHAT IS EQUALITY**

Equality of opportunity means everyone is given fair chances and treated with respect, and no one is unfairly discriminated against. Equity means individual needs are sometimes best met in different ways. Equality of outcome is where inequalities are addressed to bring about balance in representation.

The UK Government has listed the following nine protected characteristics in the Equalities Act 2010: age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation (for more details see appendix 1). Our approach to equality recognises that these protected characteristics as well as broader social identities, including social class and gender, will impact on life experiences and should not cause unfair disadvantages.

As an employer and provider of volunteering opportunities and other services, WWT is committed to the principles of equality of opportunity and equitable access, and outcomes that meet the needs of the individual.

#### **1.2 WHAT IS DIVERSITY**

This refers to the differences which exist between each of us. Diversity is about understanding each other and truly embracing a person's identities.

WWT values different identities, knowledge, skills, ideas and experiences, and believes these differences create an effective and innovative environment that increases our impact as a movement.

#### **1.3 WHAT IS INCLUSION**

Inclusion means being proactive in making sure people of different backgrounds, experiences and identities feel welcomed, respected and fully able to participate. It is not only about creating a diverse environment but also about making sure that a culture exists where individuals can be their authentic selves without feeling the need to hide aspects of

their lives. WWT aims for 'inclusivity by design', making our environments, services and opportunities accessible to as many people as possible.

#### 1.4 WHAT IS DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination is the unjust or prejudicial treatment of a person or group of people, especially on the grounds of a protected characteristic. There are various forms of discrimination, see appendix 2. WWT does not tolerate discrimination of any kind and is committed to building preventative culture and practices.

#### 1.5 WHAT IS POSITIVE ACTION

This refers to measures that can be lawfully taken (in accordance with the equality Act 2010) to address barriers or disadvantages faced by an individual or individuals with one or more protected characteristics. Positive action can be applied to employment, training and provision of services to 'level the playing field'. For example, if an organisation's employment data shows that people with disabilities are under-represented in the workforce, it may decide to offer guaranteed interviews for people with disabilities if they meet all the essential criteria. If an organisation reasonably believes a group of people who share a protected characteristic and who could be using its service needs different things than other groups, it may choose to take action to enable or encourage the group to participate. WWT is mindful of under-representation and, when barriers are identified, may decide to take appropriate and proportionate positive action provided it is determined lawful to do so.

#### 1.6 WHAT ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

Every person in the world has basic human rights and freedoms. Human rights are based on core principles such as dignity, fairness, equality, respect and independence and are protected by law under the Human Rights Act 1998. Whilst the Human Rights Act 1998 does not apply directly to WWT, respecting human rights across the organisation is best practice and will be encouraged.

### 2. APPROACH

Central to Warwickshire Wildlife Trust's (WWT) approach is our belief that everyone has a right to access and benefit from nature. Our vision of Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull being alive with nature, experienced and enjoyed by all, goes hand in hand with the creation of a diverse organisation that reflects the communities we serve.

We are committed to building a working environment in which all individuals are free from discrimination and where all members of our community are treated with respect and dignity. The Trust aims to create a culture of diversity, providing an environment where everyone is valued for their contribution and individuality. We believe that all types of diversity enhance the work of the Trust and the differences of thought, skills, ideas and experience brought by a diverse team of staff and volunteers will be invaluable in tackling the current and future challenges faced by nature in Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull.

We are committed to equality, we value diversity, and we strive for inclusivity by design, taking into consideration the nine protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010. We also recognise that individuals and groups may face barriers outside of these protected characteristics such as caring responsibilities, socio-economic background, and gender identity. We understand that people's experiences can be affected by a number of overlapping characteristics or barriers, and we seek to dismantle the disadvantages that people face when accessing nature, volunteering or employment within our sector.

Our Equality Action Plan provides more detailed information on how we aim to achieve this.

### **3. SCOPE**

This policy is applicable to all trustees, staff, volunteers, trainees and applicants. The principles of this policy also apply to the way in which staff, trainees and volunteers should treat each other, visitors, participants in our activities, contractors, subcontractors, service providers, suppliers, former staff and volunteers and any other persons associated with the functions of WWT. We will work to ensure that all staff, trainees, volunteers and visitors, as well as those who seek to apply to work with us or who have previously worked with us, are treated fairly and are not subjected to unlawful discrimination by WWT.

### **4. OUR EDI GOALS**

Our goal is to embed strong EDI practices into everything we do. This policy is therefore not a catch-all or exhaustive list of the actions or objectives that will make our organisation more diverse and inclusive, but an overarching set of principles that we apply across the organisation. We also acknowledge that our organisation and sector as whole still has a lot of learning to do which means our objectives and practices will evolve.

To lead this work, WWT has a committed EDI Working Group which meets on a quarterly basis. The group is made up of representatives from across the organisation and reflects a range of responsibilities, professional knowledge and lived experience. The purpose of the group is to define WWT's EDI aims and objectives and ensure they are met across the organisation. WWT's EDI objectives are therefore not owned by one person but are clearly defined as a responsibility shared by the organisation as a whole.

#### **4.1. 360 Ownership**

Although our EDI strategy must be ultimately owned and driven by leadership, it will be aligned to the whole organisation with a level of ownership given to all. EDI will be at the heart of the organisation and built into the way WWT operates.

#### **4.2. Culture of Allyship**

We are committed to building an inclusive culture that values and supports all people with all backgrounds and characteristics. Activities such as training, education and socialisation, combined with policies that support and include people from underrepresented groups are key to driving inclusivity.

#### **4.3. Process and Policies**

EDI consideration will be woven into all policies, procedures and processes across the organisation to support diversity and drive inclusion. Doing so will ensure consistent support and application in everything we do and avoid EDI becoming an extension or afterthought.

#### **4.4 Training**

WWT will ensure trustees and employees undertake regular training (e.g. every 3 years, mandatory as part of the induction process) on EDI so they understand what their responsibilities are and how best to prevent and challenge discrimination.

#### **4.5 Raising Concerns**

The Trust will treat seriously any complaints of unlawful discrimination on any of the stated grounds made by employees, volunteers, trustees, trainees and other stakeholders and will take action where appropriate. Any cases of harassment, discrimination, bullying or victimisation will be taken very seriously by the Trust. Any member of staff found guilty of unlawful discrimination or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action which is outlined

in our grievance and disciplinary procedure. Staff, volunteers or other parties who make a complaint of discrimination have the right to do so without fear of victimisation and the Trust will make every effort to ensure victimisation does not occur and that any complaints are dealt with promptly and fairly. Human Resources will be available to help with any concerns or queries relating to discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation, and will assist the person in seeking resolution via the relevant policy. Trustees and volunteers whose behaviour gives cause for concern will be subject to the actions defined in WWT's volunteer policy and Trustee Code of Conduct.

## **5. DIVERSITY MONITORING POLICY**

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust understands the importance of assessing the effectiveness of measures taken to support EDI. To do this, we will at times monitor representation by requesting information from different groups of people. This information is collected across a variety of Trust operations including both internal staff, trustees and volunteers and external users of our services. If the data indicates any group sharing a protected characteristic is being disadvantaged by any of our policies, procedures or activities we will take action to try and reduce or prevent this disadvantage. Collection, processing and retention of personal information is carried out in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and WWT's Privacy and Data Retention policies.

WWT understands people do not have to disclose that they hold a specific protected characteristic or identity (with the exception of pregnant employees). WWT also understands that people who share the same characteristic often have very different needs and as such we will not assume the type of support that may be needed.

WWT will not 'pigeonhole' people into single protected characteristic groups and will always seek to support each protected characteristic equally.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

WWT is committed to continually reviewing and improving existing structures and practices. There is a firm commitment to tackling discrimination, harassment, hate and disadvantage and to fostering equality, diversity and inclusion. We are also committed to achieving the highest equality standards in all aspects of our work, including decision-making and employment practice.

## APPENDIX 1: EQUALITY THE LAW

WWTs want to be transparent regarding our work on EDI, and to record how we meet relevant legislation. As WWT is based in England the relevant legislation is the Equality Act 2010.

### THE EQUALITY ACT 2010

The Equality Act 2010 is the equalities legislation, which sets out unlawful ways to treat someone. The law protects people from unfair discrimination on the grounds of nine protected characteristics:-

- 1 Age: relates to a person belonging to a particular age group (e.g. 32-year-olds) or a range of ages (e.g. 18 – 30-year-olds).
- 2 Disability: defined as having a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long term' negative impact on your ability to do normal daily activities.
- 3 Sex: covers the 'characteristic' of being a man or of being a woman.
- 4 Gender Reassignment: the process of changing from one gender to another. This characteristic covers a person who is intending to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning their gender by changing physiological or other traits of gender.
- 5 Marriage and Civil Partnership: Civil partners must be treated the same as married couples on a wide range of legal matters.
- 6 Pregnancy and Maternity: pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.
- 7 Race: refers to a group of people defined by their colour, nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins.
- 8 Religion or Belief: religion refers to any religion or lack of religion and belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g., Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.
- 9 Sexual Orientation: whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex, both sexes or other.

It is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of any of these nine 'protected characteristics'.

## APPENDIX 2: TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION

### DIRECT DISCRIMINATION

This refers to when a person is treated less fairly, due to a perceived difference they may have. For example, Fred, a senior manager turns down June's application for promotion as a supervisor. June, who is a lesbian, learns this is because Fred believes the team she applied to manage are homophobic. Fred thought June's sexual orientation would prevent her from gaining the team's respect and managing them effectively. This is direct sexual orientation discrimination against June.

### INDIRECT DISCRIMINATION

This occurs when, for example, a rule is applied fairly to all but in fact, the ability of one group to respond to that rule, is much greater than the ability of another. An example of this might be a rule that everyone should apply for something via the internet. This could exclude the older generation who may not have internet access or computer skills.

### DISCRIMINATION BY ASSOCIATION

This is a form of discrimination which occurs when one person has a protected characteristic, but another person is treated negatively from knowing them. For example, you could be discriminated against because you have a family member or a friend who has a disability. For example, May works as a project manager and is looking forward to a promised promotion. However, after she tells her boss that her mother, who lives at home, has had a stroke, the promotion is withdrawn. This may be discrimination against May because of her association with a disabled person.

### DISCRIMINATION BY PERCEPTION

This refers to discrimination because you believe a person has a protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually have that characteristic. For example, Tom is 45 but looks much younger. Many people assume he is in his mid-20s. He is not allowed to represent his company at an international meeting because the managing director thinks he is too young. Tom has been discriminated against on the perception of a protected characteristic.