



*Developing young people through
personal challenge*

Equality & Diversity Policy

The Trustees and Management of Youth Challenge Oxfordshire (YoCO) are committed to equality and diversity and providing equal access to services, information and jobs (voluntary and paid) in line with our aims and values and relevant legislation. The charity is open to all regardless of age, colour, disability, ethnic origin, gender, HIV status, marital status, nationality or national origin, race, religious or political beliefs, responsibility for dependents, or sexual orientation. We will not tolerate attitudes and behaviour that amount to discrimination on these grounds.

Equality and diversity is about accepting people's differences and creating an environment in which all can thrive and contribute. YoCO is committed to ensuring that all feel valued, that the skills and talents of individuals are recognised and fully utilised and that the environment in the charity is productive and rewarding. The charity is a place where there is respect for difference in culture and experience.

The charity will not tolerate processes, attitudes and behaviour that amount to discrimination, including harassment, victimisation and bullying through prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping.

All youth group leaders will be made aware of the contents of this policy as part of the induction process.

The trustees and management will be active in making sure all its policies and procedures are fair and no member is disadvantaged when participating in the charity's activities it provides.

YoCO is also aware of how people can be subject to harassment on a wide variety of grounds and take many forms. Harassment is a physical, verbal or non-verbal action which is unwelcome, unwanted and offensive to the recipient and has the effect of violating their dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive atmosphere for that person. This can include embarrassing or offensive jokes, unwelcome physical contact or sexual advances, the expression of racist, homophobic views, lewd comments and innuendo, sending offensive text messages and/or social media interactions.

The trustees are responsible for implementing this policy and upholding its principles in everything it does. The employees and volunteers are responsible for making sure the policy is upheld in the youth groups and leading by example in its principles and practices.

1. Procedures

We will make sure that:

1. We promote respect for other people and treat everyone fairly

2. We will not use discriminatory practices in the youth group environment
3. Young people and adults are able to meet together in a positive and accepting environment where they are safe from harm, abuse, harassment and intimidation
4. Young people and adults recognise and challenge prejudice and discrimination
5. Everyone has an equal opportunity to be considered as a volunteer leader
6. All leaders will have equal access to training opportunities
7. All young people will have equal access to group activities and training opportunities
8. We deal promptly with any complaints of discrimination
9. The policy is applied when recruiting volunteers
10. We monitor what we do to meet any legal requirements and so that this policy is implemented properly and understood by all
11. We take incidents, including those of harassment and bullying, seriously

Any issues of inequality, harassment or discrimination should be reported to the Youth Group Leader and Youth Group Manager, who will enable the parties involved to give their version of events before considering further action.

The Youth Group Leader will respond quickly and impartially to such issues after consulting with the Youth Group Manager, if necessary. We have a responsibility to challenge all forms of discrimination.

2. Membership

Equality and diversity will always be considered in the membership of YoCO youth groups. We will make sure that everyone is treated equally, fairly and has access to the same opportunities. The same opportunities for involvement will be provided for every member with regards to activities, training, election of committee members, the formation of groups and the delegation of tasks. The differing needs of individual members will be taken into account when booking venues and arranging the dates and times for youth group activities and events. These will be arranged so that as many members as possible can attend.

3. Involving Members

It is important that members are involved in running the youth group and that young people who live in the surrounding community feel that they are welcome to join. The ways in which we promote the youth group's aims and activities will consider the diversity of their community, including hard-to-reach groups.

4. Conduct

The youth group is a place where everyone feels comfortable to get involved in activities. Any discriminatory or offensive behaviour will not be tolerated. This also includes meetings and trips.

5. Training

Everyone involved with YoCO: Trustees to volunteers, employees, and young people should abide by this policy. We have a duty to make everyone aware of it and to ensure that it is followed. Training and support will be made available to help everyone understand it and put it into practice. Training to raise awareness of equality and diversity issues will be offered to Trustees and staff/volunteers.

6. Unacceptable behaviour

Bullying, harassment and discriminatory behaviour are unacceptable and will be challenged. Volunteers and staff have a responsibility to report any offensive behaviour that they witness. The Youth Group Code of Conduct will be used to help everyone understand what is expected. The code includes procedures in case anyone does break this code.

7. Implementing and following the policy

The Trustees will review procedures annually and continue to make newcomers aware of the policy. It will be included in the induction of staff and volunteers.

The procedures laid out in this policy are with regard to legislation defined by the **Sex Discrimination Act 1975** (amendments 1986 & Gender Reassignment Regs 1999); the **Race Relations Act 1976** and the Amendment Act 2000; the **Equal Pay Acts 1970** (amended 1974 & 1983) & 1975; the **Disability Discrimination Act 1995**; the **Employment Protection Act 1978** the **Employment Rights Act 1996**, **Employment Relations Act 1999**, **Employment Act 2002**, **Employment Equality (Religion, Belief, Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 (Age) 2006**; **Disability Equality Duty 2006**; **Equality Act 2006**; **Gender Equality Duty 2007**; **Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1992**; **Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 and 1999**; **Human Rights Act 1998**; **Protection from Harassment Act 1997**; **Equality Act 2010**.

This policy was adopted at the Board of Trustees Meeting on 19th January 2022

On behalf of the Board of Trustees: Jane Cranston (signed)

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees. Review Date January 2023