



Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

Common Soil acknowledges that in our society certain groups or individuals are denied fair or needed treatment on the grounds of race, gender, marital status, caring responsibilities, disability, gender re-assignment, age, social class, sexual orientation and religion/belief or any other factor irrelevant to the purpose in view.

Common Soil also recognises that it has moral and social responsibilities that go beyond the statutory requirements, and that it should support and contribute to the wider process of change through all aspects of its work and practices in order to eliminate discrimination and promote equity and diversity.

Common Soil is committed to taking positive steps to ensure that:

- all people are treated with dignity and respect, valuing the diversity of all;
- equality of opportunity for all individuals to make the most of their lives and talents is promoted;
- services are accessible, appropriate and delivered fairly to all;
- socially and economically disadvantaged sections of the community are encouraged to participate in Common Soil's activities.

It is the policy of Common Soil to provide equality of opportunity for everyone regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, colour, national, ethnic or class origin, religious or philosophical belief, marital status, parental status or impairment.

The organisation seeks to comply with the relevant legislation listed at the end of this Statement and to ensure that no individual is discriminated against in the planning and delivery of any of our activities.

Employees, contractors, management committee members, community or vegetable members and volunteers who do not comply with the requirements of the legislation or with this Policy and Code of Practice may face disciplinary action.

Common Soil holds equity of treatment of individuals and the opportunity for all people to make the most of their lives and talents as a core belief and therefore seeks to ensure that all of its policies as well as its practices are informed by the relevant legislation (see below).

It is our policy that all staff, contractors, volunteers, management committee members, community and vegetable members and the community in general should be treated fairly in all matters. Through the process of its work, the organisation aims to celebrate the diversity and strengths which arise from differences of culture and lifestyle. In introducing this policy we recognise that many people are unfamiliar with the ways in which

discrimination and disadvantage affect people's health, well-being and quality of life. We will therefore support people to develop awareness and understanding around this.

Objectives

1. To ensure that all users (potential or actual), management committee members, community or vegetable members, volunteers and members of staff or contractors are treated with respect.
2. To ensure that our activities and services are open and accessible to as many people as possible within the area.
3. To aim for representation on the management committee of a diverse range of people.
4. To ensure that any staff are recruited and, where appropriate, promoted, on merit regardless of background and other discriminatory factors, save where the needs of users justify a more balanced representation.
5. To ensure that all volunteers are recruited on merit regardless of background and other discriminatory factors.
6. To seek to make premises accessible and welcoming to all sections of the community within the aims and resources of the service.

Code of Practice

The following Code of Practice is intended as a general guide for public display.

1. At Common Soil, people will be treated with dignity and respect regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, income, marriage or civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. These are the 'protected characteristics' named in the Equality Act 2010 (see below for explanations).

2. At all times, people's feelings will be valued and respected. Language or humour that people find offensive (for example, racist or sexist jokes or terminology that are derogatory to someone with an impairment) will be challenged.

3. Harassment, bullying, abuse or intimidation on the ground of race, sex, age, nationality, impairment or sexual orientation will also be challenged. Incidents of harassment, whether based on any of the above grounds or not, will be taken seriously. If the matter cannot be resolved by way of an acceptable apology and an undertaking that the offence will not be repeated, the following action will be taken: a) In a case involving a member of the organisation, contractor or volunteer, they will be suspended from membership and engagement with the organisation until such time as they can appear before the management committee. b) In a case involving staff, disciplinary action will be taken.

Review and Action

We recognise that it is important for us to regularly review this policy to ensure that it reflects up to date equality legislation and best practice. Our policy aims to be in line with the Equality Act 2010, which has replaced nine previous pieces of legislation preventing

discrimination. The following additional legislation is still relevant: • The Human Rights Act 1998. • The Work and Families Act 2006. • Employment Equal Treatment Framework Directive 2000 (as amended).

Additional Information and explanation of terms

Equality Act 2010 – Explanation of the Protected Characteristics

Age: An age group includes people of the same age and people of a particular range of ages. Where people fall in the same age group they share the protected characteristic of age. An age group would include “over fifties” or twenty-one year olds. A person aged twenty-one does not share the same characteristic of age with “people in their forties”. However, a person aged twenty-one and people in their forties can share the characteristic of being in the “under fifty” age range.

Disability: A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This section replaces similar provisions in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and provisions in secondary legislation made under that Act.

Gender reassignment: A person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if the person is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person’s sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.

Marriage and civil partnership: A person has the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership if the person is married or is a civil partner. A person who is engaged to be married is not married and therefore does not have this protected characteristic. A divorcee or a person whose civil partnership has been dissolved is not married or in a civil partnership and therefore does not have this protected characteristic.

Race: Race is defined as (with examples)

- Colour: includes being black or white.
- Nationality: includes being a British, Australian or Swiss citizen.
- Ethnic or national origins: include being from a Roma background or of Chinese heritage.

A racial group could be “black Britons” which would encompass those people who are both black and who are British citizens. This section replaces similar provisions in the Race Relations Act 1976. However, the power to add caste to the definition of race is a new provision.

Religion or belief: religion means any religion and a reference to religion includes a reference to a lack of religion. A religion must have a clear structure and belief system. Denominations or sects within a religion can be considered to be a religion or belief, such as Protestants and Catholics within Christianity. A belief means any religious or philosophical belief and a reference to belief includes a reference to a lack of belief. A “philosophical belief” must:

- Be genuinely held

- Be a belief and not an opinion or viewpoint based on the present state of information available
- Be a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour
- Attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance
- Be worthy of respect in a democratic society, compatible with human dignity and not conflict with the fundamental rights of others.
- Any cult involved in illegal activities is not covered. Beliefs such as humanism and atheism would be covered.

This section replaces similar provisions in the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 and the Equality Act 2006.

Sex:

- A reference to a person who has a particular protected characteristic is a reference to a man or to a woman;
- A reference to persons who share a protected characteristic is a reference to persons of the same sex.

Sexual orientation: is a person's sexual orientation towards:

- People of the same sex as him or her (in other words the person is a gay man or a lesbian)
- People of the opposite sex from him or her (the person is heterosexual)
- People of both sexes (the person is bisexual). This definition is designed to replicate the effect of similar provisions in the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 and the Equality Act 2006. Source: Equality Act 2010 and Explanatory Notes to the Equality Act 2.

Policy approved by the Common Soil Management Committee: 15 March 2023