



Essex
Wildlife Trust

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

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1. Introduction

Essex Wildlife Trusts ('the Trust') prides itself in its proactive approach to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) which stems from the Social Model of Inclusion, as well as a belief in systemic and structural inequalities.

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. The Trust has the opportunity to remove such barriers and promote an inclusive environment by assessing all aspects of our work for the impact on equalities, 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 principals have been revised to prevent the discrimination of those with other protected characteristics.

Systemic and structural inequalities occur when the fabric of organisations, institutions, governments or social networks contains an embedded cultural, linguistic, economic, religious/belief, physical or identity based bias which provides advantages for some members and marginalises or produces disadvantages for other members. Only by accepting that inequalities are embedded in the systems and structures in a local and international context, can we begin to break them down.

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

1.1 This Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy is a public statement of our objectives and approach. This document, which we refer to as the Policy, has been developed to ensure we meet the requirements of the relevant Equality Law (The Equalities Act 2010).



The Policy however, goes much further and contributes to our commitment to EDI with specific focus on:

- Reinforcing the Trust's responsibility under both the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010, and our role as leaders, service provider, employer and purchaser of goods and services.
- Developing a strategy and action plan to help us ensure equality of opportunity across all sections of the workforce, and to ensure our services to all stakeholders are provided fairly and without discrimination.
- Promoting EDI across our trustees, staff, and volunteers to ensure the removal of unfair discrimination, disadvantage, and harassment and to promote a culture of inclusion. Also, to foster good relations in the workplace and between different groups.
- Educating trustees, staff and volunteers at all levels to approach their work with an open mind and to offer support and assistance to others without making decisions based on preconceptions.

1.1 This policy includes a specific section in relation to EDI and the Trust's Nature Nursery provision, see appendix (see Section 7).

2. Definitions and Equality Terms

2.1 WHAT IS EQUALITY

Equality means everyone is treated fairly, with respect, and are given fair chances and opportunities. We realise individual's needs are sometimes best met in different ways, but people must not be unfairly discriminated against. Equality means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities. *Equity* recognizes that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

Our approach to equality recognises that our social identity which includes sex, gender, race, disability, age, social class, sexual orientation, and religion will impact on our life experiences.

Equality of opportunity, in terms of access to fair and equitable services, is equal treatment and outcomes that meet the needs of the individual.

2.2 What is Diversity

This refers to the differences which exist between each of us and recognising the value of difference. It's about understanding each other and truly embracing the intersectionality of every individual.

Diversity is about valuing different identities, knowledge, skills, ideas and experiences, and using these differences to create an innovative workforce and organisation to increase our effectiveness.

2.3 What is Inclusion

Inclusion is the culture in which the mix of people with different backgrounds, characteristics, and ways of thinking, can come to work, feel comfortable and confident to be themselves, and work in a way that suits them and delivers our organisational objectives.

Inclusion will ensure that everyone feels valued and importantly, adds value. An inclusive culture, in essence, is one where employees feel that there are no barriers to being open and true to themselves. The goal is for employees to feel a sense of involvement and the ability to contribute to company-wide discussions and projects.

2.3 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.

2.4 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.

2.5 Positive Actions

This refers to certain actions taken to attempt to put right an imbalance in the makeup of a workforce or to offer traineeships/training opportunities to a specific minority group. For example, an organisation may wish to employ more individuals with a disability or those who align themselves as from minority ethnic communities, in order to have a more diverse workforce. Therefore, they encourage people from these protected groups to apply for vacancies, e.g., disabled people are guaranteed an interview if they meet all the essential criteria. If an organisation has a decision to make between two equally qualified and suitable candidates, positive action can be used to choose the candidate that holds the specific characteristic the organisation is looking for.

2.6 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.

2.7 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.

2.8 Human Rights

Whilst the Human Rights Act 1998 does not apply directly to the Trust, respecting Human Rights across the organisation is best practice and will be encouraged. 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.

3. Approach

Research shows that no one is completely free from prejudice. Prejudices manifest themselves during the early years and are influenced by family, the community and the media. We understand this and as such all our staff and key volunteers will undertake bespoke equality training to help them recognise their prejudices and overcome them, as we are aware that prejudice can lead to discrimination.

Although the Equality Act 2010 details nine protected characteristics, the Trust understands that our trustees, employees and volunteers, do not have to disclose their EDI data. The Trust also understands that people who share the same characteristic may have different requirements, and as such our training also covers asking open questions and offering support if required, without assuming the type of support required.

The Trust will not 'pigeon hole' people into single protected characteristic groups, and will always seek to support each protected characteristic equally. Although not covered in the Equality Act 2010, we also include geographical inequality and social inequality in our work.

3.1 Equality Statement

The Equality Statement has been written to help us promote and advance equality, and diversity as part of everything we do.

Over the next seven years, the Trust will:

Work to understand the current diversity of the organisation, noting areas of underrepresentation, and taking a proactive approach to ensuring the Trust is a diverse organisation with representation from all groups within the communities we serve. We will work with internal and external networks and

stakeholders to address all areas of underrepresentation and to adopt best practice. We will be actively anti-discriminatory and will have a suite of training materials for trustees, staff and volunteers to embed EDI across the organisation and ensure each person knows their responsibilities.

The Trust will also work towards ensuring:

1. **We have diverse & inclusive leadership** - our movement will be led by diverse, inclusive and effective leaders who embrace the challenge of increasing our diversity and recognise the contribution diversity makes to our people and to wildlife.
2. **We are increasing our diversity** – we will become more relevant to more people by ensuring our staff, volunteers and trustees reflect the diversity of the communities in which we live and work, by increasing opportunities and reducing barriers for marginalised and underserved groups.
3. **We are developing an inclusive culture** - where our staff, volunteers and trustees are Wild About Inclusion, where difference is celebrated, everyone can be themselves, feel respected and able to reach their full potential.
4. **We are communicating inclusively** – the ways that we connect with our staff, volunteers and communities will be intentionally inclusive and nurture a sense of belonging. We will demonstrate solidarity for people from different backgrounds, abilities and identities, and ensure they are empowered to change the natural world for the better.
5. **We provide access and engagement for everyone** - We will increase our engagement with diverse communities, to better understand and overcome barriers to accessing and engaging with nature and to ensure that everyone can benefit from the joy of wildlife in their daily lives.

3.2 Our Roles as Leaders

This Policy assists the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT), Operational Leadership Team (OLT), Inclusion Champions and line managers, to fully meet the aims set out in the Equality Statement (see 3.1) and to fully realise the equality objectives of the Trust. All supporting documents, codes of practice, legislative information, monitoring and training will be aimed at helping all trustees, employees, and volunteers to implement the policy effectively. These responsibilities are:-

- To provide leadership through SLT & OLT who will work, with the support of People and Culture, to embed an EDI culture within the Trust.
- For all employees to embrace the principles of EDI and apply these to their everyday activities.
- Not to harass, abuse or bully any individual, on the grounds of a protected characteristic or on the grounds of geographical inequality and social inequality.
- To provide guidance to staff on equality and diversity law, and be proactive in promoting EDI. The Culture Team will advise staff and volunteers on training, monitoring, service and policy reviews and engaging with external partners as appropriate.

3.3 Accessible Communications

We want to encourage communication with people from different communities and make sure we do this in a way that prevents exclusion.

The Trust will:

- Talk to people and listen to people in the way they find the easiest and best. We will also help others to do the same.
- Look at ways to raise the profile of EDI through targeted positive communications, EDI events, either as the Trust or working in partnership with other organisations. Invitations and publicity for events will clearly state the appropriate booking systems to request any facilities or services required.
- Continue to provide information upon request in a number of different formats and offer to go through a document personally with someone to help them understand it, when and where possible. Alternative formats which may include easy read, large print, Braille and audio will be available on request. We will produce a version of this document in Easy Read by the end of September 2024.
- Continue to ensure, where possible that meetings and events are accessible. This includes providing, upon request, alternative formats for written documents, help with using a hearing loop system, level access, accessible toilets, where possible assist with the provision with transport to and from the venue, and adequate emergency exit procedures.

4. Diversity Monitoring Process

Diversity monitoring is looking at the information that is collected about different groups of people. This will tell us how well EDI is embedded in the work we do. It is something we think is very important for understanding our trustees, employees and volunteers.

Information is collected and analysed covering: age, disability (including neurodiversity and learning needs), gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

This also includes information about levels of pay, information on applications for jobs and how successful different groups of people have been, staff who started and left the organisation and staff complaints.

The information is used to check if any group sharing a protected characteristic is being disadvantaged by any of the Trust's employment policies or procedures. If this is the case, we will take action to reduce or prevent this disadvantage.

The Trust Diversity Monitoring guide tells staff and volunteers how we collect information on the protected characteristics. This information will be used to:-

- Understand how many people from different protected characteristics are employed by the Trust.
- Help understand what different groups think about our work and about what can be improved to meet their needs.

5. Embedding Equality and Diversity in all we do

5.1 Equal Opportunities and What the Law Says

The Trust wants to be transparent regarding our work on EDI, as such we want to record how we meet relevant legislation. As the Trust is based in England the relevant legislation is the Equality Act 2010.

5.2 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 a person's 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'. The Trust also recognises geographical and social inequalities.

5.3 Charity Governance Code

The Trust is also bound by the Charity Governance Code with section 6 relating to EDI.

Principle 6. Equality, diversity and inclusion

The board has a clear, agreed and effective approach to supporting equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the organisation and in its own practice. This approach supports good governance and the delivery of the organisation's charitable purposes.

Rationale

Addressing EDI helps a board to make better decisions. This requires commitment, but it means that a charity is more likely to stay relevant to those it serves and to deliver its public benefit. Recognising and countering any imbalances in power, perspectives and opportunities in the charity, and in the attitudes and behaviour of trustees, staff and volunteers, helps to make sure that a charity achieves its aims.

All trustees have the same responsibility for the charity, so they must have equal opportunity to contribute to decision making. Board diversity, in the widest sense, is important because it creates more balanced decision making. Where appropriate, this includes the communities and people the charity serves. This increases the charity's legitimacy and impact. EDI are only effective and sustainable if the board works to be inclusive, ensuring that all trustees are welcomed, valued and able to contribute.

Boards that commit to EDI are more likely to set a positive example and tone for the charity by following an appropriate strategy for delivering its purpose and setting inclusive values and culture.

5.4 Assessing Equality Impact

The Trust wants to ensure that it has paid due regard to the needs of all involved with its work, from trustees to volunteers & employees, and has not without knowing or by mistake, disadvantaged or discriminated against any protected group.

5.5 What We Will Do

Use the new Equality Impact Matrix form to do a risk-based equality analysis, to assess services, functions, projects and policies, for their likely or actual effect on people with respect to EDI. The Equality Impact Matrix form and guidance for completing them will be available upon request, and on WildPoint.

- Ensure the equality impact process is robust and supported with a guidance document, which meets the legal requirements and ensure staff are trained on how to complete the new Equality Impact Matrix form.
- Actions arising from equality analysis and assessments will be reflected in relevant Team Plans.

5.6 Equality in the Workplace

The Trust is committed to all aspects of equal opportunities in employment, including fair employment and equal pay policy.

The Trust:

- Promotes opportunities to ensure its workforce is diverse and representative of the local community.
- Ensures opportunities are accessible to people from all sections of the community.
- Ensures all applicants for opportunities are aware of our equalities policies and of their right to be treated with dignity and respect.
- Ensures employees are treated equitably in all areas of employment, including career development, pay, training and promotion.
- Ensures volunteers are treated equitably in all areas of volunteering.
- Addresses harassment and bullying in the workplace.
- Will seek to improve consultation with staff and volunteers from the protected groups.
- Continually reviews human resource policies to assess their impact on the protected groups covered by the policy.
- Monitors recruitment, promotion, training, grievances, disciplinary procedures and exit interviews from employment and volunteering.

5.7 Equalities Linked to Employment and Volunteering Policies

There are a wide range of policies to support people who work for us and future employees. These policies let staff know what is expected from them as employees and what they can expect from the Trust as an employer. Equality monitoring starts at the point of application and continues through to minimise any unconscious bias and to help us achieve a workforce that is representative.

The Trust staff are active in promoting and supporting diversity in the workforce. This includes:

- Being an equal opportunities employer, including anonymous application shortlisting processes in recruitment.
- Making sure we are fair in what we pay people, through having a non-discriminatory job evaluation scheme;
- Making sure bullying and harassment doesn't happen in the workplace;
- Supporting employees in making sure they have a good balance of work life and home life (work-life balance).

The Trust understands the law in respect of reasonable adjustments and our duty as an employer to take such steps as are reasonable to prevent any practice, policy, physical feature of the workplace or any other arrangements being made, which places a disabled employee or applicant at a disadvantage compared to a non-disabled employee or applicant.

5.8 Training

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

5.9 Equality and Diversity in Procurement

The Trust procurement processes includes promotion of equality of opportunity for businesses, volunteers and staff alike. For each procurement process the responsible member of staff will endeavour to understand the equality impact of the proposed purchase or contract, so that the process being used ensures that the supplier understands and is capable of delivering their duties in respect of equality.

Exactly what is undertaken will be specific to the activity but may include evaluation of supplier policy, understanding of how that policy is implemented and communicated, and how a supplier measures its demographics against the communities it serves.

5.10 Engaging and Consulting with Communities

The Trust understand that it is important to talk to people from communities that are underrepresented at the Trust, to understand what they need from us in order to provide the opportunity to join us.

The Trust will:

- Help people who may be disadvantaged due to a protected characteristic, geographical or social deprivation to take part in activities in their community, and to have their say in consultations about the decisions the Trust makes about its work and how they may be affected. This could be through: surveys, questionnaires, focus groups or open meetings.
- Represent these communities at meetings to make sure the views of the community are heard.
- Listen to the opinions and complaints of individuals, local forums, community groups and partners to ensure feedback is taken into account in service provision and policy development.
- Working with other environmental organisations and keeping abreast of new developments that could help us achieve our aims.
- Feedback the results of engagement and consultation to all involved.

5.11 Equality Groups to Promote Equality and Diversity

Inclusion Champions at the Trust are a staff group dedicated toward improving EDI & assisting us in fulfilling our ambitious EDI strategy.

Countryside Link: This group provides an EDI network for environmental organisations to help with best practice.

RSWT Staff Networks: These groups play an important role in shaping policies and employment initiatives, whilst supporting and responding to issues raised by their group.

Online groups/networks: Inclusive Employers, Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion, Diversity & Inclusion Leaders who provide advice, guidance, and training.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Policy Summary

This Policy recognises the constant diversity changes happening within our sector and our organisation, and as such the Trust is committed to continually reviewing and improving existing structures and practices. There is a firm commitment to provide equality of opportunity, tackling discrimination, harassment, hate and disadvantage and to fostering good relations. We are also committed to achieving the highest equality standards in all aspects of our work, including decision-making and employment and volunteering practice.

The focus of all aspects of EDI is the ability to achieve our Equality Statement by 2030.

6.2 Publishing The Results

We recognise the importance of not only communicating our clear commitment to EDI but also the importance of keeping people regularly informed of the progress being made and the outcomes being achieved. This includes opportunities for people to take part in this work and help contribute to the improvements the Trust is seeking.

To help keep people informed we will:

- Share results with selected consultation groups.
- Share results with our trustees, employees and volunteers.
- We will publish information on WildPoint.
- Produce a yearly report of our progress against the Equality themes which are contained within the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and make this available on WildPoint and in other formats on request.
- Publish information on the Trust website about the Trusts work to progress its overall equalities agenda.

6.3 Equality and Diversity Strategy

An EDI strategy and action plan has been developed in relation to the deliverables and commitments detailed in this Policy with a view to achieving our Equality Statement.

The purpose of the strategy and action plan is to:-

- Ensure the Trust maintains and improves its standards in EDI in a timely manner.
- Ensure the Trust maintains its focus to give 'due regard' to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

7. Appendices

Legal Framework:

- The Equality Act (2010) [Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/353622/Equality_Act_2010_guidance_-_GOV.UK.pdf)
- Children Act (1989) & (2004) [The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/353622/Equality_Act_2010_guidance_-_GOV.UK.pdf) [Children Act 2004 - Explanatory Notes \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/explanatory-notes)
- Children and Families Act (2014) [Young person's guide to the Children and Families Act 2014 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/353622/Equality_Act_2010_guidance_-_GOV.UK.pdf)
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice (2015) [SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/353622/Equality_Act_2010_guidance_-_GOV.UK.pdf)
- EYFS Framework (2021) [Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/353622/Equality_Act_2010_guidance_-_GOV.UK.pdf)