Equality and Diversity Policy

Policy agreed: October 2026
Review date: October 2028

The Independent Custody Visiting Association

Purpose

ICVA recognises that certain individuals and groups in society suffer discrimination on the grounds of age, sex, sexual orientation, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religious belief, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, disability, and marital status, culture, and socio-economic background. The Equality Act (2010) helps by providing a legal framework to protect people from discrimination, harassment and victimisation in the workplace and wider society.

ICVA is an organisation which values diversity in all its forms, both in terms of individual and collective backgrounds of the organisation, its Board, members, and independent custody visitors. To ensure that ICVA is open and transparent in its determination to be an equal opportunities employer, and further the aim of effective diversity for its members and volunteers, the following policy has been agreed by the Board.

ICVA is an organisation that values the dignity of all those with whom it has contact, works alongside of, and represents. ICVA is committed to protecting the right of individuals to be treated with dignity and respect.

Policy statement

All employees and directors at ICVA will ensure that they do not engage in direct or indirect discrimination based on the grounds above.
We will seek to ensure that our services and resources are relevant and non-discriminatory, actively encouraging diversity to all members and service users and are perceived by them as being so.
The aim of the policy is to ensure no job applicant, employee worker or beneficiary is discriminated against either directly or indirectly on the grounds above and to determine ICVA's commitment to diversity.
Directors and the Chief Executive Officer have primary responsibility for ensuring equal opportunities in service delivery and employment practice. All members, employees, workers and volunteers must adhere to this policy in the course of their work, monitor it on a day-to-day basis and report on its operation to the Board.

Employees and directors all have a responsibility under this policy to challenge and report any unacceptable behaviour from either other employees or directors, or any unacceptable behaviour observed by those outside of the organisation where it is seen or heard.
A failure to comply with the principles set out in this policy may be considered to be a disciplinary offence and will be addressed through the relevant procedures.

Employer's responsibilities

ICVA will:

- Communicate the policy to all staff, volunteers, members of advisory groups and members via the ICVA website and the members' website.
- Discuss and, where appropriate, agree with employees and directors any proposed changes in the policy's contents and implementation.
- Ensure that disciplinary and grievance procedures contained in contracts incorporate principles of equal opportunity and non-discrimination.
- Regularly examine existing procedures and criteria, including recruitment practices, and terms and conditions of employment and change them where they are actually or potentially discriminatory.
- Ensure that the organisation is kept up to date and within the law.
- Provide training and guidance to enable employees to carry out the policy and provide specific training for relevant decision-makers, including members of the Board where appropriate.

- Regularly monitor the application of the policy.

Recruitment and selection
We will ensure that employees and directors making selection and recruitment decisions do not discriminate, whether consciously or unconsciously, in making these decisions.
Promotion and advancement will be made on merit and all decisions relating to this will be made within the overall framework and principles of this policy.
Job descriptions will be in line with our diversity and equal opportunities policy. Job requirements will be reflected accurately in any personnel specifications.
We will adopt a consistent, non-discriminatory approach to the advertising of vacancies.
We will not confine our recruitment to areas or media sources which provide only, or mainly, applicants of a particular group.
All applicants who apply for jobs with us will receive fair treatment and will be considered solely on their ability to do the job.
All employees involved in the recruitment process will periodically review their selection criteria to ensure that they are related to the job requirements and do not unlawfully discriminate.
Shortlisting and interviewing will be carried out by more than one person where possible.
Interview questions will be related to the requirements of the job and will not be discriminatory.
We will not disqualify any applicant because he/she is unable to complete an application form unassisted unless personal completion of the form is a valid test of the standard of English required for the safe and effective performance of the job.
We will make reasonable adjustments e.g. video interviews as needed by the applicant.
Selection decisions will not be influenced by any perceived prejudices of other employees.

Service provision
ICVA will work actively towards ensuring that our services and resources are relevant to all members and service users. We will examine each area of work to determine whether:

- The service is offered in an accessible and relevant way.
- Alternative methods would be more appropriate.
- Additional services should be developed.
- There are any practices/procedures which are discriminatory.

All written resources for groups and individuals produced by ICVA will reflect the mixed community within which we work and stereotyped images of particular groups will not be reinforced. All employees, board members, members and volunteers must ensure that their work on behalf of ICVA and otherwise, reflects these principles.

Users must have easy access to information about ICVA's services which may involve making materials available where appropriate in a variety of media, e.g. in large print or electronically. In particular, all printed materials will be in a minimum of 10pt type.

It is also recognised that ICVA may not be able to meet all the demands made upon its services. The business plan for ICVA will be publicly available and includes a list of priorities for the service which will be reviewed at least annually. All requests from members will be considered on an equitable basis, free of discrimination.

ICVA will ensure that all its materials encourage its member schemes to consider the diversity of their volunteers and aim for a diverse pool of independent custody visitors.

ICVA will provide resources to assist its members in recruiting diversely which will be available to all members.
ICVA will commission services on a best value basis, but will use diverse suppliers where possible.

Employment

Employees are entitled to support from management and colleagues. Employees will receive regular supervision from their line manager.

ICVA recognises that training is an important factor in leading to job achievement and opportunity. Induction training is particularly important and will be made available to all new staff. When other needs are identified, every effort will be made to ensure that training is provided.

ICVA recognises that from time-to-time family and social circumstances may change and consequently, workers may need to change their conditions of work. ICVA will attempt, where circumstances and resources permit, to accommodate the needs of those workers.

Purchasing

ICVA will try to ensure that the goods and services it offers are accessible to all groups. It will not knowingly receive or purchase goods and services from agencies which practice discrimination.