



‘Inclusion Matters’

**Victim Support’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
strategy and action plan 2019-2023**

Victim Support Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2019-2023

Foreword Diana Fawcett - Chief Officer

This strategy demonstrates our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and explains how we will turn that commitment into action. As an organisation we strive to ensure that people affected by crime are supported effectively using an inclusive and person-centred approach. We pride ourselves on being accessible to all those affected by crime and are particularly mindful of those who come from under represented parts of society and those who are more likely to be victims of crime but may be less likely to engage with mainstream services. We are committed to continuous improvement and developing innovative and relevant services that meet service users' diverse needs.

Our staff and volunteers are at the heart of what we do and we want to ensure that they are all effectively equipped and supported to carry out their role and be able to be their authentic selves within our organisation.

Roger Harding - Chair - Victim Support's People Committee

Victim Support's commitment to embedding EDI throughout our employment, volunteering and service delivery practices underpins our aim to ensure that anyone who is a victim of crime gets the support they need. For us, embedding EDI means that our staff and volunteers represent the diverse communities that we serve, that all staff and volunteers feel included, respected and heard and that our services are accessible to all and continue to improve because of our increased understanding of what our communities want and need from us.

We are proud that for many years our work to embed EDI has been externally recognised but as a Board we are committed to ensuring that we continue this journey and adapt to the ever changing landscape around us. This means that we will continue to review and update our EDI training, recruitment practices, community engagement and the support that we provide to victims of crime in response to feedback and best practice. The People Committee monitors this work to ensure that EDI remains an integral part of Victim Support's service delivery and overall culture.

1. Who we are and what we do

Who We Are

Victim Support is an independent charity. We are dedicated to supporting people affected by crime and traumatic incidents in England and Wales, and we put them at the heart of our organisation. Our support and campaigns are informed and shaped by them and their experiences. We provide specialist services to help people cope and recover and to empower them to ensure their voices are heard individually and collectively at a local and national level.

What We Do

Our services help people affected by all types of crime and we provide free confidential support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year for people affected by crime and traumatic events – regardless of whether they have reported the crime to the police or when it occurred and for as long as it is needed.

Most of our services are delivered locally through skilled staff and volunteers who are deeply rooted in their communities. We adapt our services to meet local need and pride ourselves on being responsive to local demands. These services are closely linked into the National Homicide Service providing a dedicated, comprehensive service for those bereaved by murder and manslaughter and our national Supportline.

We are an independent charity and our unrivalled national overview gives us the ability to share best practice and innovate in our services as well as champion victims' rights from a strong evidence base.

2. Victim Support's vision, ambition and values

Vision

A world where there are fewer victims, but who have

- stronger rights,
- better support
- real influence in the CJS

Our Ambition for the next three years

By 2023

- we will have developed innovative new services that will meet new and emerging needs
- we will have empowered more people with specialist support and advocacy to feel safer and move on beyond the impact of the harm they have experienced and,
- we will have effected change by making the case for people to have stronger rights and feel respected by the criminal justice system

How we will achieve change

We will be focussed on four objectives to deliver the change that is needed.

- building resilience and contributing to people being and feeling safer
- reaching more people who do not report a crime or engage with services
- delivering effective services in the way people want to receive them
- empowering people to achieve the rights to which they are entitled and to speak out about their experiences to improve the CJS

Our Values

Everything we do is underpinned by our values which drive our organisational culture; what sort of organisation we are, what we stand for and how we behave. We are;

Empowering

- We work with people to shape the support that they receive, to develop their resilience and the skills to achieve their rights
- We treat everyone with dignity and respect
- We will ensure that the way we run VS at every level is informed by people with lived experiences of crime and harm and we will continue to develop the ways we involve and consult service users

Inclusive

- VS is committed to ensuring that all of our services are equitable and accessible to all; that our employees and volunteers reflect the diversity of the communities we serve, and that equality, diversity and inclusion is embedded across our organisation
- We will continue to develop channels to engage and consult with staff and volunteers to ensure their experience and voice is heard in the running of VS and the delivery of our services via the Staff Consultation Forum and the Volunteer Panel

Collaborative

- We will work together locally in a positive Multi Agency approach to best meet the needs of individual people affected by crime
- We will work closely with other like-minded organisations nationally and locally to campaign for improvements in the CJS and to develop our respective and collective organisational strength
- The environment affects us all now and for the future. We will work together and with other organisations to make VS a healthy place to work and visit. We are committed to continually improving our environmental performance, promoting the well-being of our teams and ensuring that we minimise any adverse environmental impact from our activities.

Independent

- We are an independent charity. This enables us to work alongside people to represent their interests, access the services they need, exercise their rights and support them to speak out

3. Why Equality, Diversity and Inclusion matters

Victim Support's EDI work supports and underpins its mission and values. Equality, diversity and inclusion is about treating people fairly, equitably and offering everyone equal access and opportunities. It means ensuring that there are no discriminatory practices or effects on any group of people arising from actions or systems and taking active steps to address any potential barriers to accessing services, employment or volunteering opportunities. This includes acknowledging the barriers that exist within the wider CJS, particularly for those from minority and marginalised communities. VS takes an intersectional approach to EDI, this means taking account of the multiple and intersecting identities that any of us can have, including those that are visible and non-visible and those that are included within equalities legislation and those that are not.

At Victim Support, we work hard to ensure that our services are created with the needs of our service users at their heart in order to ensure that their diverse needs can be met in a sensitive and professional way. Similarly we encourage all our staff and volunteers to make a positive and valued contribution towards achieving our organisation's goals by being transparent, honest and sensitive to individual needs and removing obstacles that may prevent personal and professional development. We strive to harness peoples' differences to create an environment in which:

- the diverse needs of victims are effectively met;
- peoples voices are heard;
- staff and volunteers talents are fully utilised, and
- we deliver against all of our strategic objectives

Research¹ tells us that diverse teams enhance creativity, knowledge, productivity, engagement and collaboration. This also enables us to have a better understanding of the needs of all our service users and teams.

Effectively embedding equality, diversity and inclusion within Victim Support enables us to:

- develop and deliver an effective and responsive service to all service users ;

¹ McKinsey (2014)

- understand and increase the quality and efficiency of the services we provide;
- attract and retain a diverse group of skilled staff and volunteers, who reflect the communities we serve;
- comply with the law and expectations of our Commissioners

At Victim Support we welcome and value equality, diversity and inclusion. We work with a diverse range of people and communities, and are committed to understanding and responding to their needs, in order to provide an effective and responsive service.

Our people are entitled to work in an environment without fear of discrimination, harassment, bullying or prejudice, regardless of their differences. We strive to make sure that all of our people and our service users are treated with dignity and respect, and feel valued. We seek to attract, develop, promote and retain the best talent. It is our people - both paid staff and volunteers, who set us apart from the rest and who enable us to deliver professional bespoke services to victims of crime.

4. Providing services to service users

We believe that support for victims and witnesses should be available to all who need it. Victim Support has worked hard to embed inclusive practices within our services and we will continue to develop so that service users will receive an equitable service and one that is person centred and tailored to their needs.

However, we know that crime is under-reported and that it disproportionately affects different groups of people and people living in areas of high deprivation. Young people, people with mental health problems, homeless people, LGBTQ+ people, people from racialised communities and refugees are some of the groups disproportionately affected by crime. The way these factors combine, overlap or intersect intensifies the impact and feelings of isolation. The incidence of crime is not necessarily reflected in the number of people who report crime, who are referred to us for support or who take up our services.

We know there are many barriers in the CJS to equal treatment, we will ensure that we do all we can to identify and address them with changes to the way we deliver services.

We know that continuous improvement is key and we will work to enhance our services to all victims but also specifically enhance tools, guidance and practice to victims with mental health needs, disabled victims, LGBT+ victims and victims from racialised communities. We also know that engaging directly with marginalised groups is key to empowering them to report crime and to feel confident accessing our services whether they report or not.

We will continue to be proactive and innovative and work with teams, partners and communities so the organisation is able to provide high level services to victims of crime.

5. Where are we now?

Victim Support has continued to work to embed equality, diversity and inclusion within the organisation alongside our quality management system. This has included:

- Expanding our EDI staff and volunteer network groups, we now have six EDI networks: Disability, Faith & Belief, Gender Empowerment, LGBT+, Mental Health and Wellbeing and R.A.C.E Inclusive.
- Developing additional guidance for teams so they have the knowledge and awareness to support our diverse teams/colleagues. This has included: Supporting Trans colleagues, Inclusive Recruitment Toolkit, Supporting employees through the menopause, Supporting your non binary colleagues, Supporting dyslexic employees
- Enhancing equality, diversity and inclusion learning available for staff and volunteers - including an EDI module within foundation learning which is mandatory for staff and volunteers.
- Delivered equality, diversity and inclusion learning to our Board (which is ongoing).
- Service accessibility guidelines developed for service users to ensure all receive an equitable service.
- Monitoring EDI related complaints and enhancing practice via lessons learnt.
- Implemented an online recruitment tool which allows the organisation to analyse any under representation/issues within the recruitment process.
- Developed additional easy read materials for service users.
- Extended the range of digital resources available
- Developed additional EDI specific volunteer roles - Community ambassadors, EDI specialist volunteers.
- Enhanced accessibility of the website and EDI content and information available.

- Initiated projects to research the language barriers experienced by people within the CJS
- Initiated a social value project that aims to develop a social value framework for VS and a social value policy, both of which will cover key areas of social value that overlap or intersect with EDI.

6. Accreditations and awards

Our work on EDI has been reviewed and accredited externally and independently, including:

- Stonewall Workplace Equality Index top 100 Employer since 2010. We have consistently maintained our position in the Stonewall Top 100 employers list with feedback from Stonewall highlighting that Victim Support has worked hard to create an inclusive culture, demonstrating LGBT inclusion across all areas of our employment and service delivery practices, including policies, communications and training.
- Top Trans Inclusive employer 2020.
- Best Employers for Race list 2018.
- Inclusive employer 2016 and 2017.
- Leaders in Diversity accreditation - survey highlighted high levels of responses indicating:
 - The people we work with are accepting of other people whatever their background.
 - VS gives time and opportunity to find out more about diversity and improve awareness of EDI related topics (e.g. through EDI events and activities).
 - People feel valued by colleagues/line managers.
 - Victim Support are good at asking what people think about their EDI practices.
 - Victim Support are good at telling people what they have found out about themselves, and the things they are doing as a result.
- Winner of Business Disability Forum's (BDF) - 'Know How' award.
- Becoming a Disability Confident 'Employer'.
- Signatory of the Charter for Employers Positive about Mental Health
- Signatory of the Race Equality Charter

Victim Support are delighted that our commitment to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion has been recognised externally. We use our own quality management system to design, deliver and improve upon our internal practices. This combined with external audits and benchmarks through accreditations enables the organisation to reflect upon good practice and to receive external insight in to how we can further improve our EDI practices.

Accountability

The Chief Officer and Senior Management Team (SMT) are responsible for providing leadership to ensure the delivery of the strategy. The EDI Lead and Assistant Director People Services will report to SMT and will support directors, functional leads and senior managers, to communicate the strategy and co-ordinate implementation.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, the People Committee maintain oversight of Victim Supports responsibilities relating to equality, diversity and inclusion matters and ensure that the EDI agenda remains integral to the strategic direction of Victim Support. The People Committee provide reports to assure the Board of Trustees on progress and compliance with legal and moral responsibilities pertaining to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

Victim Support's EDI network groups: Disability, Faith & Belief, Gender Empowerment, Lesbian, Gay Bi and Trans + (LGBT+), Mental Health & Wellbeing and R.A.C.E Inclusive also have an important role to play in ensuring that policies and practices meet the needs of the communities their networks represent.

7. What next - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives:

There is great practice in equality, diversity and inclusion across Victim Support. However, there should always be continuous improvement and consistency across all areas. The new strategy builds on developments and learning from our earlier equality, diversity and inclusion strategy, and recommendations from the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, Best Employers for Race List, Leaders in Diversity action plan and the Business Disability Forum Standard audit processes.

The following objectives are built around our quality objectives and aim to build consistency and good practice.

Annual Business Plans will be developed including actions and Key Performance Indicators to deliver against the strategy objectives and EDI Strategy Action Plan.

Progress against annual business plans will be monitored quarterly through Victim Support business planning reviews and ensure effective progress against each of the six objectives. Activities and progress within the annual business plans will be monitored and reviewed by the Senior Management Team, People Committee and Board of Trustees.

Objectives		KPI's/Outcomes
Accessible	We will deliver a more inclusive and accessible service, increasing our ability to meet the needs of our diverse service users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting will evidence a reduction in the number of EDI related complaints year on year. • Additional quality EDI toolkits, procedures and policies will be in place for staff and volunteers. • New services will be designed with accessibility in mind from the start through a thorough impact assessment process. • Wherever possible using technology to make our services accessible to all. • Providing support materials in as wide a range of alternative formats and languages as possible. • EDI networks will be consulted on new policies, procedures and services where relevant to ensure

		that they are inclusive and accessible to the groups and communities they represent
Victim Led	We will enhance and effectively use service user diversity data in conjunction with service user satisfaction surveys to have a greater understanding of our service users and their experiences of our services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased service delivery data collated and scrutinised. • Monitoring and reporting demographic data of service users in place. • Monitoring and reporting on service user satisfaction v demographics. • Actions in place to address issues identified within service user demographic reporting. • Monitor EDI related complaints and enhance practice via lessons learnt as a result
Inclusive	We will further embed an inclusive culture throughout the organisation where people feel respected, engaged, able to speak out and be their authentic selves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will achieve Leaders in Diversity re-accreditation. • We will remain a Stonewall Top 20 Employer. • We will have implemented the principles from the Race at Work Charter. • We will have enhanced processes in place for reporting and raising concerns. • We will support the EDI networks to grow their membership and create

		<p>additional routes for staff and volunteers to find support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In conjunction with our EDI networks we will raise awareness of the diverse experiences of our staff, volunteers and service users. • Our workforce engagement surveys will evidence that VS is an inclusive place to work.
Collaborative	<p>We will build more collaborative relationships with communities and stakeholders so we are better able to meet their current and future needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strategic approach to community engagement will be implemented • Increased self-referrals • Enhanced understanding of diverse communities. • Enhanced practice in delivering services to diverse communities. • Through co-production we will ensure that a diverse range of victims voices and experiences are represented within our services.
Innovative	<p>We will work with our suppliers and partners to promote our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our procurement processes will result in positive EDI outcomes for VS service users, staff and volunteers. • EDI will form an integral part of VS's social value framework and in turn the framework will inform the future direction of travel for EDI

Ever improving	We will recruit, retain and develop a diverse workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our work force will be more indicative of our service users and we will monitor this through our staff and volunteer EDI data. • Recruitment policies and procedures will be enhanced and implemented. • Monitoring and reporting of ethnicity, gender and disability pay gaps in place. • Action plans implemented to address pay gaps. • Leadership, mentoring and coaching programmes implemented and evidenced to retain our skilled workforce.
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Alongside the Strategy and objectives, an EDI strategy plan 2019-2023 (below) has been developed to deliver against the strategy.

EDI strategy action plan 2019-2023

Objective 1: We will deliver a more inclusive and accessible service, increasing our ability to meet the needs of our diverse service users.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We will deliver high quality services that meet the diverse needs of victims ○ Ensure learning opportunities are available to VS teams ensuring resilience so VS are equipped to meet the diverse needs of victims ○ Develop and enhance standards, toolkits and learning to meet current unmet needs ○ Develop ‘good practice’ models for national dissemination

- Develop a range of good quality EDI resources for staff and volunteers
- Impact Assessments will be embedded throughout VS's practices and services
- Ensure services are accessible through the use of technology and providing support materials in alternative formats and other languages wherever possible

Objective 2: We will further embed an inclusive culture throughout the organisation where people feel respected, engaged, able to speak out and be their authentic selves

- Continue to enhance and embed EDI in all functions of the organisation
- Continue to enhance LGBT+ equality within the organisation
- Enhance disability equality within all functions of the organisation
- To enhance race equity within organisational policy and practice - work to complete requirements from the Race at Work Charter
- Increase the confidence of staff and volunteers to raise concerns
- Enhance gender equality within all functions of the organisation
- Improve the profile of our visible leadership by taking proactive action to address underrepresentation
- Mandatory PDR objectives - meaningful 'Accessible' objectives to demonstrate staff are contributing to the embedding of EDI and making a difference
- Carry out HSE mental health and wellbeing survey and enhance practice as a result
- Continue to promote our commitment to EDI in how we engage and communicate with diverse victims, partners and teams
- Embed impact assessment process within all functions
- Maintain and further develop EDI networks, including appointment of SMT senior champions and developing direct engagement between EDI networks and the People Committee
- Implement reverse mentoring programmes for senior management

Objective 3: We will recruit, retain and develop a diverse workforce

- Continue to carry out initiatives to increase staff and volunteer EDI data completion rates
- Complete Ethnicity pay gap report
- Complete Disability pay gap report
- Complete report on EDI engagement in staff/volunteer surveys

- Monitor staff grievances v protected characteristics
- Monitor EDI data within online recruitment system
- Collation and monitoring of socio - economic data
- Develop additional line manager guidance/tools to support diverse teams
- Development of line managers' recruitment skills (inclusive of EDI learning related to inclusive recruitment)
- Carry out an inclusive recruitment review to support VS to attract the right people and sign up and adhere to the Good Recruitment Campaign Charter to develop processes to eliminate bias from recruitment.
- Develop managers with delivery of specific training, mentoring/ coaching in line with progression plans and the career development matrix
- Review reasonable adjustment process

Objective 4: We will enhance and effectively use service user diversity data in conjunction with service satisfaction surveys to have a greater understanding of our service users and their experience of our services

- Develop and implement processes to enhance completion of victim demographic data
- Analyse national and regional service user demographic data to identify underrepresented groups and use this to inform our community engagement strategy
- Monitor EDI related complaints and enhance practice via lessons learnt as a result
- Analyse service user satisfaction surveys by protected characteristic to identify any disparities in satisfaction between groups

Objective 5: We will work with our suppliers and partners to promote our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion

- Implement effective EDI monitoring systems in national contracts (procurement)
- Our procurement practices will demonstrate transparency to aid the fight against modern slavery.
- Work in partnership with suppliers to enhance EDI practice
- Through the development of a VS social value framework we will aim to further illustrate the value of our EDI initiatives for staff, volunteers and service users.

Objective 6: We will build more collaborative relationships with community-based groups and stakeholders so we are better able to meet their current and future needs

- Maintain collaborative relationships with EDI organisations e.g. Stonewall , Business in the Community, Business Disability Forum, Mindful Employers
- Seek out opportunities to work with new EDI partnerships (locally and nationally)
- Implement a strategic approach to community engagement through a community of practice model
- Ensure that co-production projects include a diverse range of victim experiences and voices, e.g. people from racialised communities and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ and disabled victims

Key

CJS	Criminal Justice System
BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
LGBT+	Lesbian, Gay, Bi and Trans
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
HSE	Health and Safety Executive
VS	Victim Support
SMT	Senior Management Team
GEN	Gender Empowerment Network
HR	Human Resources
R.A.C.E	Race, Ancestry, Culture and Ethnicity