



GREEN SHELTER SOCIETY UK

Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Document control

Field	Details
Organisation	Green Shelter Society UK
Charity registration number	1192803
Policy owner	Board of Trustees
Operational lead	Equality Diversity and Inclusion Lead or nominated trustee
Version	1.0
Approval status	Broad approved
Effective date	4 th September
Next review	12 months from approval, and after any significant legal, organisational or activity change
Applies to	Trustees, staff, volunteers, applicants, contractors, partners, beneficiaries, visitors and event participants

Approval requirement The Board of Trustees must approve this policy and complete the approval record before it is presented as an approved policy.

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1 Purpose

Green Shelter Society UK is committed to fair, respectful and inclusive gardening, environmental and community activity. We aim to remove avoidable barriers, widen participation and ensure that people are treated with dignity.

This policy explains the standards expected from people who represent the charity and how equality, diversity and inclusion will be considered in governance, recruitment, volunteering, services, events, partnerships and communications.

2 Scope

This policy applies to trustees, staff, workers, volunteers, applicants, contractors and representatives. It also guides how we treat beneficiaries, donors, visitors, event participants and people reached through libraries, schools, places of worship, businesses and other partners.

It covers face-to-face, outdoor, off-site, home-visit, transport-related, telephone, online and social-media activity in England and Wales. Partners remain responsible for their own legal duties, but Green Shelter Society UK must take reasonable steps to ensure that jointly delivered work reflects this policy.

3 Legal framework and protected characteristics

Green Shelter Society UK will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and other applicable equality, employment, data protection, safeguarding and human-rights law. The way particular protections apply can depend on whether the charity is acting as an employer, service provider, association or

provider of premises. Trustees should obtain current specialist advice where a proposed restriction, targeted service or difficult individual case raises legal uncertainty.

The Equality Act 2010 identifies nine protected characteristics:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race, including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins;
- religion or belief;
- sex; and
- sexual orientation.

The charity also seeks to reduce barriers connected with caring responsibilities, language, literacy, digital exclusion and financial or social disadvantage. These circumstances are not all protected characteristics in law, but they can affect whether people are able to participate in our work.

4 Definitions and prohibited conduct

Term	Meaning
Equality	Fair treatment and fair access to opportunities, recognising that the law may require different treatment in some circumstances.
Equity	Proportionate support intended to address differing barriers or needs. Equity does not override equality law.
Diversity	The range of backgrounds, identities, experiences, perspectives and needs within a group or organisation.
Inclusion	Creating conditions in which people can participate, contribute and be treated with dignity and respect.
Direct discrimination	Treating a person less favourably because of a protected characteristic, including some treatment based on association or perception.
Indirect discrimination	Applying a provision, criterion or practice to everyone that disadvantages a protected group and cannot be objectively justified where the law permits justification.
Harassment	Unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect described by applicable law, including conduct that violates dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.
Sexual harassment	Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect described by applicable law.
Victimisation	Subjecting a person to a detriment because they have done, or may do, a protected act under equality law.
Reasonable adjustment	A reasonable change to a practice, physical feature or auxiliary aid or service to avoid substantial disadvantage to a disabled person.

Bullying, abuse, hate speech, intimidation and exclusionary conduct may breach this policy even when the legal definition of discrimination or harassment is not met.

5 Equality diversity and inclusion principles

- Treat people fairly, with dignity and respect.
- Identify and reduce avoidable barriers to participation and progression.

- Listen to people affected by decisions and consider different needs and experiences.
- Make decisions using relevant, transparent and proportionate criteria.
- Challenge discriminatory, harassing, bullying or exclusionary behaviour.
- Make reasonable adjustments for disabled people where required.
- Use lawful and proportionate positive action where evidence shows disadvantage, different needs or under-representation.
- Protect privacy and collect equality information only where there is a clear, lawful purpose.
- Review outcomes and learn from complaints, feedback and participation patterns.

6 Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Board of Trustees	Approves this policy, provides oversight and resources, reviews significant risks and receives proportionate monitoring information.
Chair or nominated EDI trustee	Provides senior oversight, supports escalation and ensures that conflicts of interest are managed.
Operational or EDI lead	Coordinates implementation, advice, training, monitoring and policy review, without replacing the duties of managers or trustees.
Project and event leads	Plan accessible and inclusive activities, consider adjustments, brief volunteers, address conduct and record relevant decisions.
Trustees staff volunteers and contractors	Follow the policy and code of conduct, complete relevant training, make fair decisions and report concerns.
Partners	Agree responsibilities, accessibility arrangements, reporting routes and standards for jointly delivered activities.

7 Inclusive services activities and events

Equality and inclusion must be considered when planning Seed to Society work, seed banks, seed and plant swaps, gardening sessions, school activities, garden open days, seminars, nature visits, volunteer support and other services.

- Use welcoming, clear and accessible information about who the activity is for, what it involves, any cost, the venue, transport, facilities and how to request support.
- Choose venues and routes with reasonable regard to physical access, seating, toilets, lighting, noise, weather, uneven ground and public transport.
- Consider timing, caring responsibilities, religious observance, communication needs and financial barriers where reasonably practicable.
- Offer suitable alternatives or adapted tasks where a gardening task, tool, route or activity creates an avoidable barrier.
- Apply eligibility, waiting-list, allocation and conduct rules consistently and record the reason for material exceptions.
- Do not assume a person's ability, needs, beliefs, family circumstances or preferred form of participation.
- Ask participants for feedback and respond to recurring access or inclusion barriers.

Not every venue or activity can be made suitable for every person. Where full participation cannot reasonably be achieved, the project lead must explain the limitation respectfully, consider a safe alternative and record significant decisions.

8 Disability access and reasonable adjustments

When the charity provides services, it must anticipate common barriers for disabled people rather than waiting for every person to complain. Where the legal duty applies, reasonable adjustments may involve changing a policy or way of working, addressing a physical feature, or providing an auxiliary aid or service. A disabled person will not be charged for a reasonable adjustment.

- Provide information in an accessible format where reasonably required, such as larger print, plain language or an electronic copy.
- Allow additional time, rest breaks, seating, a companion or communication support where appropriate.
- Adapt tasks, tools, registration methods or routes while maintaining safety.
- Consider step-free access and accessible toilets when selecting venues.
- Provide a clear way to request an adjustment before and during an activity.
- Discuss the person's needs and preferred solution; do not require unnecessary medical detail.
- Record the decision and reasons if a requested adjustment cannot be provided, and consider an effective alternative.

Whether an adjustment is reasonable will depend on factors including effectiveness, practicality, cost, available resources, disruption, health and safety and the charity's size and activities. Health and safety must be assessed on evidence and individual circumstances, not stereotypes.

9 Recruitment employment and volunteering

Recruitment, appointment, allocation of duties, training, development, supervision and progression will use fair and transparent criteria connected to the role and the charity's needs.

- Use inclusive language and advertise opportunities through suitable channels.
- Describe essential and desirable requirements accurately and avoid criteria that are not needed for the role.
- Ask applicants whether they require reasonable adjustments for the recruitment process.
- Use a consistent assessment method and keep a proportionate record of decisions.
- Do not ask health or disability questions before an offer except where the law permits, including to arrange adjustments or assess an intrinsic function of the role.
- Provide induction, training and information in an accessible form where reasonably required.
- Consider reasonable adjustments for disabled workers and volunteers, while recognising that the precise legal duties may differ according to status.
- Address discriminatory or harassing conduct promptly through the applicable procedure.

DBS checks and safeguarding requirements must be based on the actual duties and risks of the role. They must not be used as a substitute for fair recruitment, induction, supervision and conduct standards.

10 Standards of behaviour

Everyone representing Green Shelter Society UK must:

- use respectful language and respect people's names and stated forms of address;
- avoid stereotypes, degrading jokes, sexualised comments, intimidation, unwanted conduct and exclusion;
- respect personal boundaries, privacy, cultural and religious differences and communication needs;
- challenge inappropriate conduct where safe and report serious or repeated concerns;
- not retaliate against anyone who raises or supports a genuine concern;

- follow safeguarding procedures immediately where behaviour may involve abuse, exploitation or risk of harm; and
- cooperate with reasonable enquiries and maintain confidentiality.

11 Positive action and targeted activities

The charity may take lawful, proportionate action to reduce a disadvantage, meet different needs or increase participation by people who share a protected characteristic. It may also design services for people experiencing financial hardship, isolation or other barriers where this advances the charity's purposes.

Before using positive action or restricting eligibility, the responsible lead must identify the evidence and objective, consider whether the proposal is proportionate, confirm that it is consistent with the governing document and applicable law, and record the decision. Positive action must not become automatic preference or unlawful discrimination.

12 Communications images and digital inclusion

- Use plain, respectful and inclusive language and avoid stereotypes or tokenistic representation.
- Use a range of images that reflects the communities reached by the charity without misrepresenting participation.
- Obtain and record appropriate permission before taking or publishing identifiable photographs or recordings.
- Provide meaningful alternative text for important website images and use readable contrast, headings and link text.
- Offer a reasonable non-digital route where an online-only process would create an avoidable barrier.
- Do not publish unnecessary personal details or sensitive equality information.

13 Partnership working

Before jointly delivering work with a library, school, place of worship, council, business, charity or community group, Green Shelter Society UK should agree the relevant equality and accessibility responsibilities, participant information, adjustment requests, conduct standards and complaints route. Procurement and partnership decisions should use relevant and proportionate criteria.

A partner's custom, belief or separate policy does not remove Green Shelter Society UK's responsibility to comply with applicable law in its own work. Any proposed arrangement that may exclude or disadvantage a group must be referred to the Board or nominated lead before it is agreed.

14 Data monitoring and privacy

The charity may use proportionate information about applicants, volunteers, staff or participants to understand access, participation, experience and outcomes. Equality information must be collected only for a defined purpose and handled under the charity's privacy and records-retention arrangements.

- Explain why information is requested, how it will be used, whether answering is optional and who can access it.
- Collect only the minimum information needed and use anonymous or aggregated information where possible.
- Keep monitoring information separate from selection or service decisions unless access is necessary for a lawful purpose, such as arranging an adjustment.
- Restrict access, store information securely and retain it only for the approved period.

- Report trends to trustees in a form that avoids identifying individuals unless identification is necessary and lawful.

15 Raising concerns complaints and breaches

Anyone who experiences, witnesses or becomes aware of discrimination, harassment, bullying, victimisation or another breach may raise it with the project lead, operational or EDI lead, Chair, another uninvolved trustee, or through the Complaints and Whistleblowing Procedure. A person does not need to confront the alleged person before reporting.

Concerns will be acknowledged and handled promptly, impartially, sensitively and as confidentially as reasonably possible. The charity will explain the process, manage conflicts of interest, keep a proportionate record and communicate the outcome as far as privacy and fairness allow. No one will be penalised for raising or supporting a genuine concern in good faith. An unsubstantiated concern is not, by itself, malicious.

Where a concern indicates that a child or adult may be at risk of harm, the Safeguarding Policy takes priority and action must not wait for the complaints process. Criminal conduct, serious employment matters or regulatory issues may need referral to an appropriate external body. Trustees must consider whether a serious incident report to the Charity Commission is required.

A breach may lead to guidance, an apology, mediation where appropriate, training, changes to an activity, removal from an event, volunteer or employment action, termination of a contract or partnership, or referral to an external authority. The response will be fair and proportionate to the circumstances.

16 Training implementation and review

- Give trustees, staff and regular volunteers an introduction to this policy and the relevant reporting routes.
- Provide role-specific training for people who recruit, manage volunteers, plan services, handle complaints or process equality information.
- Make the current approved policy available to the public and in an accessible format where reasonably required.
- Review complaints, adjustment requests, feedback and participation information for recurring barriers without compromising confidentiality.
- Record agreed improvements, responsibilities and timescales and report material risks to trustees.

The Board of Trustees will review this policy at least annually and earlier after a significant complaint or incident, a material change in activities or structure, or a relevant change in law or official guidance.

17 Equality contact

Equality Diversity and Inclusion Lead or nominated trustee	Name: Ariful Islam
Email	info@greenshelter.org.uk
Telephone	+44 7809 691366
Alternative contact if the concern involves the lead	Name and role: Nehlin Sayed admin@greenshelter.org.uk

18 Trustee approval

The Board of Trustees confirms that it has reviewed this policy, assigned responsibility for implementation and agreed the reporting and review arrangements.

Approval record	Details
Approved by	Board of Trustees
Date approved	04 th September 2026
Chair name and signature	MS Rahman, MS RAHMAN
Effective date	04 th September 2026
Next review date	04 th September 2027

Appendix A Inclusive activity checklist

- Who is the activity intended to reach, and could any eligibility rule create an unlawful or unnecessary barrier?
- Have likely participants been consulted or given a clear way to request support?
- Are the venue, route, toilets, seating, lighting, noise levels and transport information reasonably accessible?
- Can instructions, booking information and safety information be understood in suitable formats?
- Can gardening tasks, tools, timings or methods be adapted safely?
- Have cost, digital access, caring responsibilities and religious or cultural needs been considered?
- Are photography permission, privacy, safeguarding and complaint arrangements clear?
- Do volunteers and partners know who will decide adjustment requests and receive concerns?
- Has any restriction or refusal been explained, recorded and reviewed for a reasonable alternative?
- How will feedback and lessons be recorded and used?

Appendix B Related policies and guidance

Internal documents

- Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct;
- Health and Safety Policy and relevant activity risk assessments;
- Volunteer Policy;
- Complaints and Whistleblowing Procedure;
- Privacy, Data Protection and Records Retention arrangements;
- Photography, Social Media and Digital Safety arrangements; and
- any recruitment, disciplinary, grievance or reasonable-adjustment procedures that apply.

External guidance

- Equality Act 2010;
- Equality and Human Rights Commission guidance for voluntary and community organisations;
- UK Government Equality Act guidance for charities;
- UK Government guidance on reasonable adjustments for service providers;
- Charity Commission guidance on safeguarding and serious incident reporting; and
- Information Commissioner's Office guidance on data protection and special category data.

Trustees should check that referenced guidance is current when this policy is reviewed or when a complex decision is made.