

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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1. Vision, Values and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

As the leading bereavement charity, we have an important role to play in tackling inequalities, by putting equity, diversity and inclusion at the heart of our charity. From the support we provide, to those who work and volunteer with us, to our wider reach across society.

This (EDI) policy is embodied within our Vision, Mission and Values – with one value dedicated to ensuring EDI runs through all that we do:

Our **vision** is that we live in a world where everyone grieving is supported, respected and understood.

Our **mission** is that we support people through one of the most painful times in life – with bereavement support, information and campaigning.

Values

Cruse's activities are underpinned by our values:

Kind – as with grief, we have no idea what another person's journey is or what they are dealing with, so we always approach and respond with kindness.

Inclusive – grief doesn't discriminate and neither do we. Everyone's experience of bereavement is different. We embrace diversity.

Genuine – we're honest, open to real conversations, tackling difficult subjects. We respect the courage it takes to be vulnerable when seeking support and speaking up. We learn from our mistakes and feel safe to be challenged. We bring our whole selves to our roles.

Ambitious – we encourage, energise and stretch each other. We're a passionate, professional and determined team. And the more we succeed in our ambitions, the more we can support bereaved people.

2. What do we mean by Equity, Diversity and Inclusion?

Cruse is committed to ensuring our activities are both legally compliant and embrace best practice. Our EDI strategy has the overarching aim of building an inclusive culture, ensuring there is a shared understanding of what EDI means and how it reflects our organisation's values.

Through our strategy, our policy and day-to-day work, we will ensure that Equity, Diversity and Inclusion is embedded in all aspects of the organisation.

We follow the National Council for Voluntary Organisations definitions of Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:

- Equality means ensuring every individual has equal opportunities. By being conscious of and actively challenging bias or prejudice we make sure no one is treated less favourably because of who they are or what makes them different from other people. This requires a proactive approach to make reasonable adjustments that address the visible and invisible barriers people face.
- Equity means treating people in ways that make sure they are not unfairly prevented from accessing resources and opportunities nor that others have an unfair advantage. Simply providing the same opportunities to everyone is not an effective way to create equality of outcomes. Equality of outcomes highlights rather than giving everyone the same thing, it is about giving people what they need for fair access. This is about removing inequalities to make sure everyone has the chance to realise their ambitions.
- Diversity means having differences within an organisation or setting. Diversity recognises we are all different in many ways. People with differing identities, backgrounds and experiences should all have equitable access to resources and decision-making. Some people prefer to use the term 'representation' to focus on how organisations should be reflective of the society we live in and the communities we serve.
- Inclusion means being proactive to make sure people of different backgrounds, experiences and identities feel welcomed, respected and fully able to participate. It is not only about creating a diverse environment but also about ensuring a culture exists where individuals can be their full selves.

Why is equity, diversity and inclusion important in grief and at Cruse?

Everyone experiences bereavement at some point in their lives. How people deal with death is impacted by personal, social, cultural, and economic factors. The grieving process is influenced by culture, family dynamics, relationships, religion, faith and more. It is multi layered and complex. Everyone's experience of death and bereavement is individual.

However, for some, inequalities in society may mean people experience inequitable treatment and access to specific, culturally appropriate bereavement support, which can be discriminatory.

3. Cruse EDI Strategy

This policy is accompanied by a Cruse EDI strategy. Becoming an inclusive organisation is at the centre of all the activities we must deliver, and our strategic focus will be on the building blocks that will move us towards developing an inclusive culture. We recognise that this particular culture shift will be challenging for some people, and we are committed to

supporting individuals through change as part of the process. Our strategic activities will focus on:

- Strengthening current governance and leadership structures for embedding EDI and improving communications
- Enhancing data collection and monitoring processes to measure EDI performance
- Ensuring all Cruse's policies, processes and systems are inclusive and promote best practice in EDI
- Raising our people's awareness, being trained and having greater levels of skill when applying EDI in practice
- Ensuring any change or service development is reflective of EDI policies

The strategy has an annual plan, which is reported on to the Board of Trustees

4. Discrimination and the law

The Equality Act 2010 (1) states that it is against the law to discriminate against someone because of:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

These protected characteristics are the basis of our obligations as an organisation to be compliant; however, our commitment to EDI goes beyond compliance and ensures our activities focus on the very best practice. For this reason, we will also consider the impact of economic deprivation alongside these protected characteristics.

Forms of Discrimination

To support understanding of how some behaviours are defined as unlawful, the Equality Act 2010 sets out the different forms of discrimination in the following way:

Direct discrimination means treating someone less favourably than someone else because of a protected characteristic. In the case of age, treating someone less favourably than someone else may be justified.

Direct discrimination by perception means treating one person less favourably than someone else; because you incorrectly think they have a protected characteristic.

Indirect discrimination means putting in place a rule or policy or way of doing things that has a worse impact on someone with a protected characteristic than someone without one, when this cannot be objectively justified.

Direct discrimination by association means treating someone less favourably than another person because they are associated with a person who has a protected characteristic.

Harassment is unwanted behaviour related to a protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or which creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Victimisation is treating someone unfavourably because they have taken some form of action relating to the Equality Act, e.g. made a complaint under the Act or supported somebody who is doing so, such as appearing as a witness.

5. How we will implement our EDI Policy

At Cruse, we aim to address EDI in the following ways:

The people we support

We are committed to ensuring that all bereaved people can access the services they need. We aim to reach all people affected by bereavement, ensuring that their diverse needs can be met. We will work with and listen to bereaved people to ensure our services meet their needs and are accessible by all. Decisions about developing or closing services will be reviewed through an EDI impact assessment.

Our people – volunteers and staff

We aim to be an inclusive and diverse organisation, where all staff and volunteers represent and understand the diversity of bereaved people. We commit to growing the diversity of our people, to make sure we reflect the UK population and can offer different perspectives to best support people affected by bereavement. Our action will include reviewing our recruitment processes and improving our diversity monitoring.

We are committed to building an inclusive culture that is intolerant of discrimination, bullying and harassment and that lives our values. We want our workplaces and culture to be welcoming and inclusive to all our people. People who volunteer or work for us will know that Cruse will value them as individuals and respect and embrace their differences. Recruitment, training and ongoing support will be inclusive and reflective of diverse experiences. We will provide training, information and support to all staff and volunteers in how to embed EDI in their work, how to champion equality and inclusion and what to do if

they see inequality and discrimination. We will engage with our staff and volunteers to inform our approach to EDI.

Our partners

We will actively seek to work in partnership with communities that are disproportionately affected by bereavement, or experience barriers to accessing appropriate bereavement support.

We recognise that some bereaved people will want bereavement support specific to their background or community. We support this, and where possible we will work with others to enable it.

Policy and Campaigning

We will challenge inequalities and discrimination experienced by bereaved people. We will consistently campaign to improve fairness in people's access to appropriate services and support, and to be respected and understood.

6. Accountability and Responsibilities

Everyone within Cruse Bereavement Support has an individual responsibility to uphold its EDI values. In addition, specific responsibilities are designated and defined follows:

Board of Trustees / People and Culture sub-committee

The Board has overall accountability for achieving greater equity, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of Cruse work. This is supported and monitored through the People and Culture sub-committee

Chief Executive

Accountability and responsibility for the overall development, monitoring and day-to-day co-ordination of the policy rests with the Chief Executive. The CEO will report to the People and Culture Committee and the Board on progress made against the strategy.

Director of Finance and Corporate Services

Will ensure that the staff elements of the policy are implemented and fully embedded within day-to-day policies and processes. They are responsible for employee equalities monitoring and developing and implementing Inclusive Recruitment.

Director of Services

Is responsible for leading improvements through the Cruse network, ensuring our services are accessible and increasing and monitoring the diversity of our volunteers and the people we support. They are responsible for ensuring we listen to and work with bereaved people to inform our service delivery and development.

Clinical Director

Is responsible for ensuring that equity, diversity and inclusion is reflected in clinical practice and decisions, ensuring Cruse practice is inclusive. They have overall responsibility for ensuring that bereaved people are involved in all that we do at Cruse and that we hear insight from people with diverse lived experience.

National Strategic Lead - Volunteering

Is responsible for ensuring all our volunteer recruitment, training and engagement is aligned with EDI principles. They are responsible for ensuring our Bereavement Support Foundation course and other CPD actively promotes EDI issues, emphasises the importance of understanding and responding to the diverse needs of clients and discriminatory behaviours.

Director of Income Generation & Marketing

Is responsible for ensuring our external and internal communication supports and champions our EDI work. They will ensure all images and messages reflect the diversity of our communities and that people who have been bereaved can recognise themselves in our website, social media and other communications and that these channels all meet relevant accessibility standards. They will also support the internal communications of EDI activities and priorities.

Leaders and Managers

Leaders and managers across Cruse play an integral part of ensuring their teams understand what is expected of them in terms of this policy. They have a responsibility for identifying ways to champion EDI principles within their area and leading improvements across their teams, especially in recruitment of staff and volunteers. They have a responsibility to take all concerns and complaints with regard to EDI seriously, as well as setting the tone for creating positive working environments and healthy working climates. Leaders and Managers must understand the processes contained within the policy (and other relevant EDI areas) and their responsibilities within them. All leaders in the organisation will be provided with learning and development in EDI and will be responsible for their EDI practice in their areas of work.

Lead Volunteers and Volunteer Council members

Lead volunteers are responsible for actively promoting Cruse EDI work and are ambassadors for the work including identifying opportunities to champion EDI principles within the activities they support. They have a duty to take all concerns and complaints with regard to EDI seriously, as well as setting the tone for creating positive working environments and healthy working climates.

Volunteer Supervisors

Volunteer Supervisors have a specific responsibility to support their supervisee's practice and professional development. They should ensure their supervision is inclusive and accessible and support EDI confidence and competence through the supervisory process. This includes ensuring training and development opportunities are taken up, addressing bias or discriminatory behaviour, ensuring best practice and putting policy into practice through bereavement support to clients.

All staff and volunteers

Everyone should value and promote EDI within Cruse. Individual responsibilities include:

- Actively championing EDI principles within the work that you do
- Respecting and promoting the dignity and rights of everyone and embracing and valuing what differences can bring.
- Supporting ways of working that promote inclusion and prevent discrimination and unacceptable behaviour. Raising issues and concerns about discrimination and unacceptable behaviour in line with Cruse policies. [\[link\]](#)
- Working within the EDI policy in all that you do at Cruse
- Recognising that we are ambassadors of Cruse outside of our work or volunteering and embodying EDI principles externally e.g. at sector meetings, Cruse social events and social interactions with colleagues or in interactions which may impact Cruse's reputation e.g. social media

Anyone who works or volunteers for Cruse is an ambassador for the work we do. This also means you are accountable for upholding these values outside of your work or volunteering

EDI Steering Group

Cruse's EDI Steering Group, established by the Board, will provide advice and insight to steer the continuing development and recognition of EDI. The CEO and Lead Trustee for EDI are permanent members of the Group. The Group comprises of staff and volunteers, offering advice and lived experience of EDI and how we can improve practice throughout Cruse.

The Group supports the development of the EDI Strategy and resulting action plans. Implementation

EDI Policy Areas

We will continue to promote all EDI issues through relevant policies (or guidelines) such as Inclusive Recruitment, Dignity at Work (or Harassment and Bullying), Whistleblowing, etc., that include clear operational guidelines on valuing EDI. All reviews of people policies and operational policies will be fully considerate of protected characteristics and promote inclusion

Equity Impact Analysis

All relevant initiatives and developments will utilise the Equity Impact Assessment tool in the planning process.

Annual work plan

The SLT, in collaboration with the EDI steering group, will produce an annual work plan based on the priorities of the EDI strategy. This will be monitored as described below.

Monitoring

Cruse is committed to ensuring the effectiveness of the EDI policy through monitoring. The monitoring process will include:

- Reviewing activities within inclusive recruitment
- Employee and Volunteer data through routine data collection, annual surveys and other feedback
- Data and feedback from the people we support
- Auditing the diversity of images and communications
- Volunteer engagement with EDI issues
- Formal grievance and disciplinary outcomes
- Exit interviews

We will also monitor any feedback from our service delivery projects and partnership working.

The results of monitoring will be reviewed by the SLT and the People and Culture Committee at regular intervals to determine the effectiveness of our work and any areas of concern.

Learning and Development for EDI

Cruse will provide employees, volunteers and trustees with the relevant learning opportunities to increase their awareness of EDI and widen their perspective about difference on a regular basis. Training will ensure that those with managerial responsibilities fully understand what is expected of them, for example handling complaints of discrimination, inclusive recruitment, managing diversity, etc. In addition, all employees with designated EDI responsibilities will be given specialist skills training.

Handling Complaints

There will be times when we receive complaints, grievances or concerns relating to EDI issues or behaviours. These will be investigated thoroughly, impartially and fairly using the relevant Cruse policy.

Discrimination and negative behaviour related to any protected characteristic may constitute gross misconduct and will be treated as disciplinary offences. Anyone who has committed an act of unlawful discrimination may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including

summary (immediate) dismissal.

In the event of a complaint concerning discrimination arising, Cruse's Grievance Policy or Volunteer Conduct Policy will be applied. Complaints regarding harassment and bullying will be dealt with using Dignity at Work Policy.

7. Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years by The EDI Steering Group and the People and Culture Committee.

The review will consider the effectiveness of the policy in the light of current internal and external environments.

8. Policy Ownership

Policy Owner	People and Culture Committee
Policy Lead	CEO
Audience	Cruse employees and volunteers
Legislation & Regulation	Equality Act 2010
Formally approved by	Board
Last update	May 2025
Review date	May 2028

9. Change History

Version	Date	Comments/Changes	Author
V2	May 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Update to format• Minor changes reflecting new roles and oversight practice• New review cycle – 3 years	Lucy Harmer CEO
V1	March 2023	Policy developed and agreed	Steven Wibberly CEO