

GUIDANCE ON ACCESS TO SERVICES

The Equality Act 2010 applies to the Foundation's work. The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against anyone because of a protected characteristic in a wide range of areas including employment and the provision of services.

The following are protected characteristics under the Act:

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

However, the Act provides for a 'charities' exception' that allows a charity to limit its benefits to people who share a protected characteristic. This means that the Foundation may offer grants for projects or activities that benefit only people who share one or more of the protected characteristics, where this is justified in relation to the applicant's charitable work. Further information on the charities' exception can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-guidance-for-charities/equality-act-guidance-for-charities>

With regard to applications for a grant from the Foundation, this means that:

- Access to the activities or service in question should not exclude beneficiaries on the grounds of age, disability, race, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, sex, sexual orientation, or gender reassignment (known as "protected characteristics" under the Equalities Act 2010), unless this can be justified, as follows.
- Where an organisation restricts access to the service or activities in question to people who share one or more of the protected characteristics (e.g. gender), a grant may be considered *only* if it is clear that excluding other individuals is objectively justified in furtherance of the organisation's charitable purposes or is done to prevent or compensate for disadvantage linked to the protected characteristic. For example, when considering a women's refuge, it would be justifiable to restrict access to the service to women only as the services seeks to address disadvantage in the form of abuse and a mixed gender environment would act as a barrier to women's participation. Or, with regard to a youth group it may be reasonable to restrict access only to people in a specified age bracket if restricting access in this way also enables the organisation to focus specifically on providing services of most relevance / interest to young people (and if unrestricted access could pose a risk to them). An assessment should therefore be made of the extent to which any such restrictions can be considered reasonable and necessary.

Applicants should also seek to identify and address any other barriers to intended beneficiaries participating in the service or activities for which they are seeking a grant. These may include:

- a. Awareness barrier: the service or project should be widely promoted to the intended beneficiary group(s), and it should be easy for anyone in the intended beneficiary group(s) to find out about the activity or service.
- a. Physical barriers: something that prevents an individual from physically accessing the site where the service or project is delivered. For example, someone with limited mobility is unable to enter the venue because the doorway is too narrow or there is no lift.
- a. Psychological barriers: these affect the way an individual thinks about a service, for example it may be perceived as 'not for the likes of us,' or they may have concerns around confidentiality.
- a. Financial barrier: any charge to access a service or requirement to purchase equipment for personal use may be prohibitive to some people. Or, if the individual is trying to access a service located some distance away, s/he may not be able to afford the transport costs to get there.
- a. Geographical barrier: individuals who do not live nearby the delivery location of the funded activity may not be able to drive there or may find that public transport does not run at a convenient time (or at all).
- a. Cultural and language barriers: if the information (such as signs, leaflets, posters, website) is in English only, then those with a different first language will not be able to find out about our activities. If the information on the service uses jargon the intended beneficiaries may not understand it or may simply be put off.
- a. Literacy barriers: if an individual has literacy difficulties or a visual impairment then the format that the information is provided in may be inappropriate for their needs.

A checklist for Equalities and Diversity Policies

Equality and Diversity Policy
Things our assessors will look for in an Equality and Diversity Policy.
Does the group's policy reference Equality Act 2010?
<u>Does this cover:</u> age, being married or in a civil partnership, being pregnant or having a child, disability, race, religion/belief, or lack of, gender, sexual orientation, being or becoming a transsexual person?
Does it provide for equal access to services?
Does it provide for equal access to employment?
Does it include preventing harassment and ensure everyone is treated equally?
Does it ensure complaints are dealt with fairly?