

EQUALITY POLICY

June 2024

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01/02/2024	Andrew Quartermain, CEO	Jane Fenoulhet	01/01/2025

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1.0 Context and legislation

Pro Corda recognises that everyone has a contribution to make to our society and a right to equal opportunity.

This policy ensures compliance with the Equality Act 2010 which replaced all prior equality legislation such as the Race Relations Act, Disability Discrimination Act and Sex Discrimination Act. The Act introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which placed the following specific duties on education organisations:

- to publish annual equality information to show how the organisation has complied with the general duties; and
- to publish equality objectives demonstrating what an organisation could reasonably achieve to meet one or more aims of the equality duties, showing the involvement of stakeholders in developing the objectives. The equality objectives must be published at least every four years.

2.0 Duties and definitions

2.1 General duties

At Pro Corda we welcome our role in taking due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a characteristic and those who do not; and
- foster good relations between people who share a characteristic and those who do not.

2.2 Specific duties

We also welcome our role in addressing the specific duties of the Act by:

- engaging with interested groups and individuals;
- publishing equality information; and
- formulating and publishing equality objectives.

2.3 Protected characteristics

The term “protected characteristic” is used in order to identify groups potentially at risk of “unlawful behaviour”.

The following protected characteristics relate to education organisations:

- disability
- gender reassignment

- marriage and civil partnership (with regard to organisations as employers)
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

2.4 **Unlawful behaviour** (See Appendix B for further details)

The “unlawful behaviour” outlined in the Act includes:

- direct discrimination
- indirect discrimination
- discrimination arising from disability
- harassment
- victimisation

2.5 **Key stakeholders**

The principles of this policy apply to all members of the extended Pro Corda community: course participants, staff, trustees, parents/carers and community members. By ‘course participants’ and ‘staff’, we are referring to prospective and former course participants/staff, in addition to those currently at Pro Corda.

3.0 **Equality and diversity: our aims and values**

At Pro Corda we aim to provide equality and excellence for all, in order to promote the highest possible standards.

We consider all course participants and their parents/carers to be of equal value, irrespective of disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, pregnancy, religion/beliefs and sexual orientation.

However, treating people equally does not necessarily involve treating them all the same. We respect and value differences and our policies and practices therefore reflect the diverse range of life-experiences, needs and viewpoints of all stakeholders.

We welcome our responsibility to foster a culture of respect for others within a caring, cohesive environment. All members of the Pro Corda community are encouraged to develop positive relationships reflecting their status as members of a diverse global community.

It is our duty to ensure that the aims and values outlined here apply to the full range of our policies and practices.

4.0 Pro Corda's approach to promoting equality and eliminating discrimination

The overall objective of Pro Corda's Equality Policy is to provide a single framework for Pro Corda to pursue its equality duties to promote equality of opportunity, and to promote good relations and positive attitudes between people of diverse backgrounds in all its activities. In order to achieve this, it is our aim to eliminate all forms of discrimination and harassment (the unlawful behaviour listed in 2.4 and Appendix B).

Through our Equality Policy, we seek to ensure that no course participants, staff, parents, guardians or carers or any other person through their contact with Pro Corda receives less favourable treatment on any grounds which cannot be shown to be justified.

Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation involves:

- ensuring that policies and procedures relating to discrimination, harassment and victimisation are up-to-date, inclusive of all groups and understood by all members of the community (including the Staff Code of Conduct; Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy; and Behaviour Policy); and
- ensuring that equality and diversity issues, with regard to the protected characteristics, are embedded within the staff training schedule.

Advancing of equality of opportunity involves:

- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
- taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people; and
- encouraging people from protected groups to participate in activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

Fostering good relations involves:

- tackling prejudice; and
- promoting understanding between people from different groups.

At Pro Corda the following are core to our work in achieving the three aims:

- Dealing promptly and efficiently with any forms of discrimination, harassment and victimisation within the Pro Corda community, whether on or off the premises, offline or online (link to relevant policies: Behaviour, the child-on-child section of the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy, online safety etc.).
- The use of quantitative and qualitative data analysis to identify the groups and individuals within the community that suffer disadvantage.
- Analysis of take-up of a full range of provision in order to identify any gaps in engagement.
- Putting in place a full range of pastoral, well-being and educational measures to address disadvantage and work towards equality of outcomes.

5.0 Addressing discrimination, harassment and victimisation including prejudice and prejudice-based bullying

Pro Corda is opposed to all forms of prejudice and prejudice-related bullying. Prejudice-related incidents should be identified, assessed, recorded and dealt with and the CEO should ensure that all staff, including support and administrative staff, receive appropriate training in this area.

We take seriously our obligation to regularly review and analyse the numbers, types and seriousness of prejudice-related incidents at Pro Corda and how they are addressed, including lessons learned and how these impact changes to our provision. This information is reported to, and scrutinised/challenged by, our trustees.

6.0 Pro Corda as an employer

We ensure that policies and procedures should benefit all employees, including potential and former employees, for example in recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development irrespective of disability, race/ethnicity, sex/gender, sexual orientation, gender identity /reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, and marriage/civil partnership.

7.0 Consultation with stakeholders

We engage with a range of groups, including local authority, and individuals to ensure that those who are affected by a policy or activity are consulted and involved in the design of new policies, and in the review of existing ones. As appropriate, we consult and involve groups and individuals in relation to the protected characteristics.

8.0 Meeting the specific duties

8.1 Equality information

We recognise our specific duties to gather, analyse and publish equality information on at least an annual basis. At Pro Corda this information is published in the form of annual CEO's reports to the Proc Corda Trust board. The information is also available to any outside organisation or individual on request.

In order to improve outcomes and effectiveness, we will publish information annually that illustrates:

- information of the effect that our policies and practices have had on all students and staff, and those from the protected groups;
- information on how our policies and practices have furthered the three aims of the general equality duty; and
- details of engagement with key stakeholders.

8.2 Equality objectives

We will formulate and publish at least every four years specific and measurable objectives in relation to the protected characteristics.

9.0 Roles and responsibilities

All who work at Pro Corda have a responsibility for promoting equality and inclusion, and avoiding unfair discrimination.

9.1 Trustees of Pro Corda are responsible for:

- ensuring the charity---- complies with current equality legislation; and
- ensuring this policy and its procedures are followed

9.2 The CEO of Pro Corda is responsible for:

- ensuring the policy is readily available and that the trustees, staff, course participants and their parents/carers attention is drawn to it;
- ensuring its procedures are followed;
- producing regular information for staff and trustees about the policy and how it is working, and providing training for them on the policy, if necessary;
- ensuring all staff know their responsibilities and receive training and support in carrying these out;
- taking appropriate action in cases of harassment and discrimination;

and

- monitoring the impact of the policy and undertaking regular reviews.

9.3 All Pro Corda staff are responsible for ensuring:

- good practice, dealing with incidents of direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation and being able to recognise and tackle bias and stereotyping;
- promoting equality and good relations and avoiding discrimination against anyone within the community; and
- keeping up to date with the law on equality and diversity and taking advantage of training and learning opportunities.

9.4 Course participants at Pro Corda are responsible for:

- being aware of equality and diversity issues and bringing it to the attention of staff. This may include:
 - the anti-bullying policy including online bullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying and all other forms of child-on-child abuse; and
 - developing rules which challenge discriminatory behaviour.

9.5 Visitors and contractors to Pro Corda are responsible for:

- knowing and following our equality policy; and
- if a visitor or contractor encounters a member of staff at Pro Corda who is engaging in discriminatory behaviour they will follow the Pro Corda whistleblowing policy.

9.6 Responsibility for overseeing equality practices in Pro Corda lies with CEO Andrew Quartermain and Director of Outreach and SEND

Responsibilities include:

- co-ordinating and monitoring work on equality issues;
- dealing with and monitoring reports of harassment (including sexual, prejudice-based and discriminatory harassment);
- monitoring the progress and attainment of potentially vulnerable groups of course participants (e.g. children and young people in care, children with limited English fluency, children from Traveller communities, children that are economically disadvantaged, disabled students, LGBTQ+ students, children with Special Educational Needs,

- pregnant girls and those on maternity leave and any other groups that are considered to be vulnerable); and
- monitoring attendance and exclusions.

10.0 Monitoring, reviewing and assessing impact

The policy will be regularly monitored and reviewed by staff and trustees to ensure that it is effective in tackling discrimination, promoting access and participation, equality and good relations for any individual and between different groups, and that it does not disadvantage particular sections of the community.

Any pattern of inequality found as a result of impact assessments is used to inform planning and decision-making.

The CEO will provide monitoring reports for review by the Pro Corda Trustees.

Appendix A: Protected characteristics

The protected characteristics that could be relevant are:

- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership (with regard to Pro Corda as employer)
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Disability

A person is a disabled person (someone who has the protected characteristic of disability) if they have a physical and/or mental impairment which has what the law calls 'a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

There is no need for a person to have a medically diagnosed cause for their impairment; what matters is the effect of the impairment not the cause.

In relation to physical impairment:

- Conditions that affect the body such as arthritis, hearing or sight impairment (unless this is correctable by glasses or contact lenses), diabetes, asthma, epilepsy, conditions such as HIV infection, cancer and multiple sclerosis, as well as loss of limbs or the use of limbs are covered.
- HIV infection, cancer and multiple sclerosis are covered from the point of diagnosis.
- Severe disfigurement (such as scarring) is covered even if it has no physical impact on the person with the disfigurement, provided the long-term requirement is met.
- People who are registered as blind or partially sighted, or who are certified as being blind or partially sighted by a consultant ophthalmologist, are automatically treated as disabled under the Act.
Mental impairment includes conditions such as dyslexia and autism as well as learning disabilities such as Down's syndrome and mental health conditions such as depression and schizophrenia.

Sex

A person's sex refers to the fact that they are male or female. In relation to a group of people, it refers to either men or women or to either boys or girls.

Race

Race means a person's:

- colour, and/or
- nationality (including citizenship), and/or
- ethnic or national origin

and a racial group is composed of people who have or share a colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins.

A person has the protected characteristic of race if they belong to a particular racial group, such as 'British people'. Racial groups can comprise two or more racial groups such as 'British Asians'.

Religion or belief

The protected characteristic of religion or belief includes any religion and any religious or philosophical belief. It also includes a lack of any such religion or belief.

A religion need not be mainstream or well known to gain protection as a religion. It must, though, be identifiable and have a clear structure and belief system.

Denominations or sects within religions may be considered a religion. Cults and new religious movements may also be considered religions or beliefs.

Belief means any religious or philosophical belief and includes a lack of belief.

'Religious belief' goes beyond beliefs about and adherence to a religion or its central articles of faith and may vary from person to person within the same religion.

A belief which is not a religious belief may be a philosophical belief, such as humanism or atheism.

A belief need not include faith or worship of a god or gods, but must affect how a person lives their life or perceives the world.

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation means the attraction a person feels towards one sex or another (or both), which determines who they form intimate relationships with or are attracted to.

- Some people are only attracted to those of the same sex (lesbian women and gay men).
- Some people are attracted to people of both sexes (bisexual people).
- Some people are only attracted to the opposite sex (heterosexual people).

Everyone is protected from being treated worse because of sexual orientation, whether they are bisexual, gay, lesbian or heterosexual.

Sexual orientation discrimination also covers discrimination connected with manifestations of that sexual orientation.

Gender reassignment

Gender reassignment is a personal process (rather than a medical process) which involves a person expressing their gender in a way that differs from or is inconsistent with the physical sex they were born with.

This personal process may include undergoing medical procedures or, as is more likely for course participants, it may simply include choosing to dress in a different way as part of the personal process of change.

A person will be protected because of gender reassignment where they:

- make their intention known to someone – it does not matter who this is, whether it is someone at Pro Corda or at home or someone like a doctor:
- once they have proposed to undergo gender reassignment they are protected, even if they take no further steps or they decide to stop later on
- they do not have to have reached an irrevocable decision that they will undergo gender reassignment, but as soon as there is a manifestation of this intention they are protected
- start or continue to dress, behave or live (full-time or part-time) according to the gender they identify with as a person
- undergo treatment related to gender reassignment, such as surgery or hormone therapy
- have received gender recognition under the Gender Recognition Act 2004

It does not matter which of these applies to a person for them to be protected because of the characteristic of gender reassignment.

Pregnancy and maternity

The Act lists pregnancy and maternity as a protected characteristic. Pregnancy and maternity discrimination is covered in Appendix B.

Appendix B: What is unlawful behaviour?

Direct discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs when you treat a course participant less favourably than you treat (or would treat) another course participant because of a protected characteristic.

Discrimination based on association

Direct discrimination also occurs when you treat a course participant less favourably because of their association with another person who has a protected characteristic (other than pregnancy and maternity).

This might occur when you treat a course participant less favourably because their sibling, parent, carer or friend has a protected characteristic.

Discrimination based on perception

Direct discrimination also occurs when you treat a course participant less favourably because you mistakenly think that they have a protected characteristic.

Discrimination because of pregnancy and maternity

It is discrimination to treat a woman (including a female course participant of any age) less favourably because she is or has been pregnant, has given birth in the last 26 weeks or is breastfeeding a baby who is 26 weeks or younger.

It is direct sex discrimination to treat a woman (including a female course participant of any age) less favourably because she is breastfeeding a child who is more than 26 weeks old.

Indirect discrimination

Indirect discrimination occurs when you apply a provision, criterion or practice in the same way for all course participants or a particular course participant group, but this has the effect of putting course participants sharing a protected characteristic within the general course participant group at a particular disadvantage.

Discrimination arising from disability

Discrimination arising from disability occurs when you treat a disabled course participant unfavourably because of something connected with their disability and cannot justify such treatment.

Discrimination arising from disability is different from direct discrimination. Direct discrimination occurs because of the protected characteristic of disability. For discrimination arising from disability, the motive for the treatment does not matter; the question is whether the disabled course participant has been treated unfavourably because of something connected with their disability.

Discrimination arising from disability is also different from indirect discrimination. There is no need to show that other people have been affected alongside the individual disabled course participant or for the disabled course participant to compare themselves with anyone else.

Harassment

There are three types of harassment which are unlawful under the Equality Act:

- Harassment related to a relevant protected characteristic
- Sexual harassment
- Less favourable treatment of a course participant because they submit to or reject sexual harassment or harassment related to sex.

The relevant protected characteristics for Pro Corda may be:

- Disability
- Race
- Sex

Harassment related to a protected characteristic

Harassment occurs when a course participant is subject to unwanted behaviour which is related to a relevant protected characteristic and which has the purpose or effect of:

- violating a course participant's dignity or
- creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the course participant

The word 'unwanted' means 'unwelcome' or 'uninvited'. It is not necessary for the course participant to say that they object to the behaviour for it to be unwanted.

In this context 'related to' has a broad meaning and includes situations where the course participant who is on the receiving end of the unwanted behaviour does not

have the protected characteristic himself or herself, provided there is a connection between the behaviour and a protected characteristic. This would also include situations where the course participant is associated with someone who has a protected characteristic, or is wrongly perceived as having a particular protected characteristic.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment occurs when a course participant is subject to unwanted behaviour which is of a sexual nature and which has the purpose or effect of:

- violating a course participant's dignity or
- creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, offensive or sexualised environment for the course participant

'Of a sexual nature' can cover verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct including unwelcome sexual advances, inappropriate touching, forms of sexual assault, sexual jokes, displaying pornographic photographs or drawings, or sending emails with material of a sexual nature.

It is unlawful to treat a course participant less favourably because they either submit to, or reject, sexual harassment or harassment related to their sex.

When referring to sexual harassment we mean 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of Pro Corda. When we reference sexual harassment, we do so in the context of child-on-child sexual harassment. For a full definition of child-on-child sexual harassment, see the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Part Five of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022.

Victimisation

Victimisation is defined in the Act as treating someone badly because they have done a 'protected act' (or because Pro Corda believes that a person has done or is going to do a protected act).

There are additional victimisation provisions which extend the protection to course participants who are victimised because their parent or sibling has carried out a protected act.

A 'protected act' is:

- Making a claim or complaint of discrimination (under the Act)
- Helping someone else to make a claim by giving evidence or information
- Making an allegation that Pro Corda or someone else has breached the Act
- Doing anything else in connection with the Act

Appendix C: Further reading and support

The Equality Act 2010 and Schools (May 2014, last updated 2018)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/315587/Equality_Act_Advice_Final.pdf

Equality and Human Rights Commission: The Essential Guide to the Public Sector Equality Duty, July 2014, updated March 2022

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/essential-guide-public-sector-equality-duty>

Equality and Human Rights Commission: What equality law means for you as an education provider: schools, March 2014

https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/what_equality_law_means_for_you_as_an_education_provider_schools.pdf

DfE: Preventing and Tackling Bullying, July 2017

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>

DfE Guidance: Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges, September 2021

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/999239/SVSH_2021.pdf

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022, Part Five: Child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1080047/KCSIE_2022_revised.pdf

Ofsted Review of Sexual Abuse in Schools and Colleges

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges>

DfE: Relationship Education and Relationship and Sex Education, July 2020 (updated September 2021)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>

DfE: Behaviour in schools, July 2022

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1089687/Behaviour in Schools guidance July 2022.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1089687/Behaviour_in_Schools_guidance_July_2022.pdf)

UKCIS: Tackling race and faith targeted bullying face to face and online. May 2017

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-race-and-faith-targeted-bullying-face-to-face-and-online-a-guide-for-schools>

Gov.uk: Equality Act 2010: advice for schools, May 2013 (updated June 2018)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools>

Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools, November 2014

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/380595/SMSC Guidance Maintained Schools.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/380595/SMSC_Guidance_Maintained_Schools.pdf)