



Inclusion Policy

July 2026

Version 1.0

Document control

Title	Inclusion Policy
Prepared by	Inclusion, Wellbeing and Policy Manager
Approved by	Executive Leadership Group and Board
Date of approval	30 July 2026
Version number	1.0
Review frequency	3 yearly
Next review date	May 2029

Status control

Version	Date	Status	Prepared by	Reason for amendment
1.0	May 26	For approval	CC	Creation of new Inclusion Policy, which replaces previous Equal Opportunities Policy. Substantially different to Equal Opportunities Policy.

1 Introduction

At VisitScotland, we believe that inclusion is fundamental to creating a workplace where everyone feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their best. Our commitment to inclusion goes beyond compliance; it is a core part of our culture and how we operate every day. We recognise that diversity of backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences strengthens our organisation and drives innovation, collaboration, and success.

This policy outlines our approach to fostering an inclusive environment where all individuals, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, or any other characteristic, are treated equitably and have equal access to opportunities. We aim to remove barriers, challenge bias, and ensure that every voice is heard and respected.

Through education, accountability, and continuous improvement, we strive to create a workplace where diversity and inclusion is embedded in all aspects of our work.

Together, we can build a culture that not only welcomes diversity but actively embraces it, ensuring that everyone can thrive and succeed.

2 Key equality, diversity and Inclusion (EDI) definitions

This section provides key definitions used in this policy to support a shared understanding of inclusion related terms. It aims to promote clarity, reduce ambiguity, and ensure consistent application across the organisation.

These are further referenced in our mandatory training on equality, diversity and inclusion.

Equality

Breaking down barriers, eliminating discrimination, and ensuring equal opportunities and access for all. Equality is fair treatment and the removal of obstacles so everyone can contribute and participate fully.

Equity

Recognises different starting points and provides tailored support or adjustments to achieve fair outcomes and experiences.

Diversity

Celebrating differences and valuing everyone. Each person brings visible and non-visible characteristics, identities, and experiences. By respecting and valuing these differences, individuals feel appreciated for their unique contributions — benefiting them and VisitScotland.

Inclusion

How we behave: creating conditions where everyone feels respected, heard and able to contribute.

Belonging

A felt sense of acceptance, connection and authenticity at work.

Equality and diversity together

Are not interchangeable but inter-dependent: there can be no equality of opportunity if difference is not valued and harnessed.

Protected Characteristics

As defined by the Equality Act 2010. Full list: [see Section 7](#).

Intersectionality

Understanding how multiple aspects of identity can combine to create unique barriers or risks.

Reasonable adjustments

Timely, proportionate, person-centred changes that remove or reduce disadvantage.

Inclusive leadership

Leadership that seeks diverse perspectives, interrupts bias, adapts style, considers people impacts and fosters psychological safety.

3 Legislative framework

This policy is guided by the principles of inclusion, respect, fairness, and equality of opportunity. We aim to ensure that every colleague experiences a workplace free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

It aligns with the [Equality Act 2010](#), which protects individuals from discrimination relating to the nine protected characteristics (see [section 7](#)). We also recognise intersectionality, acknowledging that people may experience overlapping or compounded barriers due to multiple aspects of their identity.

Our ambition is to go beyond compliance, proactively breaking down barriers, removing inequality and ensuring equal opportunities and access for all.

4 Purpose and scope

This policy sets out how VisitScotland promotes and embeds equality, diversity and inclusion across our leadership, culture, systems and everyday practice.

Its purpose is to:

- create a diverse, equitable and inclusive workplace, where everyone feels valued, respected and empowered to contribute their best
- ensure dignity, fairness and respect for all
- provide clear expectations, roles and responsibilities
- guide inclusive practices across recruitment, development, accessibility, communications and people processes
- support duty of care, including during international business travel where restrictive or non-inclusive laws may contradict the principles of this policy and values
- strengthen continuous improvement through learning, data and assurance

The policy applies to all workers, employees and off-payroll workers across all locations and levels. While organisation-wide, it is especially relevant to the People and Culture

Directorate and people management practices that influence the employee lifecycle (see appendix 2 which details our People and Culture Plan commitments).

5 Our commitments and principles

5.1 Organisational commitments

VisitScotland is committed to:

Creating a safe, respectful and inclusive workplace

We provide a working environment free from bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination. The contribution of every individual is valued. All colleagues will receive training on their responsibilities and are expected to uphold this policy.

Addressing concerns and complaints

We take concerns raised by employees seriously. Issues will be addressed informally where appropriate, with formal procedures used when required. Serious misconduct may result in dismissal and, in some cases, (for example, sexual harassment) legal consequences.

Extending inclusion beyond the workplace

This policy applies to all work-related contexts, including meetings, events, business travel, social activities and digital or social media behaviour that may impact colleagues or VisitScotland.

Inclusive recruitment, training and development

We design recruitment, development and progression processes that are fair, transparent and encourage applications from a broad and diverse talent pool.

Supporting employee support groups

We encourage employee support groups that promote belonging, peer support and organisational learning across diverse identities and experiences.

5.2 Core principles

Our principles underpin how we work:

Equal treatment and respect

Zero tolerance for discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

People-centred leadership

Leaders model our VisitScotland values and our Leadership Framework and create inclusive environments.

Fair, transparent processes

Decisions affecting employment and opportunity are merit based and bias aware.

Accessibility by design

We remove barriers across workplaces, digital services and events.

Psychological safety

Colleagues feel safe to raise concerns, ask questions and contribute.

Inclusive duty of care for travel

Risks are assessed and alternative arrangements offered where safety may be compromised.

Continuous improvement

We learn from feedback, data and lived experience to improve continuously.

6 Roles and responsibilities

At VisitScotland, inclusion and respect are fundamental to who we are. We expect all employees to reflect the values and behaviours outlined in our Leadership Framework and to take personal responsibility for fostering an inclusive workplace. The following roles and responsibilities have been outlined to provide clarity, consistency and accountability in how we embed inclusion across VisitScotland.

Executive Leadership Group

- Champion inclusion and ensure appropriate resources are in place
- Set clear expectations and oversee progress

People and Culture department

- Lead and maintain this policy
- Provide advice, learning and practical tools
- Monitor themes and trends
- Support reasonable adjustments and channels for raising concerns
- Manage and coordinate Equality Mainstreaming public sector reporting duties

Managers

- Demonstrate inclusive leadership
- Understand individual and team needs
- Take responsibility for inclusive practice within teams
- Respond quickly to concerns

All colleagues

- Act with respect
- Comply with this policy
- Engage in learning opportunities
- Raise concerns as early as possible
- Recognise differences and gain opportunities from them

7 Dignity, equality and anti-discrimination

Protected Characteristics

Every employee is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity, equality and respect for all. VisitScotland will not tolerate any act of unlawful or unfair discrimination (including harassment or victimisation) against an employee, contractor, job applicant or visitor on the basis of a Protected Characteristic, namely:

- Sex
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race (including ethnic origin, colour, nationality and national origin)

- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Religion and/or belief
- Age

We also do not tolerate unjustifiable discrimination on the basis of working pattern (for example, part-time, fixed-term or flexible working).

Equal access to opportunity

All employees will be encouraged and supported to develop their skills, fulfil their potential and access training, development and progression. Selection for employment, promotion, training or other benefits will be based on aptitude, capability and organisational need.

Zero tolerance of bullying, harassment and victimisation

No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment — verbal, physical, written, digital or behavioural — will be tolerated.

Reporting concerns

If you believe you have experienced discrimination, harassment or victimisation, you may:

- seek informal resolution (with your line manager or another appropriate manager)
- raise concerns under the Bullying and Harassment Policy or Grievance Policy
- speak confidentially with your HR Business Partner for advice
- raise concerns where working arrangements, partnerships, or travel to destinations do not align with the organisation's values or the principles set out in this policy

Confidentiality and protection

Allegations will be treated confidentially and investigated fairly under the appropriate procedure. Individuals who raise concerns in good faith will not be victimised. Knowingly false or malicious allegations may be addressed under the Disciplinary Policy.

Consequences of breach

A person found to have breached this policy may face disciplinary action under the Disciplinary Policy. Individuals may also be personally liable under the Equality Act 2010 for acts of discrimination they commit.

8 Relationship to other policies

The principles outlined in this Inclusion Policy are embedded throughout all VisitScotland policies and practices.

For a comprehensive list of related policies and resources, please visit our [HR Policies and Guidelines](#) page on the Hub.

9 Reviewing, monitoring and reporting

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner if required by changes in legislation and best practice.

To ensure the policy remains effective, VisitScotland may collect and analyse data relating to equal opportunities in the workplace. When employees join VisitScotland, they provide consent for us to gather and process this information. We use this data to:

- Monitor how well the policy is working in practice and make improvements where necessary.
- Assess the composition of our workforce.
- Support initiatives that promote equality, diversity, and inclusion.

As a public sector organisation, VisitScotland is also subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty. This requires us to publish reports every two and four years detailing our progress in advancing equality, diversity, and inclusion across the organisation. These reports are monitored by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and submitted to the Scottish Government.

Appendix 1 – types of discrimination

This appendix provides plain-English explanations.

Direct discrimination

Treating someone less favourably because of a Protected Characteristic.

Example: Rejecting a candidate because they are pregnant.

Indirect discrimination

A rule or practice that applies to everyone but disproportionately disadvantages people with a Protected Characteristic and is not a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Example: Requiring all staff to work late evenings without exploring alternatives may disadvantage those with caring responsibilities (often women).

Discrimination by association

Unfavourable treatment because of someone's association with a person who has a Protected Characteristic.

Example: Penalising an employee because their partner is transgender.

Discrimination by perception

Treating someone unfavourably because they are perceived to have a Protected Characteristic (whether or not they do).

Example: Harassing someone believed to be of a particular religion.

Harassment

Unwanted conduct related to a Protected Characteristic that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Includes sexual harassment (see below).

Sexual harassment

Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature (for example, comments, advances, imagery) with the purpose or effect described above.

Example: Sending sexualised messages to a colleague.

Victimisation

Treating someone badly because they have made or supported a complaint about discrimination or harassment, or are suspected of doing so.

Failure to make reasonable adjustments

Not taking timely and appropriate steps to remove or reduce barriers experienced by a disabled person, where the employer knows, or could reasonably be expected to know, about the individual's disability.

Reasonable adjustments may include changes to working arrangements, the physical environment, or the provision of additional support or equipment. Failing to consider or implement these adjustments can place disabled individuals at a substantial disadvantage compared to others.

Example: Not providing flexible working arrangements, adapted equipment, or adjustments to duties for an employee with a long-term health condition once the need has been identified.

Bullying

Offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour; abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates or injures. Bullying may overlap with harassment where linked to a Protected Characteristic.

Appendix 2 – inclusive people practices

This appendix outlines our commitments and approaches to embedding inclusive practices across the employee lifecycle.

Recruitment and selection

- Inclusive job design: focus on essential criteria and avoid inflated requirements.
- Accessible attraction: inclusive language, clear requirements, reasonable adjustments for candidates.
- Fair selection: structured interviews/assessments; trained panels; consistent scoring; documented decisions.

Performance, pay and progression

- Clear objectives and balanced measures; regular check-ins and quality feedback.
- Fair pay practices and periodic reviews for equity.
- Development pathways, coaching and mentoring.

Workplace accessibility

- Reasonable adjustments: quick, confidential and collaborative (employee, manager and HR).
- Accessible workspaces, meetings and events (seating, lighting, audibility, quiet space, step-free access, accessible toilets).
- Digital accessibility aligned to WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) where practicable.

Speak-up and early resolution

- Multiple safe routes: manager, HR, anonymous.
- Non-retaliation commitment.
- Early, supportive conversations encouraged.

Inclusive communication

- Plain, respectful language; accessible documents
- Inclusive imagery and examples; avoid stereotypes.
- Consider cultural, religious and caring commitments when scheduling.

Data privacy and dignity

- Sensitive information handled on a need-to-know basis.
- Voluntary disclosure; never compel disclosure of personal characteristics.

Hybrid and flexible working

- Fair access to opportunities regardless of location or pattern.
- Inclusive meetings (hybrid etiquette, tech checks, turn-taking).

Inclusive decision-making and horizon scanning

- Horizon scanning for people impacts (future trends, risks and opportunities).
- Consider diverse perspectives before decisions; document rationale and mitigations.
- Commitment to values-aligned working: individuals will not be required to travel to, or work in, locations or with partners where this would conflict with their personal values or the principles set out in this policy