SURYA EMPOWERMENT MOVEMENT CIC

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Fair treatment, inclusive participation and accessible employment and services

Version: 1.0
Status: For Board adoption
Policy owner: Board of Directors
Approval date: To be recorded when adopted
Review cycle: At least annually and following relevant legal or operational change

> **Our commitment.** Surya will treat people fairly, with dignity and respect, recognise different needs and take practical steps to remove avoidable barriers. Equality does not always mean identical treatment.

1. Purpose

Surya Empowerment Movement CIC ("Surya" or "the CIC") is committed to equality of opportunity, diversity, inclusion and freedom from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation. This policy sets the standards that guide our governance, employment, volunteering, commissioning, partnerships and delivery of services.

Our aim is to create welcoming and accessible experiences in which people can participate without being disadvantaged by prejudice, inflexible practices or unnecessary barriers. This supports Surya's work with corporate clients, communities, neurodivergent adults, women, older people, people with reduced mobility or dementia, residential settings, care homes and online audiences.

2. Scope

This policy applies to directors, employees, workers, sessional staff, self-employed practitioners, contractors, consultants, volunteers, students, placement workers and applicants. It also applies, where relevant, to service users, participants, clients, carers, personal assistants, visitors, suppliers, commissioners, delivery partners and anyone representing Surya.

It covers recruitment, selection, induction, pay, allocation of work, training, development, performance, conduct, discipline, grievances, ending an engagement, procurement, marketing, programme design, booking, pricing, venues, online delivery and the day-to-day provision of activities and services.

The Equality Act 2010 applies differently depending on the relationship and context. Surya's internal standards may therefore be wider than the minimum legal protection available in a particular situation.

3. Policy principles

- Decisions will be based on relevant, objective and proportionate criteria.
- No one will be unlawfully discriminated against, harassed or victimised.
- Surya will consider and make reasonable adjustments for disabled people and will plan ahead for accessibility in its services.
- Different treatment may be appropriate where it removes disadvantage, meets different needs or is otherwise lawful and proportionate.
- Concerns will be taken seriously, considered fairly and handled as confidentially as possible.
- People who raise concerns, support a complaint or provide evidence will be protected from retaliation and victimisation.
- Equality information will be collected only where necessary and handled lawfully and securely.
- The Board will monitor implementation and act where barriers or unequal outcomes are identified.

4. Protected characteristics and wider inclusion

The nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are:

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

Legal protection varies by context and by protected characteristic. Surya will use the statutory wording accurately and will not assume that every rule or exception applies in the same way to employment, volunteering and service provision.

Surya also aims to prevent unfair treatment linked to caring responsibilities, socio-economic background, employment status, education, accent or language, health circumstances and criminal record, even

where these are not protected characteristics in their own right. This wider commitment does not change the specific legal tests under the Equality Act.

5. Forms of unacceptable and unlawful conduct

- **Direct discrimination.** Treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic. In relevant circumstances this includes treatment because a characteristic is perceived or because of association with someone who has it.
- **Indirect discrimination.** Applying a provision, criterion or practice to everyone that puts people sharing a protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage and cannot be objectively justified as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- **Harassment.** Unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. The legal assessment considers the person's perception, the circumstances and whether it was reasonable for the conduct to have that effect.
- **Sexual harassment.** Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect described above, including less favourable treatment because someone accepted or rejected sexual conduct.
- **Victimisation.** Subjecting someone to a detriment because they have done, may do or are believed to have done a protected act, such as raising a discrimination concern, supporting another person or giving evidence.
- **Discrimination arising from disability.** Treating a disabled person unfavourably because of something arising from disability where the treatment cannot be objectively justified.
- **Failure to make reasonable adjustments.** Failing to take reasonable steps to avoid a substantial disadvantage caused by a practice, physical feature or lack of an auxiliary aid or service.

Bullying, intimidation, exclusion, offensive jokes or images, hostile messages, deliberate misgendering, unwanted touching, threats and discriminatory instructions may breach this policy even where the conduct does not meet every element of a statutory claim.

6. Responsibilities

- **Board of Directors.** The Board owns and approves this policy, provides appropriate resources, appoints an Equality Lead, reviews significant complaints and monitoring information, and ensures that identified actions are completed.
- **Equality Lead.** The director or manager appointed to this role coordinates implementation, advice, training, accessibility reviews, monitoring and policy updates. The role may be combined with another appropriate responsibility.
- **Directors and managers.** Those making decisions about people, services, contracts or complaints must apply this policy, consider equality impacts, respond promptly to concerns and obtain advice where the legal position is uncertain.
- **Everyone working for or representing Surya.** All directors, workers, practitioners, contractors and volunteers must treat others respectfully, complete required learning, cooperate with adjustments and investigations, challenge inappropriate conduct safely and report serious concerns.
- **Partners and suppliers.** Contracts and partnership arrangements should set appropriate equality and accessibility expectations. Surya will address serious or repeated failures through contract, commissioning or partnership processes.

7. Recruitment, selection and people management

Surya will use fair and consistent recruitment and engagement arrangements. Requirements will reflect the genuine needs of the role and will not unnecessarily exclude or disadvantage particular groups.

1. **Define the role.** Use an accurate role description and person specification containing only necessary, relevant and proportionate criteria.
2. **Advertise inclusively.** Use accessible language and channels and explain how applicants can request an adjustment.
3. **Assess consistently.** Use structured, role-related questions and recorded criteria. More than one assessor will be involved where reasonably practicable.
4. **Separate monitoring.** Equality-monitoring information will be voluntary, separated from selection and unavailable to decision-makers unless needed for a lawful adjustment or positive-action measure.
5. **Limit health questions.** Before an offer, health or disability questions will be asked only where a statutory exception permits, including to arrange selection adjustments or establish whether an essential task can be carried out with reasonable adjustments.
6. **Record decisions.** Appointment and engagement decisions will be supported by evidence against the stated criteria.

Equality will also be considered in induction, allocation of work, pay, benefits, working arrangements, training, development, promotion, performance management, conduct processes, grievances,

redundancy and the ending of employment or engagement. Surya will keep criteria under review for unnecessary bias or disadvantage.

Positive action may be used where lawful and supported by evidence of disadvantage, different needs or under-representation. Positive discrimination will not be used. Any occupational requirement or other exception must be lawful, genuinely necessary, proportionate and documented before it is relied upon.

8. Reasonable adjustments and accessibility

8.1 Employment, volunteering and recruitment

Surya will consider reasonable adjustments where a disabled applicant, worker, practitioner or volunteer would otherwise experience a substantial disadvantage. Individuals are encouraged to explain the barrier and what may help, but a request does not need to use legal terminology.

Surya will discuss the request respectfully, consider the person's views and relevant evidence, respond without unreasonable delay, record agreed actions and review them when circumstances or duties change. Medical information will be requested only where it is necessary and proportionate. The cost of an employment adjustment will not be passed to the individual.

8.2 Services and activities

The duty on service providers is anticipatory. Surya will therefore consider accessibility when designing services, choosing venues, commissioning practitioners, creating booking processes and preparing communications, rather than relying only on individual requests after a barrier has arisen.

- step-free or otherwise suitable access, seating, toilets and arrival information;
- chair-based, lower-impact or alternative movement options where consistent with safe delivery;
- plain-English, large-print, easy-read, captioned or digital information where reasonably practicable;
- clear instructions, predictable session structure, sensory information, breaks and reduced-pressure participation;
- online or hybrid access where appropriate and reasonably practicable;
- reasonable participation by a carer, interpreter, support worker or personal assistant;
- adjusted communication methods, additional processing time or assistance with booking; and
- reasonable changes to timing, layout, equipment or delivery methods.

Service users will not be charged for reasonable adjustments. Where a requested step cannot reasonably be provided, Surya will explain the relevant considerations and explore effective alternatives. Safety requirements will be based on individual and activity-specific risk, not assumptions about a diagnosis, age or disability.

9. Inclusive programme and service delivery

- Marketing, images and language should be respectful, accurate and inclusive of the communities Surya serves.
- Booking, eligibility, payment, cancellation and participation rules must be clear, proportionate and reviewed for unintended barriers.
- Venues, digital platforms and equipment will be assessed for accessibility appropriate to the activity and intended audience.
- Facilitators will explain that participation and adaptations are encouraged within safe practice and that discriminatory conduct is unacceptable.
- Concerns involving participants, residents, clients or visitors will be addressed promptly and may result in boundaries, removal from an activity or referral under another policy.
- Commissioners and delivery partners will be told promptly where their arrangements create a material equality or accessibility risk.

9.1 Targeted and positive-action programmes

Surya may design activities for a particular community, for example women, older people, disabled or neurodivergent people, where this responds to evidenced disadvantage, under-representation, safety, privacy or different needs and is lawful and proportionate. The objective, evidence, eligibility criteria and review date will be recorded.

Restrictions based on sex, age, disability or another protected characteristic must not be assumed to be lawful simply because a programme has a beneficial aim. The responsible director will check the applicable Equality Act provision or obtain competent advice where the position is uncertain.

10. Preventing harassment and sexual harassment

Surya will take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment and will take reasonable steps to prevent other unlawful harassment. This is an active responsibility, not only a response after a complaint.

- assess risks arising from workplaces, events, lone working, travel, messaging, online delivery, social occasions and contact with clients or participants;
- consider risks from colleagues, directors, contractors and third parties such as clients, residents, service users, visitors and suppliers;
- set clear conduct expectations in induction, contracts, facilitator briefings and participant information where appropriate;
- provide proportionate training and refresh it when risks or legal duties change;
- offer more than one safe reporting route and act promptly when concerns or warning signs arise;
- take appropriate interim and corrective measures, including boundaries with third parties; and
- review incidents, complaints and near misses to improve prevention.

Surya will not permit harassment of its workers by third parties where it has influence or control. Where another organisation controls the setting, Surya will raise the matter, seek protective action and review whether the work or partnership can safely continue.

11. Raising and handling concerns

Anyone may raise a concern about discrimination, harassment, victimisation, exclusion or an unmet adjustment. Workers may use the grievance, whistleblowing or other relevant internal route. Volunteers, participants, service users and external parties may use Surya's complaints arrangements or contact a Director.

1. **Choose a reporting route.** A concern may be raised with the relevant manager, the Equality Lead or a Director. If that person is involved, another Director should receive it.
2. **Record and acknowledge.** Surya will make an appropriate record, acknowledge the concern promptly and identify any immediate safety, safeguarding, welfare or adjustment needs.
3. **Agree the process.** Informal resolution may be offered where suitable and freely chosen. Serious allegations, power imbalances, repeated behaviour or safety concerns will normally require a formal process.
4. **Investigate fairly.** A suitably impartial person will gather relevant information, allow those involved to respond and avoid unreasonable delay.
5. **Decide and act.** Findings will be based on the available evidence and the applicable standard. Action may include an adjustment, apology, training, changed arrangements, conduct action, contractual action or referral.
6. **Communicate and review.** The complainant will receive an appropriate outcome and information about any review or appeal route, subject to privacy, safeguarding and legal limits.

Information will be shared only with people who need it for a fair process, protection, support or a legal duty. Absolute confidentiality cannot be promised. Anonymous concerns will be considered as far as the available information reasonably allows.

No one will be disadvantaged for raising a genuine concern, requesting an adjustment, supporting another person or participating in an investigation. Deliberately false or malicious allegations may be addressed under the appropriate conduct process, but an allegation that is not upheld is not by itself malicious.

This policy does not remove anyone's legal rights or prevent them from seeking advice or contacting an appropriate regulator, authority or support service. Legal time limits may apply, so external advice should be sought promptly where needed.

12. Equality information and data protection

Surya may collect proportionate equality information to understand participation, access, recruitment outcomes, adjustments, complaints and the effectiveness of this policy. Providing monitoring information will normally be voluntary and a decision not to provide it will not disadvantage the individual.

- state the purpose and use of the information clearly;
- identify and document an Article 6 UK GDPR lawful basis and, where special-category data is involved, an applicable Article 9 and Data Protection Act 2018 condition;
- maintain an appropriate policy document where the chosen legal condition requires one;
- collect only the information needed and avoid free-text detail where aggregated categories are sufficient;
- keep monitoring information separate from selection or service decisions unless access is necessary for a lawful adjustment or positive-action measure;
- restrict access, apply suitable security and use anonymised or aggregated reporting where practicable;
- set and follow appropriate retention periods; and
- explain the processing in relevant privacy information.

Small numbers will be handled carefully so that individuals cannot be identified from reports. Monitoring will not be used to stereotype people or make unjustified decisions about an individual.

13. Training, communication and implementation

- Make the policy available to workers, practitioners, volunteers and applicants and provide it to service users or partners on request.
- Include proportionate equality, accessibility and harassment-prevention information in induction and role briefings.
- Provide additional learning for anyone involved in recruitment, complaints, programme design, procurement or people management.
- Record completion of required training and refresh it following material legal, service or risk changes.
- Ensure job descriptions, contracts, partnership terms and participant information reflect relevant responsibilities.
- Use the equality and access review in Appendix A for new or materially changed services, events and policies.

14. Monitoring and review

The Equality Lead will provide the Board with proportionate information about implementation. This may include recruitment and service-access patterns, adjustment requests, complaints, training completion, identified barriers, partner issues and progress against agreed actions. Information will normally be reported in aggregated or anonymised form.

The Board will review this policy at least annually and sooner following relevant legal or statutory-code changes, a serious complaint or incident, evidence of unequal outcomes, significant service expansion or a material change in how Surya works. Actions arising from a review will have a named owner and target date.

15. Breaches of this policy

A breach may lead to action under the applicable disciplinary, volunteer, contractual, complaints, safeguarding or partnership procedure. Serious conduct may result in ending an engagement, excluding a person from an activity, terminating a contract or partnership, or referral to an appropriate authority.

Surya will also consider whether a breach reveals a wider barrier, training need, unsafe arrangement or failure of oversight that requires organisational action.

16. Related policies

- DBS and Criminal Records Checks Policy;
- Safeguarding policies and procedures;
- Recruitment and selection arrangements;
- Code of Conduct and any Dignity at Work or anti-bullying arrangements;
- Grievance, disciplinary, complaints and whistleblowing procedures;
- Data Protection, Privacy and Records Retention policies;
- Health and Safety and risk-assessment arrangements; and
- Reasonable-adjustment, accessibility and participant-safety arrangements.

17. Legal and guidance framework

This policy is intended to support compliance with applicable law and guidance in Great Britain, including:

- Equality Act 2010;
- Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023;
- Employment Rights Act 2025, as relevant provisions commence;
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR;
- Employment Rights Act 1996 and related employment legislation, where applicable;
- Equality and Human Rights Commission statutory Codes of Practice and technical guidance; and
- the Public Sector Equality Duty only where Surya is itself subject to it or is exercising a public function.

The law and statutory guidance may change. Where this policy conflicts with a legal requirement in force, Surya will apply the legal requirement and update the policy without avoidable delay.

Official guidance

Equality Act 2010: The current statutory text. Open official guidance

Services Code of Practice: EHRC guidance for service providers, public functions and associations. Open official guidance

Discrimination at work: Acas guidance on protected characteristics and forms of discrimination. Open official guidance

Recruitment: GOV.UK guidance on preventing discrimination during recruitment. Open official guidance

Special-category data: ICO guidance on equality information and sensitive personal data. Open official guidance

Appendix A: Equality and access review

Complete this review when introducing or materially changing a service, event, policy, recruitment process or partnership. The record should be proportionate to the scale and risk of the decision.

Review field	Evidence, decision or action
Activity, service or decision	
Responsible person	
Proposed start or change date	
Who is intended to benefit or participate?	
Who may be excluded or disadvantaged, and why?	
Evidence or feedback considered	
Venue, physical access and facilities	
Communication, booking and digital access	
Timing, cost, eligibility and participation rules	
Sensory, cognitive, mobility and communication considerations	
Reasonable adjustments planned or available	
Targeted or restricted participation: objective and legal basis	
Risks of harassment or third-party conduct	
Partner, supplier or commissioner responsibilities	
Equality data to be collected and lawful handling arrangements	

Review field	Evidence, decision or action
Changes made after this review	
Residual barriers and how they will be managed	
Consultation or specialist advice required	
Decision and reasons	
Review date or trigger	

Appendix B: Concern and action record

Use this form only where an appropriate case-management or complaints record is not already in place. Restrict access and do not record unnecessary special-category information.

Case field	Restricted record
Date concern received	
Received by	
Person raising concern and preferred contact method	
Relationship to Surya	Worker / volunteer / applicant / participant / service user / external
Summary of concern	
Immediate safety, safeguarding, welfare or adjustment action	
Process selected and reasons	Informal / formal / other
Person responsible for handling or investigating	
Key evidence or information considered	
Findings	
Actions and responsible owners	
Outcome communicated on	
Review or appeal requested and outcome	
Organisational learning or policy change	
Closure date	
Retention and access arrangements confirmed	

Board adoption record

The Board should complete this section when formally adopting the policy. The signed or approved record may be retained with the relevant Board minutes.

Board approval field	Record
Approved by	Board of Directors
Approval date	26th July 2026
Policy version	1.0
Signed on behalf of the Board	Annemarie Hlavacova
Named Equality Lead	Annemarie Hlavacova, Director
Next scheduled review	25 July 2027

Version history

Version	Status or date	Summary
1.0	For Board adoption	Complete rewrite of the former Equal Opportunities Policy