

South West Learning – Equal Opportunities, Diversity, and Inclusion

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if statutory updates require, by the Directors and DSL.

Date Approved: September 2025

Date for Review: September 2026

Introduction and Purpose

South West Learning (SWL) values and embraces diversity and is committed to promoting equality of opportunity in every aspect of our work, in line with the Equality Act 2010.

We aim to foster a culture that celebrates difference, respects individuality, and ensures fairness, dignity, and inclusion for all.

SWL provides alternative education and tutoring services to young people aged 11–16 across varied educational and community settings. In this context, diversity is recognised as a strength that enriches our learning experience and supports positive outcomes for all.

This policy applies to all employees, tutors, contractors, volunteers, and applicants, and should be read alongside our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Safer Recruitment Policy, Health and Safety Policy, and Complaints Procedure.

Statement of Intent

South West Learning is committed to ensuring that all individuals — staff, contractors, learners, parents, and clients — are treated with respect and without discrimination.

We will:

- Promote equality, fairness, and inclusion in all areas of our work.
- Continuously review our policies and practices to avoid unlawful discrimination.
- Ensure that decisions regarding recruitment, engagement, training, pay, promotion, or termination are based solely on merit, qualifications, and performance.
- Take active steps to remove barriers and provide reasonable adjustments where necessary.

We will not discriminate unlawfully on the basis of any of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, which are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

We also ensure no discrimination occurs on the grounds of membership or non-membership of a trade union, part-time or fixed-term status, or any other irrelevant distinction.

All SWL staff and contractors are expected to comply with and promote this policy as part of their professional duties.

Recruitment and Employment Practices

South West Learning ensures that:

- Job descriptions, person specifications, and advertisements reflect our commitment to equality and inclusion.
- Selection criteria are based on skills, experience, and qualifications required for the role.
- Application and selection processes are accessible to all, with reasonable adjustments provided where necessary.
- Decisions to recruit or engage individuals are made solely on the basis of merit.
- All new staff receive induction and ongoing training in equality, diversity, and inclusion.

SWL will not accept discriminatory instructions or requests from clients, schools, or partners.

Discrimination

- Direct Discrimination occurs when an individual is treated less favorably because of a protected characteristic. For example, refusing to hire a qualified candidate because of their disability or racial background. Direct discrimination can also occur by association (because someone is connected to a person with a protected characteristic) or by perception (because someone is wrongly assumed to have a protected characteristic).

- Occurs when a policy, criterion, or practice that applies to everyone places people with a protected characteristic at a disadvantage, unless it can be objectively justified. For example: requiring all staff to work evenings may disadvantage those with childcare responsibilities or certain disabilities.

SWL will not implement any requirement that could cause direct or indirect discrimination unless it can be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

In exceptional cases, an occupational requirement may lawfully apply (for example, a female tutor for work in specific welfare contexts). This must be objectively justified, documented, and approved by the Directors.

Harassment

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, or offensive environment.

This includes sexual harassment and unwelcome behaviour such as offensive jokes, gestures, remarks, or visual material.

SWL is committed to maintaining a workplace and learning environment free from harassment.

Examples of prohibited harassment include:

- Verbal or written abuse, jokes, or slurs.
- Unwanted sexual advances or comments.
- Display or circulation of offensive material (digital or printed).
- Physical conduct such as unwanted touching or assault.
- Threats, coercion, or retaliation after raising a complaint.

Anyone who believes they have been harassed should report the incident immediately to the Directors or Safeguarding Lead.

Reports should include details of the incident, names of those involved, and any witnesses.

All complaints will be investigated promptly, fairly, and confidentially.

If harassment is substantiated, appropriate action will be taken — which may include disciplinary measures, up to and including dismissal or termination of contract.

Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when someone is treated unfavourably because they have made or supported a complaint about discrimination or harassment.

SWL strictly prohibits victimisation of any individual who has raised or assisted in a complaint.

Anyone found to have victimised another person will be subject to disciplinary action.

Disability and Reasonable Adjustments

SWL recognises the need to remove barriers that disadvantage disabled staff, contractors, or learners.

We will make reasonable adjustments to recruitment, training, working arrangements, and learning environments to enable participation and progression.

Examples include:

- Modifying application and interview procedures.
- Adjusting work equipment or teaching resources.
- Allowing flexible working arrangements or additional support.
- Providing information in alternative formats or accessible locations.

No person will be treated less favourably because of disability or perceived disability.

Age Equality

SWL is committed to ensuring that people of all ages are treated fairly.

No assumptions will be made about ability or suitability based on age, and job adverts will not specify age requirements except where legally justified.

Information about age will be collected only for monitoring purposes.

Gender Reassignment

SWL recognises and supports the rights of individuals to transition or express their gender identity.

We will treat all staff and learners with dignity and respect, using preferred names and pronouns, and ensuring confidentiality throughout any transition process.

Any discrimination, harassment, or bullying on the grounds of gender reassignment will not be tolerated.

Part-Time, Flexible, and Fixed-Term Workers

SWL ensures that part-time, temporary, and fixed-term staff receive equal treatment in pay, conditions, and benefits (on a pro-rata basis where appropriate).

They will have the same opportunities for training, development, and progression as full-time employees.

Recruitment of Ex-Offenders

Where roles require DBS checks, SWL will follow the Disclosure and Barring Service Code of Practice and will not discriminate unfairly against individuals with criminal records.

A criminal record will only be considered in light of its relevance to the position and safeguarding requirements.

Staff Responsibilities

All SWL staff, tutors, and contractors have a responsibility to:

- Treat others with dignity and respect.
- Challenge or report any behaviour that could be discriminatory, harassing, or bullying.
- Support SWL's commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action or termination of contract.

Complaints and Monitoring

SWL has procedures in place for dealing with complaints of discrimination or harassment.

All complaints will be taken seriously, investigated fully, and handled sensitively.

We will also monitor recruitment, training, and workforce data to ensure fairness and identify areas for improvement.

Communicating this Policy

This policy will be:

- Shared with all staff, tutors, and contractors during induction.
- Made available on request to clients, schools, and parents.
- Reviewed annually or sooner if legislative changes occur.

Contact Details:

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- Email: info@southwestlearning.co.uk
- Designated Safeguarding Lead: Emma Radford
- Deputy DSL: Eleanor Hoggett