



SCLD Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

April 2022–March 2027



Introduction

SCLD is a human rights defender. SCLD's vision is of a fairer Scotland where people with learning disabilities live full, safe, loving and equal lives. We aim to make a significant contribution to creating an environment in which existing systems and culture are changed to ensure people with learning disabilities are empowered to live the life they want in line with existing human rights conventions. We believe that the discrimination, inequality and exclusion faced by people with learning disabilities is neither acceptable nor inevitable. We are committed to working with people with learning disabilities and all our stakeholders to challenge and dismantle this discrimination wherever it occurs.

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) fundamentally underpin the work that we do. Importantly, we recognise that people with learning disabilities are not a homogeneous group, and have intersecting characteristics such as age, disability, race, gender, religious beliefs, sexual orientation and socio-economic background.

This is SCLD's first EDI Strategy, and it sets the direction, focus and aspiration for SCLD's work in this area. It builds on the learning and reflection we have done over the past year to identify ways of:

- developing a more intersectional approach to working with people with learning disabilities
- increasing diversity within the organisation.

Below we look at some of the ways that the protected characteristics (as defined in the Equality Act (2010)) can intersect with learning disability and lead to further discrimination.



Learning Disability and Disability, including Neurodevelopmental Differences and Other Health Conditions

SCLD's core purpose is to work towards improving the lives of people with learning disabilities in Scotland, including where learning disability intersects with physical disability, neurodevelopmental differences and other health conditions. We acknowledge that people are not disabled through their own individual impairments or relative ability, but through common social attitudes and the physical and attitudinal barriers which result in marginalisation and lack of access to their full human rights.

We will address this by promoting the inclusion of people with learning disabilities in public life, consciously identifying and removing barriers and taking an approach that builds on the social model of disability, towards a human rights model of disability with a focus on ensuring access to justice and fairness for people with learning disabilities in realising their human rights.

Learning Disability and Gender and Sex Discrimination

SCLD is committed to tackling gender and sex discrimination. Women experience discrimination in many ways, including social and economic disadvantage, negative attitudes, alienation, abuse and violence. Women and girls with learning disabilities face particular challenges in relation to bullying, hate crime, coercive control and experience all forms of violence, over and above other non-disabled people.

Because women with learning disabilities are disproportionately at risk from gender-based violence (GBV) compared to their peers in the general population, SCLD has established a GBV Project in partnership with People First (Scotland) with the aim of ensuring that women and girls with learning disabilities, and the services who support them, are better able to recognise and report abuse, and to access justice and support. The intended outcome is that both learning disability services and universal GBV services provide more accessible, holistic and effective support to women with learning disabilities who experience GBV.

We will continue to address this, among other things, by advocating for the implementation of the recommendations from our report, **'Unequal, Unheard, Unjust: But Not Hidden Anymore: Women with Learning Disabilities' Experiences of Gender-Based Violence in Scotland'**, and ensuring that women and girls with learning disabilities are represented in the ongoing Strategic Funding Review of Violence Against Women and Girls services in Scotland.

Learning Disability and Race

SCLD is committed to tackling race discrimination. The Equality Act defines the protected characteristic of race as including nationality, colour and ethnic or national origin. Research over the past 25 years has consistently highlighted that much of the discrimination faced by people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities is based on stereotypes such as, “they look after their own” or the mistaken assumption “they don't like to use state services”. This allows agencies to justify the lack of engagement with minority ethnic communities. More attention needs to be given to the other consistent findings; communities are not always aware of what services are available, or sure that the services that do exist are competent to meet their needs.

We will address this by working with partners in minority ethnic communities to improve our understanding of how racism impacts on the ability of people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities to realise their rights and to access appropriate services.

Learning Disability and Sexual Orientation

SCLD is committed to tackling discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Many people with learning disabilities have the same aspirations for loving relationships as those without a learning disability and they too may be members of the LGBTQI+ community. Research over the past six years has shown that it can be more difficult for people with learning disabilities to be “out” partly due to the lack of information and support to help people to understand their sexuality or sex and relationships in general. It may be a concern that being out as an LGBTQI+ person with a learning disability is more likely to lead to hate crime. Sometimes family carers or support workers frame this as trying to protect the person with a learning disability from abuse or exploitation.

We will address this by working with LGBTQI+ organisations to help develop our strategy to enable people with learning disabilities from the LGBTQI+ community to realise their rights and to access appropriate services.



Learning Disability and Age

SCLD is committed to tackling age discrimination. Over a number of years, SCLD has consistently advocated for the human rights of children and young people. SCLD's support in the development and implementation of the **Keys to Life Strategy** and subsequent policies has meant that improving opportunities and outcomes for children and young people in education, employment and in meaningful relationships remains a priority area for intervention.

We will continue to address this by promoting the rights of young people with learning disabilities to have equal opportunities to education, employment and to have meaningful relationships. We will also promote the rights of children with learning disabilities to have equal access to early learning and childcare, developing our work on the back of our report **“Building Blocks: Exploring the barriers and facilitators to early learning and childcare provision for children with learning disabilities in Scotland.”**

SCLD will also work to promote the human rights of older people with learning disabilities by developing a strand of work looking at dementia, as well as working in partnership on the Include Age project with Dundee and other universities, exploring how older people with learning disabilities can be better included in their communities.

Learning Disability and Socio-economic background

SCLD recognise that people face discrimination, marginalisation and reduced opportunities because of their socio-economic background. Employment, education and the quality and nature of health care, housing, and access to opportunities is determined by socio-economic background. We are committed to providing opportunities for people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds to participate in our programmes, events, and activities wherever possible.

We aim to realise this commitment through reviewing criteria to ensure that unnecessary requirements are not in place and seeking opportunities to widen participation in activities.

Employment Issues

Our EDI Policy along with our Dignity at Work Policy aims to ensure SCLD is a truly inclusive organisation that promotes equality and values diversity. The EDI policy sets out how we will meet our legal obligations in relation to the Equality Act (2010) in relation to our recruitment, selection and retention of staff and the steps we will take to increase diversity in the workforce. The Dignity at Work policy aims to ensure all employees are treated with respect and dignity at all times and that the environment is a healthy one, free from harassment and bullying.

Our commitment to workforce diversity is not merely about ensuring that there are range of different backgrounds, protected characteristics and life experiences within the workforce, because diversity without equality and inclusion is meaningless. We want to ensure that our differences are equally valued and that all our voices are heard. We recognise the strength that comes from diversity including the benefit of wider perspectives and greater creativity. We want to create a supportive environment where people can be their authentic selves without fear of reprisals. This develops our employees and benefits the whole organisation.

We also want to ensure that these principles of equality, diversity and inclusion are embraced by the Board and reflected in their strategies.

Conclusion

This document outlines the key actions we will take to improve equality, diversity, and inclusion. It is a five-year strategy which SCLD will work on between 2022-2027.

The document will provide a framework to ensure SCLD, as both a workplace and employer and a civil society organisation, will embed equality, diversity and inclusion across all areas of its practice.



Pillar 1: Our organisational culture

Our workforce is made up of individuals with their own unique identities. They represent a variety of ages, abilities, beliefs, sexual orientations, parental and caring responsibilities, socio-economic and educational backgrounds and mental health experiences.

It is important that SCLD promotes an open, respectful and transparent culture, where difference is encouraged, and everyone can be authentic at work. An inclusive culture leads to better engagement, well-being and reduced sickness, and an improved experience for people who work with us, from individuals to partner organisations.

Outcomes

All SCLD staff will demonstrate and live the values of the organisation. This will allow all staff to assume positive intent from one another in all our interactions and create an environment where no one is afraid to be themselves.

There will be a focus on improvement through coaching and learning from others.

Actions

Number	Activity	Year
1	Audit of SCLD values to ensure that values are compatible with and encourage diversity	2022
2	Review recruitment processes (application and interview) and ensure that they necessitate the demonstration of SCLD values as an essential criterion.	2022
3	Review staff induction and development processes and ensure the demonstration of SCLD values within these.	2022
4	Review staff induction, staff 1-1 and staff Personal Development Review processes and ensure they allow space for discussion of what staff might need to support their diverse needs in terms of, among other things: flexible working, support at work, training and development.	2022
5	Undertake an anonymous equality, diversity and inclusion audit of the staff team to understand their experience of working with SCLD and drive change where needed.	2022

Continued over the page

6	Team building meetings to include 'colours' questionnaire to aid ability to understand and work better with each other as a diverse team.	2023-2027
7.	On an annual basis, Leads Meeting should devote agenda space to discussion of managing a diverse team.	2023-2027
8.	Enhance the ability of senior staff to support the management of diversity, through advanced training.	2023-2027



Pillar 2: Representation

A diverse and inclusive workforce is essential. More diverse teams make better decisions, deliver better results and are better engaged. A diverse workforce reflects the population of people with learning disabilities that we work with and for. It allows us to better understand the experiences of individuals we work with.

Diverse role models at senior levels in organisations show those aspiring to leadership roles that opportunities exist to progress. There is much more that SCLD needs to do ensure wider diversity at all levels.

Outcomes

We will improve diversity in the SCLD staff team by changing the way we recruit and making sure development opportunities encourage diverse progression.

Actions

Number	Activity	Year
1	Review our use of equalities monitoring data to better understand the demographics of the people that work for us and, importantly, those who have applied for positions with us, to understand where we need to target recruitment.	2022
2	Review our recruitment process in tandem with our review of equalities monitoring data to ensure every recruitment round begins with a consideration of where and how posts will be advertised to encourage diverse candidates.	2022
3	Review annual leave policy with particular focus on mandated office closure over Christmas and Easter and consider impact on diverse groups	2022
4	Our EDI strategy will be referenced in all our documentation relating to recruitment and selection – including as part of the job description, as a requirement of the job specification and an interview question.	2023

Pillar 3: Improving engagement with diverse stakeholders

SCLD knows that some sections of the community of people with learning disabilities are underrepresented in the work that we do, despite being doubly marginalised by the barriers they face. In particular, people from minority ethnic communities and LGBTQI+ communities are underrepresented in our engagement work.

We need to ensure that we demonstrate outwardly that we are an inclusive organisation, and work hard to understand why some people do not engage with us and rectify this.

Outcomes

SCLD will better understand the requirements of people with learning disabilities from diverse communities and engage them in the work we do.

Actions

Number	Activity	Year
1	All staff to take part in cultural competence training for working with minority ethnic communities	2023
2	SCLD will build relationships with organisations that work specifically with people from minority ethnic communities	Ongoing
3	SCLD will develop a community engagement strategy with the help of CEMVO, beginning with an audit of our networks.	2023
4	All staff to take part in LGBTQI+ training.	2024
5	SCLD will build relationships with organisations that work specifically and people from LGBTQI+ communities	Ongoing
6	All staff to take part in gender equality training.	2024
7	All staff to take part in training on the experience of those with disabilities, including learning disability, neurodiversity and health conditions.	2025



Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities

Suite 5.2, Stock Exchange Court
77 Nelson Mandela Place
Glasgow G2 1QY

✉ admin@scl.d.co.uk

☎ 0141 248 3733

🐦 [@SCLDNews](https://twitter.com/SCLDNews)

📘 [@ScotCommission](https://www.facebook.com/ScotCommission)

📷 [@scl.dnews](https://www.instagram.com/scl.dnews)

📺 vimeo.com/scl.dnews