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**Equal Opportunities**

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This Policy has been developed by Somerset Centre for Integrated Learning (SCIL), part of Somerset Council. All training programmes have a commitment to providing a supportive learning environment which enables all Students, Apprentices, Learners and Trainees (SALTs) who have chosen to study with SCIL to achieve their full potential.

SCIL is committed to equality of opportunity for all eligible participants, and recognise that everybody is different and diversity is about recognising, respecting and valuing the differences we each bring regardless of their:

* age
* disability
* gender reassignment
* marriage and civil partnership
* pregnancy and maternity
* race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
* religion or belief
* sex
* sexual orientation

In addition to the 9 protected characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010, Somerset also recognises the following groups:

* low income
* military status
* rurality

Carers are protected through association with disability but is not one of the nine protected characteristics.

SCIL will follow The Equality Act (2010) which sets out the different ways in which it is unlawful to treat someone, such as direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, victimisation and failing to make a reasonable adjustment for a disabled person.

Somerset, like the rest of Britain, is a diverse society, it embraces men, women and children of all ages and sexuality, with and without disability, of different faiths, from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Somerset is predominantly rural; this can lead to particular communities and individuals becoming isolated and disadvantaged as a result of where they live. That isolation can doubly disadvantage groups who already face social and institutional discrimination.

SCIL, in association with Somerset Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity, diversity and access (physical access and communication of information) for all people particularly those who are:

* employees of Somerset Council;
* seeking and using Somerset Council’s services;
* external or internal candidates applying for a job, whether full or part-time or job share, permanent or temporary with Somerset Council or its contractors;
* in receipt of goods or services from Somerset Council contractors, or organisations, voluntary or otherwise, with whom Somerset Council is working in partnership.

These objectives are complementary in that SCIL and Somerset Council believes that the quality and sensitivity of service is enhanced when the makeup of the workforce reflects the community it serves.

SCIL and Somerset Council will not knowingly discriminate (directly or indirectly) against anyone because of their race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, religion, sex or sexuality, disability, age, marital status, domestic responsibilities, political or trade union activity. (These are only examples; other forms of discrimination will be avoided also). It will also try to eliminate the risk of unintentional discrimination in the way it provides information and services.

The policy objectives and opportunities will be pursued throughout Somerset Council’s services, employment practices and training and development including, as appropriate:

1. Raise awareness so that all staff become committed to taking positive action to eliminate discrimination in employment practices and the delivery of services;
2. Put Somerset Council policies, codes of practice and guidance relating to training and development into practice in every instance: e.g. Bullying, Harassment & Discrimination Policy;
3. Ensure that services, and the publicity about them, are equally accessible by giving adequate consideration to issues of, mental, physical and sensory impairment, and the literacy, language and confidence of service users;
4. Ensure that the delivery of training is relevant to the needs of different user groups by taking account of the diversity of backgrounds, needs and cultures (see Access to Assessment and Special Considerations Policy);
5. Where a need becomes apparent, interpretation and translation services will be made available to enable users, carers and other interested individuals to communicate with SCIL in the language and format with which they feel most comfortable;
6. Work in partnership with communities and groups, to address training delivery needs, promote good relations, and positive participation in anti-discrimination measures;
7. Ensure other agencies with whom the Council collaborates in the joint provision of services are aware of the Council’s commitment and requirement to adhere to this policy;
8. Ensure that the method for making a complaint is clearly communicated and that complaints about Equal Opportunities are appropriately handled and monitored;
9. Code of Behaviour - all staff are expected to be familiar with the equality of opportunity policy and to conduct themselves in accordance with its requirements;
10. Any deliberate act of discrimination against other employees, volunteers, staff of suppliers, learners/participants, or members of the public by employees in the course of their duty will be treated as a disciplinary offence.

## Equal Opportunities relating to learning opportunities offered by SCIL and their partners.

* We strive to avoid discrimination against anyone on the grounds of their gender, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, disability, ‘race’ (including ethnicity, colour or nationality), religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership either directly or indirectly.
* We promote the principles of fairness and justice for all through the education and training provided.

We ensure that all SALT’s have equal access to the full range of educational opportunities.

* We seek to recognise barriers that limit people’s success and put provision in place to overcome them.
* We constantly attempt to avoid any form of indirect discrimination which may form barriers to learning.
* We ensure that all recruitment, employment, promotion and training systems are fair to all, and provide opportunities for everyone to achieve.
* We challenge stereotyping and prejudice whenever it occurs.
* We celebrate the cultural diversity of our community and show respect for all minority groups, recognising the strengths that diversity brings to our society.
* We aim to promote positive social attitudes and respect for all through positive educational experiences and recognition of each individual’s point of view.
* We promote the Equal Opportunities Policies of our Partners, Somerset Council, its schools, the University of Worcester and Awarding Organisations.
* We regularly review our practice and the outcomes of our work, in order to identify areas where equalities issues need to be addressed and take action as a result.
* In the event of any complaint being made against us on equal opportunities grounds, we promise to investigate this fairly and openly in line with Somerset Council’s Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Procedures. Details of how to initiate a complaint are given in the document titled ‘Complaints Procedure’.
* Following any investigation, we will review and amend our practice if necessary.

# **Race Equality Statement**

* It is the right of all SALTs to receive the best education and training with access to all educational activities organised by SCIL. We do not tolerate any forms of racism or racist behaviour. Should any racist incident occur, we will act immediately to prevent any recurrence.
* Should any one learner be a victim of racism, we will do all we can to support that person in overcoming any difficulties they may have.
* We endeavour to make our facilities welcoming to all and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.
* We promote an understanding of different cultures through the work undertaken, and we reflect this in the resources available to learners and the environment in which they train.
* Our course promotes respect for minority groups and reflects positive attitudes towards them.
* Whenever a racial incident is *thought by someone* to have occurred it should be reported to the SCIL Project Manager. For the purposes of reporting and recording “a racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person” (Stephen Lawrence enquiry report). If it occurs in a school the headteacher should be alerted and school procedures followed. Schools are asked to report any incidents to the Local Authority. Copies of any reporting documents should be sent to the SCIL Project Manager.

**This statement supports the Equal Opportunities Policy. It is based on the “Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality (May 2002)**

We operate within the diversity and equalities policies and guidance for Somerset Council.