

Title	Equality policy
Date	November 2023
Owner	HK
Review date	November 2025
Publication status	External and Internal

Our commitment to people with disabilities

Introduction

CDRL is committed in taking reasonable steps to ensure that disabled people who use our service are not disadvantaged. This affirms our commitment to improving accessibility for all complainants we deal with, sets out some of the basic principles of our duty to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled people, and sets out the factors we will take into account when dealing with requests for reasonable adjustments.

We recognise that we must take reasonable steps in the way that we provide our service to disabled people to ensure they are not disadvantaged in comparison to people who are not disabled. There are legal requirements to make reasonable adjustments which are often complex and different depending on the nature of a person's individual circumstances.

This document does not advise how we will approach every situation; it is intended as a general statement of our promise to:

- confirm our commitment to improving accessibility for everybody that we deal with;
- set out some of the basic principles of our legal duty to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled people; and
- set out the factors that we will take into account in dealing with requests for reasonable adjustments.

Many of the arrangements that we offer for disabled people may also be made available for those who do not have disabilities. For example, a person may find it easier to read our information leaflets in a larger sized font.

This document applies to all CDRL customers, including complainants and participating companies.

Our legal duties in relation to disabled people

The Equality Act 2010 requires CDRL to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled people, defined by the Act as those who have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This will, in some circumstances, mean that disabled people receive more favourable treatment than non-disabled people, which is lawful in the context of disability.

The disability equality duty

In addition to the duties we owe to disabled customers, CDRL also has a wider duty to actively promote equality of opportunity for disabled people; often referred to as the disability equality duty.

The duty is 'anticipatory' which means we cannot wait until a disabled person wants to use our service. CDRL will think in advance, on an ongoing basis, about what disabled people with a range of impairments might reasonably need, such as people who have a visual or hearing impairment, or a mental health disability.

CDRL is working towards meeting the disability equality duty by reviewing our policies and practices to identify possible barriers for disabled people so that we can minimise those barriers and anticipate the reasonable adjustments that we may need to make.

CDRL provides consumers with a free, impartial and independent alternative dispute resolution service of complaints against scheme members. The Ombudsman's determinations are designed to achieve a full and final settlement of the dispute and all claims made by either party.

We can, where appropriate make compensatory awards in individual cases up to a maximum of £25,000 for actual and quantifiable loss and/or for aggravation, distress and inconvenience caused by the actions of a member.

Valuing diversity is one of CDRL's core values. This must drive how we treat complainants, the wider public, and one another. In order to handle complaints effectively our policies, processes and interactions must be fair, inclusive, accessible and responsive.

Our commitment to promoting equality and diversity is central to providing excellent customer service. We know that organisations that deliver high standards on equality and diversity deliver high standards for their services generally. We strive to be one of those organisations.

Equality and diversity is at the heart of CDRL role as a provider of consumer redress and as an employer.

As an employer, we are committed to eliminating discrimination and encouraging diversity among our workforce. Our aim is that our workforce will be truly representative of all sections of society and that each employee will feel respected and able to give their best.

As a redress provider, CDRL is called upon to react to a wide range of issues from a wide range of people. We recognise that some complainants will require assistance in order to get the best from our service. If someone feels that they have been badly treated by the actions of another party it is only right that they can have access to our processes and we therefore have a responsibility to ensure that our service is accessible and that all complainants are dealt with fairly and that due courtesy is given to the difficulties they may face.

The purpose of this Equality Policy is to ensure that we are alert to the need to handle different people appropriately and that we are all aware of the obligations placed on CDRL under the Equality

Act 2010 along with an understanding of the importance of everyone who interacts with CDRL that they are being treated fairly and consistently.

The Equality Act 2010

A number of separate pieces of equality legislation have been brought together within the Equality Act 2010 and this has also extended and enhanced protection for people in relation to:

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

CDRL is a private body which, for the purposes of the Equality Act, provides a public function. As a public function provider, CDRL is subject to the Act's general public sector duty.

This requires us to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity between those with and without the above characteristics; and
- Foster good relations between those with and without the above characteristics.

CDRL will comply with the general duty in the way we manage our people and the organisation. Our casework functions are exempt from this general duty so that the Ombudsman's independence in decision making is not interfered with. Nonetheless, we will promote equal access to our service for all members of the community and tailor our service to meet people's individual needs.

Vision Statement

CDRL will demonstrate excellence in equality and diversity across all areas of policy and practice. In all aspects of our work we will be accessible, inclusive, responsive and fair. CDRL's vision statement will be achieved by all of our staff working together to understand the needs of our consumers, so that we are able to provide an accessible service, by developing a diverse workforce at all levels which reflects the working population at our site, and by engendering an open and inclusive culture in the workplace.

Key objectives

- To improve access to our service for all sections of the community.
- To promote equality of opportunity, diversity, and inclusion in our workplace.
- To promote equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion when implementing our policies and strategies.