

# Guiding Statement on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion



Voluntary Organisations Disability Group

**VODG’s vision is for an ambitious, trusted, and vibrant voluntary sector that works together to enable disabled people to live the lives they choose. Central to this vision is our commitment, alongside the contribution of members, to championing equity, celebrating diversity, and ensuring full inclusion.**

Through this statement, VODG is committing to a direct focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). Without this we cannot uphold our vision, deliver through our mission or be good allies for disabled people, and their support services (including as direct employers).

We recognise that disability is an evolving concept, and there is diversity amongst disabled people, including those who require intensive support. This requires us to promote and protect the human rights of all disabled people.<sup>1</sup>

At VODG, we actively seek to further develop a diversity of views within society and among disabled people about disability. VODG believes in the social model of disability, which recognises that people are disabled by barriers in society, and not their impairment or condition. These barriers may be attitudinal, or physical such as inaccessible locations, and removing these barriers creates the conditions for equality and offers disabled people more independence, choice, and control. Inclusion can lead us to full citizenship, with equal rights and responsibilities, but there is a need to go much further at both scale and pace.

Voice4Change England and the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations have set out how racism is a significant and unresolved issue in the voluntary sector, just as it is in the rest of society.<sup>2</sup> Infrastructure organisations, including VODG, recognise that we have not done enough to create real changes that are needed to achieve true equality in our work.<sup>3</sup> There is a profound problem of inequality that VODG is committed to address.



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***VODG is committing to a direct focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI).***

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations (2006) *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. [www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf](http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Voice4Change England and the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (2020) *Home Truths: Undoing racism and delivering real diversity in the charity sector*. [www.acevo.org.uk/publications/home-truths/](http://www.acevo.org.uk/publications/home-truths/)



## ***We cannot be anti-disablist if we are not anti-oppression.***

The Black Lives Matter movement highlighted, finally and after too little action from so many of us, the distinction between ‘not being racist’ and being ‘anti-racist’. The former does little to change the status quo. The latter demonstrates a commitment to change through actions to address inequality. Our commitment to anti-racism must recognise the different facets of long-standing and deep-rooted prejudice and must dismantle anti-colourism and anti-blackness. These distinctions offer important guides to VODG, as they also help us to sharply focus on being anti-disablist.

We cannot be anti-disablist if we are not anti-oppression. We therefore celebrate difference to recognise people’s individual backgrounds and characteristics and see the value of their lived experience of discrimination in taking action. These differences include, but are not limited to, disability, skin colour, ethnicity, gender identity, membership of LGBTQ+ communities, age, physical appearance, religious and other beliefs, origins, and experiences. We understand that these differences often intersect, creating unique perspectives which must be valued, particularly for the millions of disabled people in this country.

Equity recognises that advantages and barriers exist, and that there are unequal starting points that preclude inclusion. We must understand these imbalances and – crucially – challenge them if we are to achieve equality of outcomes for people, and full citizenship. Equity is therefore the pursuit of full equality.

We know that self-declared words are not enough without the direct work needed to make change, including critical examination of our norms and the structures that lead to oppression. That requires groups, like VODG, to take collective actions if the changes being made by ourselves, and our members, are to be greater than the sum of the parts. Strengthening diversity in our work, can only be a powerful force for good in upholding our values and in pursuit of our vision and mission.



<sup>3</sup> #NeverMoreNeeded (2020) *Dismantling racism in charities and the voluntary sector.*  
<https://nmn.org.uk/dismantling-racism-in-charities-and-the-voluntary-sector/>

We want to ignite a set of powerful and action orientated conversations across our membership. This includes within each of our networks<sup>4</sup> we will hold up an EDI lens in all conversations. Additional special sessions for our members will shine a bright light on EDI to help galvanise the changes we need to see. We will build evidence and resources to help our members, and the areas within which they work. In doing this, we want our impact to go beyond our organisational boundaries and will seek to share our learning widely.

### **Making our commitments real**

We will review and publish annually our progress in achieving the aims set out in VODG's Guiding Statement on EDI. This will form part of our annual reporting to our regulator, the Charity Commission. We will set out the key issues as we see them following our engagement with members, and with key external stakeholders. We recognise that challenge will need to come from within our membership, as well as outside of it. We will report on our progress against our Guiding Statement in our annual report to the Charity Commission and through our wider networks. We will ensure our communications not only reach our members but also wider communities of disabled people.

We acknowledge that the EDI agenda is constantly evolving and will revisit our work and our plans in this area at least annually, and more frequently if required.

Progressive social change is something the voluntary disability sector is proud of, and has an established history of undertaking, by investing community resources to support disabled people, their families, and communities. We recognise that to achieve this will require difficult and challenging conversations if we are to affect meaningful action together.

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<sup>4</sup> VODG's networks bring together peers from across organisations to explore areas of professional shared interest, to support information exchange and development. [www.vodg.org.uk/about-us/professional-networks/](http://www.vodg.org.uk/about-us/professional-networks/)

# What good looks like 2022-2023

## **Organisation and governance – to ensure VODG is fit for purpose to address EDI.**

We will:

- Undertake equality impact assessments for all major decisions at board level.
- Review, at least annually, representation, strengths, and gaps among the Board of Trustees, particularly in relation to the protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act, and we will publish that data.
- Recruit to the Board of Trustees based on a clear understanding of duplication, gaps, and succession timings, opening the search for applicants beyond member organisation chief executives, and prioritising the recruitment of disabled people to our board.
- Recruit staff in ways that are aligned with the principles contained within this statement. For example, value attributes differently, including lived experience.
- Review staff learning requirements in relation to EDI and support ongoing development.
- Monitor performance on EDI annually, report on progress and invite accountability.
- Increase EDI capability and capacity within VODG to address EDI.

## **Membership – enables our members to collaborate and harnesses their views and experiences through networks, events, and other approaches.**

We will:

- Further develop VODG's networks and events principles by enabling an EDI lens to be held up to all our conversations.
- Host a series of focused conversations across VODG to highlight current issues, areas of mutual support and calls to action. To include flagship EDI events.
- Diversify the membership of VODG to create a more varied and stronger group of organisations working alongside disabled people, and review progress annually. With explicit attention focused on under-represented groups.

**Policy, communications, and public affairs – works with government and others to ensure our members’ voice is heard and acted upon and ensures the right information gets to our members.**

We will:

- Ensure our communications and ‘framing’ looks through an EDI lens and ensure our website and publications are accessible.
- Set out the challenges and solutions on matters relating to EDI in our consultation responses, policy and influencing work.
- Publish original research, based on member engagement, to highlight barriers and solutions.
- Report publicly on our progress against our guiding statement and targets.

**Development – delivers real-world projects that influence our members’ practice and seeks to expand our ability to influence.**

We will:

- Go beyond due diligence frameworks when seeking external funding opportunities and develop VODG’s EDI principles to ensure project work aligns with our organisational values.
- Seek grant funded resources, to strengthen our focus on EDI, and to enable resources to be shared and amplified widely.



We have set out our approach that is aligned with our current operating model. We are prepared to adapt and make changes to our structure if it means our EDI objectives can be better delivered or enhanced through alternative approaches.

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**VODG will:**

- **Ignite a set of powerful and action orientated conversations across our membership around EDI.**
  - **Build evidence and resources to help our members, and also the sectors within which they work.**
  - **Look at our own organisation and ensure we are fit for purpose to address EDI.**
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We will keep our commitments under regular review and publish our progress in our annual reports. Alongside this Guiding Statement, which will be reviewed at least annually by the Board of Trustees, we will publish an action plan and keep this regularly updated.

VODG welcomes feedback and further conversations on delivering the ambitions within this guiding statement from across our membership and beyond. Please email [research.policy@vodg.org.uk](mailto:research.policy@vodg.org.uk) or call 0330 043 1273.

[www.vodg.org.uk](http://www.vodg.org.uk)

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