



Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Policy

1. Policy Statement

Mountains and Valleys Christian Counselling (MVCC) is committed to fostering a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of its work as a provider of counselling services. We recognise that individuals and groups may have experienced disadvantage or discrimination, and we are dedicated to taking positive steps to redress imbalances and promote fairness.

MVCC believes that every person should feel safe, valued, and empowered to reach their full potential, regardless of their background, identity or personal circumstances. Our commitment to EDI is rooted in our Christian ethos, which affirms the inherent dignity and worth of every individual (i.e. we are all made in the image of God).

2. Legal Framework

MVCC operates in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, which protects individuals from discrimination based on the following nine protected characteristics:

- 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

We also recognise that effective EDI practice goes beyond legal compliance and embraces an intersectional approach, acknowledging the complex and overlapping identities that shape individual experiences.

3. Understanding EDI

Equality

Equality is about ensuring fair treatment, access, and outcomes for all. It involves identifying and removing barriers that prevent individuals from thriving. MVCC understands that equality is not about treating everyone the same, but about providing equitable opportunities that reflect individual needs and circumstances.

Diversity

Diversity refers to the rich variety of differences among people, including visible and invisible characteristics such as ethnicity, gender identity, neurodiversity, socioeconomic background, culture, and lived experience. MVCC values and celebrates these differences, recognising that they enhance our collective wisdom and service delivery.

Inclusion

Inclusion is the active process of creating environments where everyone feels welcomed, respected, and able to contribute fully. MVCC is committed to building an inclusive culture where all staff, volunteers, and service users feel a genuine sense of belonging.

4. Implementation

Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers or Staff

- It is an **Occupational Requirement** for any prospective Volunteer or Staff to be a practicing Christian, where they will be providing counselling services to the client base.

Practicing Christian means:

- They are in agreement with MVCC's Statement of Faith.
- They are in good standing in their local church (reference required).
- They agree with MVCC's Vision for Counselling.
- Any advertising will include the following wording "There is an Occupational Requirement for the postholder to be a practicing Christian in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, Schedule 9".

MVCC recognise that sometimes stipulating an Occupational Requirement can narrow the diversity of people applying. Bearing this in mind, we want to actively encourage applications from underrepresented groups. This will be partially achieved by using objective, job-related criteria for selection.

Training and Development

- Provide induction on EDI principles.
- Include EDI training within required CPD hours.
- Identify and meet the training needs of disadvantaged groups.
- Promote awareness of unconscious bias and inclusive practices.

Organisational Culture

- Embed EDI principles in all policies and practices.
- Encourage respectful dialogue and mutual understanding.
- Challenge discriminatory behaviour and attitudes.

Service Delivery

- Ensure counselling services are accessible and inclusive.
- Respect the diverse backgrounds and beliefs of clients.
- Adapt services to meet individual needs where possible.

5. Monitoring and Accountability

MVCC will monitor the effectiveness of this policy through:

- Regular review of recruitment, training, and promotion data.
- Feedback from staff, volunteers, and clients.

6. Grievances and Complaints

Any concerns related to discrimination, inequality, or exclusion should be raised with either Jaki North or Nicola Merrigan as the lead Counsellors at MVCC. Clients are also able to file a grievance with the Association of Christians in Counselling who are the governing body that MVCC are members of. Grievances will be addressed through our established procedures, ensuring confidentiality, fairness, and timely resolution.

7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

MVCC recognises that EDI is an ongoing journey. We will continue to learn, adapt, and improve our practices to ensure that our organisation reflects the values of justice, compassion, and inclusion.

8. Public Declaration

MVCC publicly affirms its commitment to being an equal opportunity service provider. We aim to be a model of inclusive practice within our community and sector. Whilst we aim to be inclusive, we will not work outside our competencies this will sometimes mean referring clients on to another provider.