

Circle Community Organiser

[You can apply for this role on our website](#)

Contents

Role description of Community Circle Organiser

[Recruitment & Selection Policy](#)

[Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy](#)

Equality & Inclusion Questionnaire (anonymous) - [click here to complete](#)

Summary

You will support, be in service of, develop and help start equal care and support community circles - groups of people in a local area who want to come together to tackle the caring challenges where they live. Your focus is on 'caring for the whole', having deep consideration and concern for the dynamics of each circle and enabling positive, healthy power.

Your role is to facilitate the growth and development of the circle, to help bring in resources, to connect people to Equal Care infrastructure and to support the community volunteering. You are also the point person to go to for resolving problems and concerns that may arise in the course of the circle's work.

This role is part of a pilot - some of the activities described below are dependent on the development of Equal Care's digital offering and will come into play over the course of next year.

The basics

Salary	£25,000 - £28,000 dependent on experience and qualifications
Full-time or part-time?	Either. Your choice.
Flexible working okay?	Yes, of course, although be mindful that the majority of community meetings will be taking place in evenings and over weekends to accommodate volunteers. You won't be going to

	all of them but you do need to take this into account for this role.
Job share allowed?	Yes, that too
Can I combine it with other roles in Equal Care Co-op?	Yes, absolutely
Where is it?	The role geography covers the whole of Calderdale but for the first year will be in and around Hebden Bridge, Todmorden and Blackshaw Head with office time in Halifax. Your place of work will be University Business Centre, 27 Horton St, Halifax HX1 1QE.
Do I need a car?	No, but it would really help with getting to people for circle meetings and connecting with volunteers. If you can drive but don't have a car we'll sign you up to the local eco friendly car club. We also welcome avid cyclists!
Key Circle (i.e. main team)	People
Link Person (i.e. main person to support you)	Emma Back (for first year)
Your Links	Circle Community Volunteers + team members on rotating annual basis
Circle Roles	You may be nominated into these as part of your work.
Disabilities and differences welcome?	More than welcome - actively welcome. <u>Please apply!</u> We're disability confident and a mindful employer and we're committed to doing our bit to erode the disability & mental health employment gap.

Some definitions

Community Organising is the work of bringing people together to identify and find solutions to important local issues. Community organisers reach out, listen, connect and motivate people to build their collective power.

A community support circle is a group of people coming together in their neighbourhood to tackle the caring challenges unique to their area or particular circumstances. It has a diverse membership representing all the perspectives in caring (people getting support, family members, professionals, local volunteers...). The circle members make up the membership of Equal Care Co-op, but they act semi-autonomously, having significant direction and control over how the circle works and the work that it comes together to do.

What you'll be doing

We like and support dynamic and emerging work roles. Each section below should be treated as a mini-role in its own right and the share of time you spend on each will change. Significant changes are agreed as part of the consent process with your circle and you lead on your role review at least biennially. You will act upon the role, helping to sculpt it and shape the experiences of circle organisers who will follow in your footsteps.

Launch community support circles

We are setting up our first two circles in Blackshaw Head and Hebden Bridge. You'll be the go-to person for this work.

- Arrange and publicise initial circle meetings, linking in with existing networks
- Find and work with connected members of the community who are close to the problem and passionate about solving it
- Support circle members to shape the circle's remit, aims and identity
- Facilitate the first few meetings until the circle is ready to nominate its own facilitator
- Stand in for absent roles as needed (e.g. secretary)
- Working with the equal care facilitator and training and learning lead, transition the 'ready and willing' community volunteers into independent care and support roles (case by case)

Keep the momentum going

Circle membership will fluctuate and change. Circle success is reliant on goodwill and volunteer engagement. The day-to-day work of the circle will mostly be on a one to one basis (volunteers

supporting people, independent care and support workers giving paid support). But the real potential power of it is in the group.

- Listen to and act upon individual concerns with the support of your colleagues
- Support the group to surface and act upon concerns in a kind, constructive way
- Where it's not possible for another member of the circle to resolve disagreements, act to mediate these
- Help the group think through broader project aspirations (for example, putting on an event or starting intergenerational projects), commit to them and achieve them in a realistic timeframe

Community development and asset-based thinking

We expect some circles to have more access to resources (time, stuff to share, skills and expertise) than others. And we expect that this will change over time. Every circle is unique.

- Identify and help activate existing circle resources which can be pooled / shared
- Support crossovers between circles (e.g. one circle has access to voluntary safeguarding training expertise and the other has access to lots of volunteer drivers)
- Keep a shared resource of circle assets and support the development of the equal care platform to help make best community use of them
- Connect with other local co-operatives, statutory and social purpose organisations to explore partnerships and connections (e.g. first responders in rural areas, community transport)

Support circle community and peer volunteers

Although volunteers will also get contact and help in relation to people they offer support to, you will support their work and wellbeing in connection with the circle and the wider co-operative. This may be in collaboration with other circle members, who can be nominated into lighter versions of this role.

- Listen to and resolve issues as they arise, offer social support and a first point of contact for all circle members not engaged in offering or receiving paid, independent support
- Regular short check-ins with a biennial sit-down and long chat
- Engage in appreciation! Lots of it!
- Help identify training and learning needs and offer reviews and evaluation
- Provide references as appropriate

Spread the word

Share information about each circle's activities amongst the membership and in the community.

- Produce regular updates on activities and announce circle meetings through a variety of channels
- Give short talks at social care groups, health and local volunteer organisations (with Equal Care Facilitator as appropriate)
- Help circles plan for and put on community events
- Regular posts on facebook and lots of tweeting
- Help keep online circle forums active and up to date

Governance and decision-making

We use various decision-making tools and techniques. They (and others we are yet to discover) are useful for helping clarify roles and responsibilities within a group and helping that group work well together. But people need a way to learn them and become confident in using them.

- Train and support people in facilitation, leadership and other key circle roles
- Help circles work with our core governance principles of equivalence and effectiveness
- Support circles with decision-making processes (e.g. nominating roles, deciding their budget spends)

Nurture the membership

We are a co-operative, which means that our circle members also become business owners once they become eligible for membership.

- Welcome people to Equal Care and keep yourself updated of when they become eligible to join
- Help ensure the diverse voices of the membership are heard and help to surface issues and concerns
- Keep track of circle diversity and act to increase it (both in terms of perspectives e.g. family member, professional care worker and in terms of diverse backgrounds and protected characteristics)
- Publicise wider membership events to the circles and support in organising members meetings in your area

Learn!

We are relying on your experience as circle community organiser to notice and draw out learning in our pilot year. We'll need you to evaluate both your own role and the development of the circles with us and circle members.

- Record learning from successes as well as challenges
- Notice and analyse key blockers

- Deep analysis and evaluation of endings and beginnings (of the circle itself, with individual members joining and leaving)
- Participate in reviews and evaluation, contribute to our knowledge bank with design ideas for the digital tools to facilitate the circle's work
- Help Equal Care Co-op understand its social impact

Open tendering - connecting to the formal support system

We want to connect community concerns to help leverage the formal funding system. Your viewpoint will be crucial to the way in which the co-operative designs and bids for contracted services in the area.

- Use the link to the circle to advocate for broader shifts in the system
- Support the design of services Equal Care submits tenders for and review these with the circle

Offering support

Emotional labour is often unrecognised and is often the most exhausting part of a job. Your emotional and compassionate engagement is an active part of the role and so we're including it in the job description.

- Provide emotional support to your colleagues and to circle members, with especial focus on those people not being paid for their contribution to the circle
- Do your best to recognise and say when you need support yourself, understanding that this will fluctuate according to circumstances both in your personal and professional life
- Act pragmatically on these rhythms, leaning on and sharing out work with colleagues at times when you need to step back and take a break from the deep, human engagement needed for this role
- In order to keep a direct connection with the core work of Equal Care Co-op, at least 5% of your working hours will be giving support to someone getting social care (note this is not charged to people and is part of the co-operative's voluntary offering)

Contribute to the design of Equal Care's digital service

We're building technology that fits our purpose, our ethos and our goals. We can't do this without you.

- Test out new versions and contribute new / improvement ideas
- Feedback difficulties you and other people encounter
- Participate in design and user testing days

Co-create your own role

This role is part of a pilot - we expect it to change both a little and a lot! We need you to help shape it.

- The circle community organiser role is a crucial anchor role for developing genuine community-led care and support. We don't know yet which of your activities will be the one most crucial to the success of the circles and to the co-operative as a whole. Some will turn out not to be relevant. Some will turn out to be much bigger than we originally thought.
- We expect a lot of the tools and processes you use and participate in your day-to-day work will change and evolve. We need your active participation in shaping these as we design them into the technology and the service.

What you're like

You are an experienced facilitator and have a deep understanding of group dynamics. You are an excellent communicator, able to adapt your approach to the situation and you work in an enabling way that focuses on and builds strengths. You have resolved conflict in groups before and the environments you support are inclusive, welcoming and people are able to get things done. You have a keen sense of social justice and you are very mindful of how underlying social, structural and economic inequities can drive behaviour.

You're good at keeping records, spotting potential issues and recording what you learn. You are very community-minded and you prioritise direct voices of those experiencing an issue over other perspectives. You really enjoy feeling connected with diverse community networks and you speak to everyone!

Your experience and qualifications

It's likely that you will have held roles such as or similar to Community Development Worker, Local Area Co-ordinator, Group Facilitator, Events Manager, Volunteer Manager etcetera. Any jobs that cover bringing together and working with groups, supporting volunteers and helping people work together and get their voices heard fall within the scope of this role.

Your experience will likely have been in community and co-operative development and may include activism work that involves any organising with a group.

Although it would be a benefit to have had experience with alternate forms of decision-making (consent, consensus, sociocracy, worker co-op voting) this isn't required for this role. We will train you in sociocratic ways of working and give you access to any skills development you need.

Qualifications

There are no required qualification levels for this role - we will be focussing on the depth and breadth of your experience and this will take into account your areas of study as well. Evidence of a commitment to ongoing learning is a plus.

A typical month

This job will vary a lot! Writing a typical week proved difficult, so this is a typical month (or two).

You are working with a few local people keen to set up a circle in their area. These people form the first few members of the circle and the core steering group to get it up and running. They might be

professional care workers, community volunteers or people and their families getting care and support. You arrange a meeting at a local venue to share experiences and start understanding what people want out of the proposed circle. This meeting is a combination of getting to know one another, talking about big picture aspirations and identifying practical next steps.

With a mutual working purpose and a few initial meetings the group can publicise an open launch circle meeting (or workshop). You help with access to and use of the tools to do this, co-ordinating with your equal care colleagues to enable things like design and print of flyers, writing articles for local newsletters, booking a venue and talking to people and community groups who may be interested in coming along. You 'top up' the capacity in the core steering group by using the assets of the wider co-operative to help make it all happen. You lead on setting up the circle's digital tools (including access to the circle budget) to enable collaboration and ensure that circle communication is mindful of people who have different needs and preferences.

You help the group plan, facilitate and learn from the launch, setting the agenda in collaboration with them. This includes developing and adapting a circle agreement between the wider co-operative and amongst the circle members themselves.

You arrange meetups with volunteers who have recently joined the circle to set up their profiles, explain how the matching works and carry out some background checks. Once this is complete you facilitate the first few matches with the equal care facilitator and any named circle members nominated to be involved.

Meanwhile, a circle you helped launch in another area has run into difficulties and contacts you to help resolve the issue. There has been a personality clash and two circle members are in conflict. This has had an impact on circle meetings and the membership has dropped significantly since the issue began.


You meet separately with both individuals to understand the concerns and establish what each person wants. Neither want to leave the circle and each person feels that they are more committed than the other. With help and advice from your equal care colleagues, you're able to facilitate a meeting between them and achieve an agreement around how they relate to one another in circle meetings. You offer to co-facilitate the next few meetings, including providing a space to acknowledge the difficulties. You also do some work with other circle members to restore membership levels.

Recruitment and selection


If you remember nothing else, remember this:

- Recruitment and selection is stressful and has in-built inequitable power dynamics. Let's all try and make this as human as possible.
- All members of a recruiting panel need to do our recruitment training.
- The interview panel must help each other to make reasoned decisions that can be backed up by evidence, not opinions.

Why we need this policy

 We need to find and hire the right people. We want a diverse, skilled, learning workforce who think that Equal Care Co-op's vision and plan is amazing. They've found an organisation they really, really want to join.

We need to respect that they are evaluating us just as much as we are evaluating them. Most importantly, this policy will help us put power and decision-making over who joins Equal Care Co-op into the hands of the people who give and get support.

 We need to comply with [Employment Act 2008](#), [Equality Act 2010](#), the [EU Working Time Directive](#) and the [Care Act 2014](#). We're also working to [CQC standards](#), which have a lot to say about recruitment.

Who it affects

- External and internal applicants to job roles
- Workers, Supported and Advocate members involved in recruitment and selection
- Freelance contractors
- Volunteers
- Independent care and support workers
- Any external consultants or recruitment agencies involved in recruitment and selection of our staff

Key Players

Recruiting Circle

In charge!

Creates new roles, adapts existing ones, launches recruitment exercises and leads on the work. Bolstered by members of the People circle where needed.

People Circle

HR specialists, needed for some sign-offs and checks for developing circles.

Lead Recruiter

Generally this is a member of staff but doesn't have to be. This person also holds the admin and communication with applicants, arranges the interview panel and sifts applications.

This role requires extra training and onboarding.

Recruitment Panel

Anywhere between two and four people.

At least one person who has direct, active experience of receiving support (may also be a family member though priority is to have someone receiving support).

At least one person who does direct caregiving for the majority of their role (every Worker at Equal Care does minimum 5% direct care and support work).

The other one or two people will be subject / technical specialists, usually leading on that circle's work.

Outcomes we want

1. A fair, safe, inclusive recruitment process
2. A highly diverse and skilled worker membership
3. Power and influence over recruitment for those who give and those who receive support

Impact

Impact type	On who
-------------	--------

Cost	Payment to recruiting Circle members. Avoidance of employment tribunal costs.
Health and Wellbeing	A fully staffed organisation - no burnout!
Equality	Everyone applying to work with us, especially people living with disability or experiencing marginalised identity who apply for a role with Equal Care Co-op
Time	Of all workers involved in the recruitment and selection process.
Data	A lot of personal data gathered that must be securely stored and dealt with in compliance with GDPR.

Where roles come from

Each Recruiting Circle has its own budget and that's where the costs for new roles are covered. Budgets are set annually with the membership and are determined by the overall strategy of the co-operative.

Circles will create or adapt existing roles and they'll check that role descriptions and person specifications work properly with this policy and our approach to pay. Finally, a member of the People Circle or a trained person in the Recruiting Circle will review the role description and person specification to check they meet employment and equality law.

Story: The Dev Circle decides that it needs to recruit a developer. This is a new role so there is no previous role description or person specification available. They use the proposal shaping process and the consent round to create the role description, person specification and set salary in line with the Pay and Salary Policy and consider the role in light of the overall ethos, purpose and values of the co-operative.

The finalised draft is then checked by either a member of the People Circle or trained person in the Dev Circle to check it meets the needs of employment law and equality and diversity regulations. This person changes the phrase 'must have UK qualification in...' by adding 'or equivalent non UK qualification' so as to avoid indirectly discriminating against people who studied outside the UK.

How roles can fit the person

We are big fans of flexible working, supplementary training and adapting roles to fit the person. We make this an active discussion rather than rely on people making requests.

Story: Monique was successful in an application to become a training lead. She declared that she has a disability and explained at interview that she suffers from depression in the winter, especially in December and January. During these times she finds it very hard to get

up and get going in the mornings. Following the job offer the Lead Recruiter sits down with Monique to talk about how to adapt the role and together they come up with a plan.

Monique takes on a contract that works for 10 months of the year – February to November – and her salary for the 10 months is split into 12 monthly payments. The recruiting circle and Monique devise a variety of creative work-arounds for the two months without a training lead.

Telling people about the role

Job adverts can't (obviously) be discriminatory. But it's (obviously) not that simple. Here's some really useful guidance. For more info take a look at our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy.

The application form, role description, person specification and equal opportunities data monitoring form all goes onto our website. All our forms are online and can be completed via voice or written text.

Internally:

- All posts will be advertised internally. Worker Members of the co-op will get the first opportunity to apply for roles (this includes volunteers and independent workers).
- The circle may choose to only advertise internally. This is a good idea when a current member of staff could develop into the role or where there is a suitable group of people available already with those areas of expertise (like those offering independent and voluntary support for example).

Externally:

- External advertising will be through our website, twitter, facebook and linked in. The real impact through is through community networks, so we'll need help from our members to let people know when roles come up. Paid-for advertising is the recruiting Circle's decision and paid for by that Circle.

We put out loads of information about a role to help people make an upfront decision about whether or not they want to go for it.

We will talk to people about the role outside the recruitment process, answer questions and help clarify any confusion. We've found this really helps people decide whether or not joining the co-operative would be right for them (it's more of a 'they interview us' opportunity, involving cake and a hot drink).

Application & Interview

The formal bit of the process starts once that person submits the application form. We generally invite everyone to interview unless we get floods of applications. If someone submits an application that's low on detail or incomplete we will get back to them to check that's their final submission and/or to ask clarifying questions before inviting them to an interview.

For technical hires (e.g. coders) the interview process may be split into two: one technical and one ethos interview.

We are a care and support organisation. And although we're not yet regulated by the CQC (as an introductory agency) we are working to their standards. This means we have to ask about any gaps in people's employment history and - for the care and support roles only - their reasons for leaving.

We will always send the interview questions in advance and the majority of questions will be competency-based (asking people to share specific times when they showed the qualities, skills and values we're after).

Following the interview the panel will share their thoughts on how the person matched up to the job description and person specification and complete a feedback form that's then shared with the person by the Lead Recruiter. Decision to employ is a consent decision between the panel members with a voting fallback.



The offer!

We will make conditional offers to people, subject to pre-joining checks. For independent care and support workers joining the platform we may ask them to wait and join a following cohort. The checks include:

- References from at least two different sources: one from the current or most recent employer and one from somebody they have supported directly (or two employers / two people supported depending on situation and role).
- Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check plus a DBS Risk Assessment where we get a positive disclosure
- Proof of eligibility to work in the UK
- Driving Licence (where required)
- Proof of highest and most relevant qualifications

We will also find out how we can support the person's health and wellbeing, including if they tell us things about their mental and physical health that they didn't feel able to during the interview process. This won't affect the offer of the role but it might result in changes to it that we agree together with the person.

Story: Kareem scored well at interview and we gave him a conditional offer of work, subject to checks. He disclosed at interview that he had been convicted of shoplifting and was very candid about his personal circumstances at the time. When his DBS check arrives the only thing mentioned is the shoplifting offence from 2005. As this was so long ago and his record has been clean ever since the panel decide that this does not prevent them from offering the role to Kareem.

Ming also scored well at interview and we made a conditional offer. She also disclosed a conviction, for assault. Her DBS check revealed that the conviction was in 2016 and she was also convicted of racial abuse. With such a recent conviction and one against the equality and diversity policy as well as the fact that she didn't fully disclose this, we withdraw the offer.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

If you remember nothing else, remember this:

- We will not tolerate discrimination in any form.
- We want everybody to be able to contribute towards how we work and to bring their own uniqueness to work.
- We will encourage and enable all workers to take part in and contribute to Equal Care's decision-making processes and operations.
- We want everybody to feel respected, that they belong, empowered and to receive fair progression.
- We celebrate difference!

Why we need this policy

- So that all individuals and groups of people are treated equally and without discrimination.
- So that each person is recognised as unique and that their differences and what they can contribute are celebrated.
- To ensure we are encouraging, enabling and respecting each individual so that they feel a sense of belonging and can contribute to the best of their abilities.
- People need to feel comfortable and supported to constructively challenge prejudicial and discriminatory beliefs and actions.
- To ensure we comply with all relevant legislation and best practice, in particular the Equality Act 2010.

Who it affects

Absolutely everyone!

Key players

The principles of equality, diversity and inclusion should be understood and followed by the whole of society.

For Equal Care Co-op, this policy is particularly important for anybody:

- Giving or receiving care and support
- Involved in recruitment, selection and induction of workers

Connected policies and forms

- Codes of conduct
- Recruitment, selection and welcome
- Safeguarding adults

Outcomes we want

- No gender, ethnicity or disability pay gap
- To reverse inequitable trends in care work
- To seek out and tackle health inequalities
- For people to wholeheartedly agree that they're in an inclusive workplace

Impact

Impact type	On who
Cost	Improved performance and engagement for workers, and avoidance of prosecution and employment tribunals for the co-op.
Health and Wellbeing	Improved health and wellbeing of all stakeholders through acceptance and support of difference.
Equality	Achieving equality, increasing diversity of people participating in the work of the co-op.
Time	Potentially longer processes and procedures.
Data	Collection of data to monitor diversity of co-operative members and other stakeholders.

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” Maya Angelou

“We’re here to stand up for freedom, compassion and justice in our changing times. Our work is driven by a simple belief; if everyone gets a fair chance in life, we all thrive.”

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Equality

We believe in equality for everybody, regardless of their differences, in fact, we celebrate difference! It makes us a more rounded and exciting organisation. We all want to be treated fairly. Nobody wants to be discriminated against. These are simple human rights: to live in a society where nobody says or does anything that results in a social or economic disadvantage - an inequality.

This principle is enshrined in law in the Equality Act 2010. The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. It replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, making the law easier to understand and strengthening protection in some situations. It sets out the different ways in which it’s unlawful to treat someone.

There are nine aspects of identity which are protected by law. These are known as the protected characteristics.

Many groups and individuals in societies are oppressed and disadvantaged due to discrimination directed against them simply because they carry these markers of identity, such as being young, old, gay, pregnant or black. The voices and experiences of oppressed and disadvantaged identities are fundamental to how we work, provide a service and produce the words and products of Equal Care Co-op.

We are working towards an equal society free from discrimination and expect all our workers to support this aim wholeheartedly, with the courage to actively challenge prejudicial comments and discriminatory behaviours in others as well as notice these in ourselves.

The promotion of equal opportunities requires more than passive opposition to discrimination. It requires courage and it requires positive action. Positive action is working to address and correct systemic inequalities. For example, a job advert asking for someone living with a disability is working to address the huge disability employment gap.

EQUALITY VERSUS EQUITY



In the first image, it is assumed that everyone will benefit from the same supports. They are being treated equally.



In the second image, individuals are given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access to the game. They are being treated equitably.



In the third image, all three can see the game without any supports or accommodations because the cause of the inequity was addressed. The systemic barrier has been removed.

Find more excellent discussion of equality, equity and inclusion on the [Fearless Futures](#) website.

Examples of indirect discrimination:

- Indirect age discrimination - only promoting staff with a postgraduate qualification. Younger staff are unlikely to have this.
- Indirect race discrimination - stating that candidates for a job must have a UK qualification. People might have an equally good qualification achieved abroad.
- Indirect sex discrimination - insisting all staff work full time. At this point in history, the majority of people who are the main carers of their children are still women. By insisting everyone clocks in and clocks off at the same time you exclude more women than men by using this policy.
- Indirect religious discrimination - stating that all staff must work on a given day. Different faiths have different holy days and this requirement would conflict.



Diversity

At the same time as treating everybody equally, we know that we are each different and unique human beings. We all think, feel and act in our own ways and bring our own unique perspective and outlook. We want to recognise this diversity and celebrate what each person can contribute. Differences in thought and outlook lead to ideas and new ways of doing things.

We want everybody to be able to contribute towards how we work and to bring their own uniqueness to work.

Story: A small care agency, based in a predominantly white part of town, recruited staff

locally and therefore had a predominantly white workforce. When they tried to expand into a more racially diverse area they found that their contracts were often cancelled. On investigation they found that this was because many of their potential clients had English as a second language and thus had trouble communicating with the care staff. The agency contacted local minority support groups for advice. Following their advice, it was then able to target its recruitment to attract staff from more diverse backgrounds who shared a common cultural and linguistic heritage.



Inclusion

Inclusion is the active joining together of a diverse workforce in an organisation's work processes. Inviting a large group of players of various musical instruments to join an orchestra will create a diversity of musicians. Getting the orchestra to all play the same score will create inclusion, something much greater than that of all the musicians playing solo.

To achieve inclusion, we will enable all workers to take part in and contribute to Equal

Care's decision-making processes and operations.

Understanding Inclusion

The need for equality and diversity is widely recognised amongst organisations, (even if only to keep within the law), and many appreciate its advantages, but inclusion is less well understood. The following explains Equal Care's understanding of the benefits of inclusion, and the barriers to inclusion and how to overcome them.

Without inclusion, the challenges of a diverse workforce can outweigh its benefits. Prejudice, discrimination, stereotyping, isolation and communication and cultural barriers may prevent workers from minority groups fully contributing to workplace decision-making and practices.

Inclusion involves an organisational culture that values, embraces and celebrates individual differences. For most organisations, this involves a significant change of culture. For a long time, organisations have been run on the assumption that similarity in a workforce is good for business because it avoids many of the challenges associated with diversity. Workplaces were said to be more efficient when everyone understands and plays by the same rule-book. Organisations have worked hard to clearly define 'the way things are done around here'. To encourage conformity, people who display the 'right' qualities and behaviours, that fit with the organisational culture, are hired and rewarded. Counter-cultural behaviour is discouraged and penalised.

Cultural fit thinking blocks diversity in two ways:

- Firstly, in recruitment and selection processes people who don't fit with the culture of the organisation are filtered out and never make it through the front door. For most organisations cultural fit is still the most important quality looked for at interview. This 'mini me' attitude blocks diversity and encourages similarity throughout the organisation.
- Secondly, employees cover, mask or downplay their individual differences to fit in and to avoid negative stereotyping, prejudice, harassment or discrimination. For the individual this means their behaviour does not fit their own values and this has a negative impact on their self-concept, self-worth and wellbeing. For the organisation, individuals made to act in a way that is against their own values are less engaged. They have lower levels of commitment and sense of belonging to the organisation and are more likely to consider leaving. When workers mask or cover their differences an organisation cannot make use of that difference and the ideas and new ways of doing things it can bring.

Encouraging inclusion

We recognise four main ways of encouraging inclusion and enabling people to bring their whole selves to work:

- **All workers feel respected.** Respect exists when workers feel that their uniqueness is valued and that they can bring their whole selves to work.
- **All workers experience a sense of belonging.** Belonging results when an individual's social and emotional needs for connection to others are met. You feel accepted by and connected to your workgroup and feel an essential part of that group.
- **All workers are empowered to contribute to work processes.** Empowerment means all workers can fully participate in the decision-making processes of the organisation and its operations. It means the different needs of diverse workers are recognised and that those differences are accommodated to ensure all workers can contribute fully to work practices.
- **All workers have a fair chance of progressing their careers.** Ultimately, the extent to which an organisation is inclusive is reflected in its development and promotion of diverse talent and the diversity of its leadership team. There must be fair and objective selection, appraisal and development to ensure that members of non-dominant cultural or social groups have an equal chance of progressing in the organisation.

As a platform co-operative and by using sociocratic decision-making methods, we will ensure that these four factors are present - **respect, belonging, empowerment and fair progression**. We want workers to be willing and able to share their diverse ideas, perspectives and experiences. We will support people to bring their whole self to work so that we can all benefit from their differences. This generally creates higher levels of wellbeing, engagement and efficiency.

Story: Willow was amazed to be offered the job. She'd only applied for this one because her best friend had encouraged her and she didn't want to let them down. She'd found applying for jobs before really difficult - people tended to concentrate on her appearance (she had colourful dreads and lots of piercings) more than her answers.

At the interview she found herself able to answer all the competence questions easily due to her growing up with a brother with special needs and caring for her grandparents. Willow realised that her complex and challenging family experiences were valued and she was **respected and recognised** for them.

Willow joined a Circle of care and support workers. She looked forward to their regular meetings where she could talk about her work and any issues she had, encourage others, plan schedules and cover absences. She felt that she was an essential part of the group and that she **belonged**.

Because Willow's Circle used sociocracy for decision making she had to always speak at meetings. She found this hard at first because although she liked chatting, she found it difficult to be assertive and to share her opinions. But with practice she found that the Circle was a safe place to talk and she was listened to. She found this very **empowering**.

Due to retirement, Willow's Circle needed a new Secretary. Through rounds of nominations with people explaining why they thought she had the skills for the role, Willow became the new Secretary. Though daunted by the new responsibility, and surprised by her colleagues' faith in her, she appreciated being given the role and felt that it had been a **fair progression** for her.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Training

We will provide training for all workers in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and make sure the training is kept up to date. The Purpose Circle and the People Circle will be leading on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, but every Circle will make sure that it's work is underpinned by these principles.

Recruitment, selection and welcome

All selection exercises, especially recruitment and selection, will be carried out avoiding any prejudicial discrimination, and always by more than one person.

Any advertisements for working with the Co-op will be aimed to attract as diverse a group of applicants as possible and will not discourage any individual or group from applying.

Applicants will not be asked questions that could discriminate against them in any way, especially on grounds of a Protected Characteristic.

Applicants will not be asked about their health or disabilities before an offer of engagement is made, except where allowed by law: for example to check that the applicant can carry out an essential part of the role (taking account of any reasonable adjustments), or to see if any adjustments might be needed at interview.

Health or disability questions may be included in equal opportunities monitoring forms, but these are anonymous and not used for selection or making decisions.

- The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against, or treat unfairly in any way, job applicants and existing workers because of a protected characteristic.
- In making the final selection for engagement the interview panel must make sure that it focuses on making objective, unbiased decisions. Personal opinions, attitudes and prejudices must not be allowed to influence the choice.
- The interview panel should not see sensitive equal opportunities monitoring data which may prejudice or influence a decision making process.
- In order to fulfil our commitment to employing disabled applicants recruitment panels must ensure that candidates who have declared a disability on their application are shortlisted and interviewed where they meet the minimum essential criteria.
- We encourage disabled candidates to apply and support them as far as possible all through the recruitment process. We will make all reasonable adjustments needed and seek advice from the person and from other relevant specialists to ensure we have identified all the adjustments that we could make to support the candidate.
- When we think that a post must be filled by a male, female or someone from a particular ethnic group for reasons of privacy and/or decency a Genuine Occupational Requirement (GOR) may apply. This will be discussed with the People Circle to ensure the requirements meet the legal definition of a GOR.

Story: Amir, Bert and Carla are the interview panel. They have finished all the interviews and have scored all the candidates. When they discuss their results Amir surprises Bert and Carla by giving Zahra such a low mark. Amir said that everybody knows that where Zahra lives means that she will have trouble getting to work in the winter and she'll often be late for work. Carla explained that where a candidate lived was of no consequence to their suitability for the role. If Zahra was regularly late for work they would deal with that when it happened. Amir had to be objective and rescore Zahra's interview.

Training Opportunities

All training opportunities will be published widely to all appropriate employees and volunteers and will not in any way exclude particular groups.

Disciplinary and grievance procedures

Any worker with Equal Care who acts against the letter or the spirit of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action. We regard discrimination, abuse, harassment, victimisation or bullying of staff, volunteers, clients or others in the course of work as disciplinary offences that are likely to be regarded as gross misconduct.

We will treat seriously any complaints of unlawful discrimination on any of the stated grounds. Any workers with Equal Care, employees, volunteers, people getting support, their families or other stakeholders who believe that they have been discriminated against by workers (including volunteers) should raise the issue through the grievance policy.