



## Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Last Review Date	January 2025
Next Review Date	January 2026
Reviewed by	CEO/HR/EDI Working Group
Approved by	Trustees

### Policy statement

At FoodCycle, we are committed to being an equitable, diverse and inclusive organisation.

The success of our organisation depends on the people who work and volunteer with us, and the guests we serve. We recognise that an effective Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy helps everyone to feel comfortable in themselves and develop to their full potential. This is in the best interests of individuals and of FoodCycle as a whole.

We are dedicated to creating an environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and is not subjected to unfair or unlawful discrimination.

A key objective of our Equality and Diversity Policy is that we provide an environment in which everyone we work or interact with (see Scope below) feels comfortable and confident that they will be treated fairly and equally, irrespective of any 'protected characteristics' (as per the Equality Act 2010).

We uphold the principles of the Equality Act 2010 and go beyond compliance by considering additional factors that influence inclusion, such as socio-economic background, caring responsibilities, and cultural experiences. These commitments help ensure that our practices reflect the diverse needs of all stakeholders.

We further recognise the benefits of employing people from a range of backgrounds, as this creates an organisation where creativity and valuing difference in others thrives. We value the wealth of experience within the community in which we operate and aspire to have a workforce that reflects this.

This policy covers all aspects of employment including advertisements, recruitment and selection, induction, pay, conditions of service, training and development, change management and grievance and disciplinary procedures. This policy is not contractual, but sets out the way in which FoodCycle aims to promote equality and address diversity in the workplace. We reserve the right to vary, replace or terminate it at any time.

We're also committed to ensuring our organisation is free of harassment and bullying and that everyone's treated with dignity and respect. We have a separate dignity at work policy that covers this in more detail.

### Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to everyone engaged with FoodCycle, including:

- **Employees** (full-time, part-time, zero hours, permanent, and fixed-term).
- **Casual Workers** and **Self-employed Contractors**.
- **Job Applicants**, ensuring equity and fairness throughout recruitment.
- **Trustees** and **Prospective Trustees**, recognising their critical role in governance.
- **Volunteers**, whose contributions are vital to our mission.
- **Guests**, who attend our community meals.
- **Visitors, Suppliers, Partners, Stakeholders** and **Former Colleagues**

## Definition of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

We define our approach to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion as follows:

- **Equity:** Recognising that individuals face unique challenges, we commit to removing barriers and providing tailored resources to achieve fair outcomes for all.
- **Diversity:** Celebrating the richness of our differences, we welcome varied perspectives, experiences, and identities as drivers of innovation and empathy.
- **Inclusion:** Ensuring every individual feels a sense of belonging, dignity, and respect through inclusive practices and behaviours.

## Our Vision

Our vision is to create a working and service environment where every individual is treated with dignity, respect, and fairness. We are committed to eliminating harassment, intimidation, and discrimination in all forms and fostering a culture that values and celebrates diversity.

Learning to work with people's differences, visible or not, enables us to all work together effectively and helps us to anticipate and meet the needs of all of our guests; recruit, retain and develop the best people; act responsibly in the communities of which we are a part and also fulfil our legal commitments.

We want everyone to bring their full selves to work and to our community meals. We commit to removing barriers that prevent our employees, volunteers and guests from embracing their distinctive and diverse identities.

## Our Approach

To ensure equity, diversity, and inclusion are central to everything we do, we commit to:

1. **Providing tailored training and development opportunities** to build awareness, challenge biases, and foster inclusive practices.
2. **Implementing and reviewing systems and policies** to identify and remove barriers that lead to inequities.
3. **Embedding continuous learning** into our culture, adapting our approaches to align with best practices and feedback from stakeholders.
4. **Maintaining robust mechanisms** for reporting, addressing, and learning from breaches of this policy.

FoodCycle takes breaches of this policy seriously and provides accessible channels for reporting concerns, ensuring appropriate action is taken to uphold our commitments.

## Legal considerations

The main legislation that covers equal opportunities and discrimination is the Equality Act 2010. In addition, the following should be taken into consideration:

- the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- the Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- the Human Rights Act 1998
- the Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999

- the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006
- the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013
- any Codes of Practice issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission

plus any amendments to the above legislation.

## Definitions

### Protected characteristics

A protected characteristic is a human characteristic that's safeguarded against discrimination by law. There are nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act:

- age
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or on maternity leave
- disability
- gender reassignment
- race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin)
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

### Types of unlawful discrimination

Discrimination by or against a worker is generally prohibited unless there is a specific legal exception. Discrimination may occur intentionally or unintentionally, and can take different forms, for example:

- **direct discrimination:** treating an individual with one or more of the protected characteristics less favourably than others
- **indirect discrimination:** unjustified provisions, criterion or practice e.g. our policies, procedures or practices, which are applied to everyone, or groups of people, but have, or will have, the effect of putting those who share a protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage when compared to others
- **harassment:** unwanted conduct linked to a protected characteristic which violates an individual's dignity, or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them
- **victimisation:** treating a person less favourably because they have committed a "protected act". "Protected acts" include making or supporting an allegation of discrimination, or giving evidence relating to an allegation of discrimination, or raising a grievance about equality or discrimination.
- **discrimination by association:** an individual is discriminated against because they associate with someone, e.g. a family member, who possesses a protected characteristic
- **discrimination by perception:** an individual is perceived as having a protected characteristic, irrespective of whether or not this perception is correct

On all occasions where those with managerial responsibility for workers are required to make decisions between them, for example disciplinary matters, selection for training, promotion, pay increases, redundancy etc it is essential that merit, experience, skills and temperament are considered as objectively as possible.

## Responsibilities

### 1. The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees holds ultimate responsibility for leading the promotion of equity, diversity, and inclusion across the organisation. They are accountable for ensuring this policy is embedded within the organisation's strategic direction, governance, and operations.

### 2. The Chief Executive

The Chief Executive has delegated responsibility for overseeing the effective implementation, monitoring, and review of this policy. This includes ensuring adequate resources, systems, and structures are in place to support EDI goals.

### 3. Managers

Managers play a critical role in championing equity, diversity, and inclusion within their areas of responsibility. As leaders, they are responsible for:

- Promoting a culture of respect, equity, and inclusion within their teams.
- Ensuring all team members understand and adhere to this policy through effective communication and training.
- Monitoring workplace practices to prevent and address discrimination, harassment, or any breaches of this policy.

Managers are accountable for their actions and must actively challenge and address any non-compliance within their teams.

### 4. EDI Working Group

The EDI Working Group act to support decision-making and best practice in relation to EDI. The group will gather and provide feedback to inform policy changes, training, guidance, data gathering and use, and any other relevant actions in relation to EDI initiatives at FoodCycle.

### 5. All employees, volunteers and others engaged by FoodCycle

Everyone representing FoodCycle, regardless of their role or seniority, has a personal responsibility to:

- Familiarise themselves with this policy and uphold its principles in their day-to-day work.
- Treat colleagues, job applicants, guests, and stakeholders with fairness, dignity, and respect.
- Avoid engaging in or tolerating discriminatory behaviour, harassment, or any conduct that undermines the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

All representatives of FoodCycle are encouraged to report behaviour or decisions that conflict with this policy. FoodCycle is committed to handling all concerns promptly, confidentially, and in accordance with its procedures, ensuring that workers feel supported and protected when raising issues.

We should be aware that:

- The organisation is legally liable for acts of discrimination or harassment within the workplace.
- Individuals may also be held personally liable for their actions. Personal accountability is essential to maintaining a positive and inclusive working environment.

## The working environment

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that our working environment does not prevent people from taking up positions for which they are suitably qualified. This may include physical adaptations or more flexible ways of working (where appropriate and practical).

## **Terms and conditions of employment**

Our employment policies and procedures will be reviewed regularly to improve, amend or adapt current practices to promote equality of opportunity within FoodCycle, and to remove barriers experienced by members of disadvantaged social groups in seeking employment with us, and working and progressing with us.

We will ensure that all of our employment policies including compensation, benefits and any other relevant issues associated with terms and conditions of employment, are formulated and applied without regard to age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage or civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

These will be reviewed regularly to ensure there is no discrimination. Length of service as a qualifying criterion for benefits will not exceed five years unless clearly justifiable.

Employees will not be subjected to any detriment if they wish to join our pension scheme, nor will they be offered any inducement not to do so.

## **Recruitment and selection**

We aim, through appropriate information, training and supervision, to ensure that all employees and Trustees who are responsible for recruitment and selection are familiar with this policy and apply it in conjunction with our recruitment and selection procedures.

For our volunteers and project leaders, we aim to ensure that they are familiar with this policy through transparency in information, training, and supervision.

For our guests, we aim, through providing transparent information, that all of our guests are familiar with this policy in how we recruit and select FoodCycle staff and support our volunteers.

## **FoodCycle Employees**

We aim to ensure that our recruitment practices are free from unlawful discrimination. We will make reasonable adjustments to our recruitment and selection processes to ensure applicants with disabilities are not disadvantaged.

Job adverts will normally state: "FoodCycle is an equal opportunity employer and values diversity".

Job descriptions and person specifications will be reviewed to ensure that criteria are not applied which are either directly or indirectly discriminatory and that they do not impose any condition or requirement which cannot be justified by the demands of the post. Shortlisting and interviewing will be carried out by more than one person, to minimise the risk of conscious or unconscious bias.

Selection will be conducted on the basis of the applicants' suitability for the job and their ability to fulfil the job requirements, as outlined in the Job Description. Our interest is in the skills, abilities, qualifications, aptitude and the potential of individuals to do the job.

Information from candidates' social media profiles will not be used to make decisions on whether to interview or hire them, as using this information might lead to a presumption that an applicant's protected characteristics, such as religious beliefs or sexual orientation, played a part in a recruitment decision.

Questions asked of candidates will relate to information that will help assess their ability to do the job. Questions about marriage plans, family intentions, religious or political beliefs, caring

responsibilities, intention to join our pension scheme or to opt out, or about any other issues which may give rise to suspicions of unlawful discrimination should not be asked.

Selection tests will be specifically related to the job, measuring an individual's actual, or inherent, ability to do or train for the job.

## **FoodCycle Volunteers and Project Leaders**

Where possible we will make reasonable adjustments to our volunteer roles to ensure that any volunteer with a disability is able to volunteer with us safely. This includes overcoming digital exclusion where this presents a barrier for registering to volunteer or completing training to become a project leader.

Project adverts will state that FoodCycle values diversity and supports equal opportunities.

Volunteer and project leader role descriptions will be reviewed to ensure that criteria are not applied which are either directly or indirectly discriminatory and that they do not impose any condition or requirement which cannot be justified by the demands of the post.

Project leader applications will be reviewed based on a volunteers suitability for the role and their ability to fulfil role requirements as outlined in the role description. Our interest is in the skills, abilities, aptitude, and the potential of volunteers to do the role.

Information from volunteers' social media profiles will not be used to make decisions on their suitability to project lead, as using this information might lead to a presumption that an applicant's protected characteristics, such as religious beliefs or sexual orientation, played a part in accepting project leader applications.

Questions asked of volunteers will relate to information that will help assess their ability to do the role. Questions about marriage plans, family intentions, religious or political beliefs, caring responsibilities, intention to join our pension scheme or to opt out, or about any other issues which may give rise to suspicions of unlawful discrimination should not be asked.

Training requirements will be specifically related to the role, ensuring that the individual has the knowledge, ability, and capacity to lead or support project sessions.

## **FoodCycle Guests**

We make reasonable adjustments to our hall layout to ensure that guests with disabilities are able to attend and enjoy the meal safely.

Project adverts will state that FoodCycle values diversity and supports equal opportunities.

## **Training and development**

We recognise that our ability to meet the diverse needs of our guests is improved by having a workforce which has the skills and understanding to achieve our objectives. All employees will be encouraged to discuss their career prospects and training needs with their manager. All volunteers will be made aware of training opportunities that they can engage with to progress their own skills, experience, and interests. We are committed to ensuring that, wherever possible, all employees and volunteers receive the widest possible range of development opportunities for advancement in line with the needs of FoodCycle.

Ongoing training and development opportunities will be provided to raise awareness and understanding of equality and diversity issues, and how these impact on FoodCycle and individuals. Project leaders will be supported to access ongoing training and development to increase their awareness and understanding of equality and diversity issues.

The provision of training will be reviewed to ensure that provisions are made where necessary to enable part-time workers, infrequent volunteers, or those returning to work following a break to benefit from training.

## **Flexibility**

We recognise the benefits of enabling our employees and volunteers to balance their work and private life. We will consider any requests for flexible working in a way which aims to balance the needs of the individual whilst maintaining a high quality service to our guests and the communities of which we are a part.

## **Impairments**

We aim to provide a safe working environment for employees and volunteers with impairments who experience disability. We will make reasonable adjustments to the workplace and/or working arrangements for people with impairments where they cause disadvantage to the person.

If, due to changing circumstances, an employee or volunteer with impairments is unable to carry out their existing duties, every effort will be made to find suitable alternative roles within the organisation, and retraining will be provided as necessary.

Where an employee or volunteer without impairments develops impairments during their employment or volunteering, we will make every effort to facilitate continued employment or engagement in their existing role. Where this is not possible, suitable alternative employment or volunteer roles will be considered, and we may provide training and support as required.

Whilst we will make every effort to retain employees and volunteers in these circumstances, we cannot make any guarantees about continued employment or volunteer engagement.

## **Grievances, disputes and disciplinary procedure**

### **FoodCycle Employees**

Employees who believe they have been discriminated against should bring this to our attention as soon as possible. In the first instance, employees are encouraged to do this informally, but where it has not been possible to resolve this informally, or where the matter is particularly serious, they are advised to use our internal Grievance Procedure. An employee who brings a complaint of discrimination must not be victimised or less favourably treated as a result.

Harassment (behaviour that is offensive, frightening or in any way distressing) or bullying will not be tolerated, and any individual who feels that they have been subjected to harassment or bullying should refer to our Dignity at Work Policy. Equally, anyone who witnesses incidents of harassment or bullying should report this to their manager or an appropriate senior member of staff.

When dealing with general disciplinary matters, care is to be taken that employees who have, are perceived to have, or are associated with someone who has, a protected characteristic are treated fairly, equitably and with respect.

### **FoodCycle Volunteers and Project Leaders**

Volunteers who believe they have been discriminated against should bring this to our attention as soon as possible. Volunteers are encouraged to do this by contacting their regional manager who will be following the **complaints policy and procedure**.

A volunteer who brings a complaint of discrimination must not be victimised or less favourably treated as a result.

Harassment (behaviour that is offensive, frightening or in any way distressing) or bullying will not be tolerated, and any individual who feels that they have been subjected to harassment or bullying should refer to our **Dignity at Work Policy** and **Harassment and Bullying Policy**. Equally, anyone who witnesses incidents of harassment or bullying should report this to their project leader or an appropriate senior member of FoodCycle staff.

When dealing with general disciplinary matters, care is to be taken that volunteers who have, are perceived to have, or are associated with someone who has, a protected characteristic are not dismissed or disciplined for performance, conduct or behaviour which could be overlooked or condoned in other volunteers.

## **FoodCycle Guests**

We aim to make our services as accessible and responsive as possible to all existing and potential guests and to provide a service to them which recognises and respects their differences.

Anyone who feels they have been denied equality of opportunity whilst in receipt of our services will be encouraged to make their complaint in writing so that their concerns can be investigated and responded to. Workers are expected to make our guests aware of their rights and responsibilities with regards to equality of opportunity and guests should be referred to our Complaints Policy for further information. Complaints can be made by following our complaints procedure and emailing [complaints@foodcycle.org.uk](mailto:complaints@foodcycle.org.uk).

We reserve the right to withdraw our services to any guest if that individual behaves in a discriminatory, disruptive or abusive manner to any worker, trustee or other person.

We are committed to meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, and will make every effort to ensure that our services and communications are accessible to people with special requirements, including those with visual, audio, cognitive and/or physical impairments, and those who are unable to communicate effectively in English.

## **References**

We will not discriminate against employees or volunteers who have left FoodCycle, and our references are based on factual information only.

## **Retirement**

We have no fixed retirement age and employees or volunteers who wish to work/volunteer beyond State Pension Age may choose to do so.

## **Employee and Volunteer Involvement**

We will take appropriate steps to encourage the participation of all employees/volunteers to ensure that, wherever possible, our working practices recognise and meet their needs. We will involve our employees and volunteers in determining what can be done to make sure they develop and use their abilities in their role.

## **Guest involvement**

We will endeavour to ensure that our services are sensitive and appropriate to the needs of all groups. We undertake to listen to our guests and involve them in the development of services which recognise and value their diversity.

## **External agencies**

In order to ensure that we follow best practice and keep ourselves up to date, we will liaise with appropriate external organisations to help develop a policy of continuous improvement.

### **Data protection**

FoodCycle processes personal data collected during informal discussions as well as the formal bullying and harassment procedure in accordance with our Data Protection Policy. Data collected as part of informal discussions and/or the formal procedure is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of responding to the complaints or conducting the bullying and harassment procedure.

Inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with our Data Protection Policy immediately. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under our Disciplinary and Capability Procedure.

### **Communication of this policy**

All workers will be made aware of this policy on joining us.

In addition, workers will be reminded of the policy through such means as advertisements, job descriptions, application forms, posters, training courses, videos and memos.

### **Implementation, monitoring and review of this policy**

It will be reviewed on a regular basis annually following its implementation and may be changed from time to time.

FoodCycle is committed to monitoring its progress towards diversity by doing the following:

- monitoring the ethnic, gender, age and disability profile of our employees and volunteers to enable us to understand the composition of our workforce in order to identify any areas of inequality
- monitoring applicants for jobs, training and development, grievances, disciplinary hearings, dismissals and other reasons for leaving
- monitoring employee opinions and comments through feedback via the performance review system
- performance monitoring through guest feedback, surveys and proper investigation of any guests complaints

Relevant data will be collected to support this policy. Personal details provided by employees or job applicants for the purposes of equal opportunity monitoring are confidential, will be kept apart from all other records and not used for any other purpose.

Any queries or comments about this policy should be addressed to the line manager or HR. Guests and volunteers can raise any queries or comments by contacting their regional manager or contacting head office directly.