



# Diversity and Inclusion – Clients, Consumers and Tenants Policy

Document number: SCS-PP-4148 Version 2.0

## Approval

|               |  |             |            |
|---------------|--|-------------|------------|
| Policy owner  | Executive Manager, Specialist Community Services |             |            |
| Business Unit | Specialist Community Services                    |             |            |
| Approved by   | Executive Manager                                |             |            |
| Date approved | 20/05/2024                                       | Review date | 20/05/2026 |

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## 1 Purpose

- 1.1 Specialist Community Services (SCS) recognises the value of a diverse workforce including such things as life experiences, background, skills and capabilities and the benefit this can offer to teams as well as consumers, clients, and tenants it provides service to.
- 1.2 SCS adopts a trauma informed approach to practice that acknowledges the importance of creating an environment where clients, consumers and tenants feel safe and respected, so that they are able to create connections with others and experience inclusion.
- 1.3 The purpose of this policy is to communicate SCS's approach to diversity and inclusion and how these qualities are fostered and integrated into SCS services

## 2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all staff and volunteers working in the following SCS sites;
  - Mental Health Service (MHS)
  - Homelessness Services (HLS)
  - Housing Plus (HGP)
- 2.2 This policy needs to be read in conjunction with other SCS and St Vincent de Paul Society WA (SVdPWA) policies and procedures that articulate and support the commitment to value diversity and promote inclusion for the clients, consumers and tenants we work with, as well as staff and volunteers. These include;
  - SVdPWA Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy
  - SCS Gender Sex and Sexuality Policy
  - SCS Consumer/Client/Tenant Participation Policy
  - SCS Mobility Access and Inclusion Policy
  - SVdPWA Reconciliation Action Plan

## 3 Policy principles

### Diversity:

- 3.1 Refers to the visible and invisible differences that exist between people including (but not limited to) disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status, age, race, religion, ethnicity, culture, physical impairment and, relationship and parental status. Diversity also encompasses the ways people differ in terms of their educational background, life and working experiences, carer responsibilities, socio-economic background and geographical location

### Inclusion:

- 3.2 Inclusion occurs when a diversity of people (e.g. of different ages, cultural backgrounds, genders) feel valued and respected, have access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute their perspectives and talents to improve their organisation.
- 3.3 SCS believes in treating all clients/consumers/tenants with respect and dignity, promoting inclusion and equality in relation to their diverse experiences, identities,

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- lifestyles and backgrounds.
- 3.4 SCS has a zero tolerance to discrimination, harassment and bullying and an expectation that staff and volunteers reflect Vinnies Values in all aspects of their work with consumers, clients, tenants and with their peers.
  - 3.5 SCS practice frameworks have been adopted purposefully to reflect the commitment to inclusive practice and removing barriers to access. They are;
    - Person Centred Practice
    - Low Threshold and Change Model (HLS)
    - Trauma Informed Practice
    - Supportive Landlord Model
  - 3.6 SCS integrates Vinnies Values throughout the service to support inclusivity in service delivery environments, in particular;
    - Respect – being non-judgemental and open to the views (and differences) of clients/consumers/tenants
    - Compassion – being aware of responding to the (unique) needs of clients/consumers/tenants
    - Empathy – being sensitive and understanding where we can with clients/consumers/tenants
    - Courage – leading by example and role modelling inclusive behaviours with clients/consumers/tenants and alongside our sector peers.
  - 3.7 SCS adopts a trauma informed approach to ensure that service environments contribute to feelings of safety, respect and significance, thereby enabling clients/consumers/tenants to foster their individual wellbeing so they can create connections, actively participate and engage.
  - 3.8 SCS is aware that the cohort of individuals it offers service to has been and is still at times marginalised in the community they live in. SCS is committed to providing its clients/consumers/tenants with an alternative experience that supports the belief that connection and inclusion is possible.
  - 3.9 SCS recognises that the culture at service sites is influenced by the conduct and behaviour of its staff, specifically how they interact with each other, clients/consumers/tenants and other key stakeholders.
  - 3.10 Expectations and standards for conduct are communicated in the SVdPWA and SCS Codes of Conduct and, relevant policy and procedures, as well as the Vinnies Values.
  - 3.11 SCS ensures staff receive relevant professional development opportunities to broaden their knowledge and skills and, enrich their practice when working with diverse cohorts.
  - 3.12 SCS is committed to taking all reasonable steps to ensure their services are as accessible as possible to people from all diverse groups and abilities, within the scope of service and resource.
  - 3.13 SCS acknowledges that managing diversity in shared and communal environments can produce tensions. Where conflict arises, the focus continues to be on the best interests of the client/consumer/tenant.
  - 3.14 Where it is identified that a client/consumer/tenant's unique needs are not being met, and this impacts their inclusion in the service, staff are responsible for exploring specialised external support where appropriate and able, to assist removal of any unintended barriers to participation.
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- 3.15 SCS staff are responsible for ensuring that they maintain a good working knowledge of diverse community groups, relevant to the client/consumer/tenant cohort they provide service to and, will actively support clients/consumers/tenants to connect to these groups where appropriate.
  - 3.16 SCS recognises that not all service sites accommodate all levels of mobility. All new referrals to the service are assessed and matched accordingly to the location and, any potential barriers to access, discussed at the time of intake.
  - 3.17 Any request for alterations in accommodation services, is at the sole discretion of Management and will be dependent on resources, identified risk, impact on the service and capacity for external funding.
  - 3.18 For SCS sites that provide longer term accommodation and, where clients/consumers/tenants have access to government funding to support required alterations to accommodation or, wish to pay for alterations themselves, this will be discussed with the Service Manager who has the discretion to approve or decline the request. The decision will be reviewed against the individual's need and any immediate and long-term consequences on the service environment and, communal living setting.
  - 3.19 Any services and facilities due for upgrades are assessed to ensure access and inclusivity. Any alterations and/or purchase of equipment will be resource dependant.
  - 3.20 With the support from the Corporate Engagement Team who also work in the area of grants, SCS actively monitors the funding and grants environment for funding opportunities that support diversity and inclusion relevant to the scope of service.
  - 3.21 All new builds and/or purchase of properties under SCS are reviewed for accessibility prior to build/purchase.

## 4 Roles and responsibilities

- 4.1 The Executive Manager SCS is responsible for maintaining the currency of this policy.
- 4.2 Society representatives are required to adhere to this policy. Failure to comply may be considered a breach of our policies and may result in disciplinary action.

### Managers are responsible for:

- 4.3 Role modelling inclusive behaviour;
- 4.4 Ensuring that teams adhere to organisational values (reflected in their work and interactions with others) and policies and procedures, including Codes of Conduct.

### Staff are responsible for:

- 4.5 Contributing to, and maintaining an inclusive and diverse workplace culture in line with organisational values;
- 4.6 Acting and behaving with respect and inclusion;
- 4.7 Adhering to all policies and procedures, including Code of Conduct.

## 5 Review

- 5.1 This procedure is scheduled for review every two years, after consultation. Some circumstances may trigger an early review; this includes but is not limited to legislative changes, organisational changes, incident outcomes and other matters deemed appropriate by the SCS Management Team and Executive Manager SCS.

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## 6 Further assistance

- 6.1 Society personnel should speak with their Manager regarding any questions about the implementation of this policy. They may also contact the Policy Owner to provide feedback.

## 7 References

References made in this policy are:

- 7.1 SCS-PP-4023 Gender, Sex and Sexuality Policy
- 7.2 SCS-PP-4024 Consumer/Client/Tenant Participation Policy
- 7.3 SCS-PP-4016 Mobility, Access and Inclusion Policy
- 7.4 SVdPWA Reconciliation Action Plan
- 7.5 Vinnies Values
- 7.6 SVDPWA\_PP-1010 Code of Conduct Policy

## 8 Related documents and legislation

Related documents and legislation at the time of approval include:

- 8.1 Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986, *Attorney General's Department, Australian Government*
- 8.2 Sex Discrimination Act 1984, *Attorney General's Department, Australian Government*
- 8.3 Racial Discrimination Act 1975, *Attorney General's Department, Australian Government*
- 8.4 Disability Discrimination Act 1992, *Attorney General's Department, Australian Government*
- 8.5 National Standards for Mental Health Services 2010, *Australian Government*
- 8.6 Standard One: Governance, Licensing and Accreditation Regulatory Unit. *Department of Health, Government of Western Australia*
- 8.7 Specialist Homelessness Service Standards. *Department of Communities, Government of Western Australia*

## 9 Approval and amendment history

| Version | Approval authority | Date       | Amendment summary            |
|---------|--------------------|------------|------------------------------|
| 1.0     | EM, SCS            | 31/03/2022 | Initial version              |
| 2.0     | EM, SCS            | 20/05/2024 | Scheduled review and updated |
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## 10 Definitions

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| Term                           | Definition  |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Diversity                      | Refers to the visible and invisible differences that exist between people including (but not limited to) disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status, age, race, religion, ethnicity, culture, physical impairment and relationship and parental status. Diversity also encompasses the ways people differ in terms of their educational background, life and working experiences, carer responsibilities, socio-economic background and geographical location<br><br>(Law Council of Australia)   |
| Equitable                      | Refers to dealing fairly and equally with all concerned   |
| Inclusion                      | Inclusion occurs when a diversity of people (e.g. of different ages, cultural backgrounds, genders) feel valued and respected, have access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute their perspectives and talents to improve their organisation.<br><br><a href="https://www.dca.org.au/topics/inclusion">https://www.dca.org.au/topics/inclusion</a>  |
| Low Threshold and Change Model | Is an intentional approach to maintain the admittance requirements (eligibility criteria) of a service, at such a level that as few people as possible are denied access to that service.   |
| Peers                          | For the purposes of this policy, peer refers to individuals with whom you work alongside and/or share work responsibilities with  |
| Person Centred Practice        | “A person-centred approach to service delivery involves the individual being at the centre of decision-making and having control over the services they receive.”<br><br>(Australian Human Rights Commission)   |
| Trauma Informed Practice       | Is an organisational and practice approach to delivering health and human services directed by a thorough understanding of the neurological, biological, psychological and social effects of trauma and its prevalence in society. It is a strengths-based framework that emphasises physical, psychological and emotional safety for people who have experienced trauma, their families and carers, and service providers.<br><br>(Commonwealth of Australia: The Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia; 2017) |