



ADVICE SUPPORT KNOWLEDGE INFORMATION (ASKI)

Equality & Diversity Policy

March 2026

1 Introduction

The Charity is a people-led organisation that must always ensure it meets the needs of the community through fair and appropriate employment and development of the people who work and volunteer for the Charity.

ASKI:

ACCEPTS that in society certain groups or individuals are denied equality on the grounds of race, gender, marital status, caring responsibilities, disability, gender re-assignment, age, social class, sexual orientation and religion/belief or any other factor irrelevant to the purpose in view.

WELCOMES the statutory requirements laid down in the Equalities Act 2010 and is committed to complying with the Equalities Act 2010 with such other Acts and statutory requirements furthering equality of opportunity for all as also apply to its charitable activities.

RECOGNISES that it has moral and social responsibilities that go beyond the provisions of the abovementioned Acts and Regulations, and that it should support and contribute to the wider process of change through all aspects of its work and practices in order to eliminate discrimination and promote equality and diversity.

IS COMMITTED to taking positive steps to ensure that:

- all people are treated with dignity and respect, valuing the diversity of all;
- equality of opportunity and diversity is promoted;
- services are accessible, appropriate and delivered fairly to all;
- the mix of its employees, volunteers and management committees reflects, as far as possible, the broad mix of the population of its local community;
- traditionally disadvantaged sections of the community are encouraged to participate in policy decisions about, and the management of the services provided.

2 Policy

This policy applies to all Trustees, staff, volunteers, management committee members, users and the general public.

Commitment

Equality and diversity are central to the work of the Charity.

The Charity will treat all people with dignity and respect, valuing the diversity of all. It will promote equality of opportunity and diversity. It will eliminate all forms of discrimination on grounds of race, gender, marital status, caring responsibilities, disability, gender re-assignment, age, social class, sexual orientation, religion/ belief, irrelevant offending background or any other factor irrelevant to the purpose in view.

The Charity has a commitment to diversity, which is about:

- Recognising and valuing difference
- Recognising and seeking to redress inequality and disadvantage
- Treating all in a fair, open and honest manner
- Recognising the right of volunteers, employees and service users to be treated with dignity and respect.

For this policy to be successful, it is essential that everyone is committed to and involved in its delivery. The Charity's goal is to work towards a just society free from discrimination, harassment and prejudice. The Charity aims to embed this in all its policies, procedures, day-to-day practices and external relationships.

Aims

The Charity aims to:

- Provide services that are accessible according to need;
- Promote equality of opportunity and diversity in volunteering, employment and development;
- Create effective partnerships with all parts of our community.

Objectives

The Charity's objective is to realise its standards by:

- Sustaining, regularly evaluating and continually improving its services to ensure equality and diversity principles and best practice are embedded in our performance to meet the needs of individuals and groups;
- Working together with the community to provide accessible and relevant service provision that responds to service users' needs;
- Ensuring staff, volunteers and trustees are representative of the community served and the employment policies are fair and robust;
- Responding to volunteer's & employees' needs and encouraging their development to increase their contribution to effective service delivery;
- Recognising and valuing the differences and individual contribution that all people make to the Charity;
- Challenging discrimination;
- Providing fair resource allocation
- Being accountable.

3 Procedures

3.1 Responsibility for Implementation

This policy covers the behaviour of all people employed or volunteering in the Charity or using the services and sets out the way they can expect to be treated in turn by the Charity. The overall responsibility for ensuring adherence to and implementation of this policy lies with the Trustees, staff and the management committee.

3.2 Method of Implementation

The Charity intends to implement this policy by:

- Ensuring that it is a condition of paid employment in the Charity;
- Ensuring that Trustees, Trustees, management team, staff and volunteers to and users are made aware, understand, agree with, and are willing to implement, this policy. All staff and volunteers will be given a copy of this policy as part of their induction;
- Actively encouraging Trustees, management team, staff and volunteers to participate in anti-discriminatory training, and making time and resources available for such training;
- Monitoring the services, publicity and events provided by the Charity, to ensure that they are accessible to all sections of the population and do not discriminate, and taking active steps to ensure that participation is representative.

3.3 Provision of Services

Every service user will be treated in a professional manner, with courtesy and respect. Users of our services and those who take part in our activities will be informed that the Charity is committed to an Equality and Diversity Policy so that:

- They will know a policy exists and a copy is available so as to guide all members of the organisation and others to share the commitment and code of practice of Equality and Diversity.
- All who come into contact with the Charity will know the standards that we are trying to achieve and have the opportunity to assist us in trying to achieve them.
- They will know they have the right to complain, if they feel these standards are not being adhered to or are dissatisfied with the service provided to them.

The Charity will make sure that its services meet the needs of its diverse communities by involving communities in identifying their needs and by seeking to meet these needs.

The Charity will:

- Provide information and use methods other than written documents to present information as appropriate,
- Offer information on request in accessible formats, including spoken community languages, large print, audio tape/CD, on DVD in British Sign Language and on the internet as appropriate
- Access interpretation, translation and sign language services on request as appropriate.

3.4 Discrimination

The Charity will not unlawfully discriminate against or harass other people including current and former employees, job applicants, volunteers, clients, service users, customers, suppliers and visitors. This applies in the workplace, outside the workplace, and on work-related trips or events including social events.

The following forms of discrimination are prohibited under this policy and are unlawful:

- a) **Direct discrimination:** treating someone less favourably because of a Protected Characteristic. For example, rejecting a job applicant because of their religious views or because they might be gay.
- b) **Indirect discrimination:** a provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone but adversely affects people with a particular Protected Characteristic more than others, and is not justified. For example, requiring a job to be done full-time rather than part-time would adversely affect women because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement would be discriminatory unless it can be justified.
- c) **Harassment:** this includes sexual harassment and other unwanted conduct related to a Protected Characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Harassment is dealt with further in our Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy.
- d) **Victimisation:** retaliation against someone who has complained or has supported
- e) **Disability discrimination:** this includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability.

3.5 Recruitment and Selection

The Charity will ensure that recruitment practices fulfil the requirement of the equality and diversity policy. Vacancies should generally be advertised to a diverse section of the labour market. Advertisements should avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage particular groups from applying.

All posts will have a job description and person specification, which will contain essential and desirable skills, qualifications and experience. Person specifications will only contain details which are required.

Job applicants should not be asked questions which might suggest an intention to discriminate on grounds of a Protected Characteristic. For example, applicants should not be asked whether they are pregnant or planning to have children. Shortlisting should be done by more than one person if possible. The format for interview will be agreed before it takes place and will remain constant for all interviews for the position.

Every effort will be made to make provision for staff and volunteers with a disability through reasonable adaptations.

All staff and trustees involved in recruitment and selection will be aware of this policy and adhere to it at all times. All applicants for posts will be treated strictly on merit, against objective criteria that avoid discrimination. As an exception, posts targeted at specific groups of people will be exempted, as allowed by legislation.

All application forms will include an optional and detachable section for equality and diversity monitoring, which will not be used as part of the selection process. The information will be individually confidential and used for assessing recruitment and advertising practices periodically. An appointed person will be responsible for vetting, in confidence, applicants for sensitive posts; this may include Disclosure and

Barring Service (DBS) checks. Reasons for the decision to appoint, or not, will be noted and kept for at least six months.

3.6 Part-time and fixed-term work

Part-time and fixed-term employees should be treated the same as comparable full-time or permanent employees and enjoy no less favourable terms and conditions (on a pro-rata basis where appropriate), unless different treatment is justified.

3.7 Disabilities

If an employee is disabled or becomes disabled, they are encouraged to talk about their condition so that reasonable adjustments or support may be considered as appropriate.

3.8 Training and Development

The Board of Trustees, staff and volunteers need to recognise and fulfil their personal role in making the Charity an inviting and inclusive organisation. The Charity will ensure that all staff and volunteers know about the Equality and Diversity policy and their responsibilities within it, by including it within Induction Training, and ensuring it has a high profile within our internal communications and practices. Additional role specific training will be undertaken to ensure understanding of and commitment to Equality & Diversity policies and procedures as appropriate.

4 Responsibilities

The Board of Trustees has the ultimate responsibility to provide, implement and review the policy. It is the responsibility of trustees, staff and volunteers to support the policy by ensuring that the Charity's activities promote equality and diversity. The Chief Executive or appointed representative holds the day to day responsibility for ensuring that the policy is implemented and, in the first instance, for dealing with or taking action on disciplinary offences.

The Board of Trustees will receive a report analysing monitoring data on an annual basis, in order to retain oversight of the impact and implementation of the policy.

5 Breaches of this policy

The Charity takes seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, volunteers, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities.

We take a strict approach to breaches of this policy, which will be dealt with in accordance with our Disciplinary Procedure. Serious cases of deliberate discrimination may amount to gross misconduct resulting in dismissal without notice. If an employee believes that they have suffered discrimination the matter can be raised through the Charity's Grievance Procedure or Bullying and Harassment Policy. Complaints will be treated in confidence and investigated as appropriate.

Employees must not be victimised or retaliated against for complaining about discrimination. However, making a false allegation deliberately and in bad faith will be treated as misconduct and dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

8 Review

The Charity has declared its commitment to establishing, developing, implementing and reviewing a policy of equality of opportunity. Effective record keeping and monitoring, and acting on information gathered, are essential in order to measure effectiveness and plan progress

This document will be reviewed and updated to reflect changes in legislation that would require the Charity to amend its policy and procedures. As a minimum, it will be reviewed annually.