

Owner: Chief Executive Officer

Reviewed: April 2023

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At ReachOut we value every person as an individual, celebrate diversity and believe that embracing differences and enabling our staff to feel comfortable to be themselves creates an environment in which everyone can thrive. We recognise that there are strengths in diversity and want to support our staff to reach their full potential, so the talent and resources of our workforce are fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation
- 1.2 We are committed to working to achieve a more equitable, diverse and inclusive work and volunteer force that is representative of the communities we serve by ensuring EDI is embedded in our policies, practices and our individual behaviours, ensuring that our beneficiaries remain at the forefront of our thinking and decision making.
- 1.3 Our four Character Strengths of Fairness, Good Judgement, Self-Control and Staying Power are at the heart of what we do. We support our young people to develop these strengths and expect our staff and volunteers to lead by example in demonstrating them. We expect all our people to be accountable for equality, diversity and inclusion at ReachOut.
- 1.4 This policy sets out how we will treat all volunteers, employees, our beneficiaries and all other stakeholders with dignity, fairness and respect.
- 1.5 We are committed to ensuring that all of our staff, volunteers and beneficiaries are treated fairly without fear or prejudice regardless of race, age, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status, maternity or pregnancy status, caring responsibilities, social class, religion, belief and irrelevant offending background.

2. What is equality, diversity & inclusion?

- 2.1 **Equality** is about creating a fairer society, where everyone is treated with dignity, respect and without discrimination. It is about challenging the environments and processes that limit an individual's opportunities to succeed.
- 2.2 **Diversity** is the mix of individuals within society and the workplace. It is about recognising, understanding and valuing difference that individuals bring. By embracing these different experiences, skills, ideas, knowledge and abilities we can create an organisation that can

achieve the best possible outcomes and opportunities for our beneficiaries, staff *and* volunteers.

2.3 **Inclusion** is about taking deliberate action to create an environment and culture where everyone feels they belong, can participate and is valued for their contribution, experience and perspective. Everyone has a part to play in creating a welcoming and respectful organisation.

3. Purpose and aims

3.1 This policy sets out ReachOut's commitment to:

- (a) A ReachOut that is free from discrimination and prejudice.
- (b) Treat all people, regardless of their background, with dignity and respect – this includes: our people, those with whom we interact (e.g. our young people, delivery partners etc.) and other stakeholders.
- (c) Comply with UK equalities legislation and our other external obligations including: equality standards set by contracts, regulatory requirements, accreditations and good practice schemes.
- (d) Uphold the ReachOut Character Strengths in all activities
- (e) Create an environment where our staff feels able to have a diversity of thoughts and opinion, to challenge each other, expect a willingness to learn and an understanding that people can make mistakes
- (f) Make our people aware of their responsibilities, and know how and where to seek support to actively uphold and champion equality, diversity, and inclusion
- (g) Ensure that we attract and retain people from the widest possible diversity of backgrounds and experiences to and at all levels of the organisation.
- (h) Actively promote our opportunities to a wide range of diverse communities from all backgrounds to ensure are representatives of the communities we serve
- (i) Ensure robust diversity-related data collection to better understand our people and beneficiaries

3.2 This policy applies to:

- (a) This policy is applicable to all Trustees, staff, volunteers, beneficiaries and the general public.

Responsibilities

3.3 **The Board of Trustees** are responsible for championing equality, diversity and inclusion and ensuring that the policy is consistent with ReachOut's values and that resources, support and leadership is provided to ensure this policy can be meaningfully implemented.

3.4 **The Chief Executive Officer** is the policy owner and is responsible for ensuring that this policy is fit for purpose and up to date.

3.5 **The Senior Leadership Team** are responsible for championing this policy on behalf of the Board of Trustees and ensuring compliance with policy and the effective development, implementation and monitoring of equality and diversity objectives and related action.

3.6 **Managers** are responsible for implementing the policy and role modelling inclusive behaviour and providing support to their staff and volunteers.

3.7 **Our people** are responsible for championing equality, diversity and inclusion, understanding how the policy relates to their role, and reporting cases of discrimination, harassment, and unfair treatment, this includes reporting on cases that might be affecting someone else than yourself.

4. The Law

4.1 It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of a 'protected characteristic'. The Equality Act 2010 defines the protected characteristics as being age, disability, sex, gender identity, pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality, caste and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership.

4.2 Discrimination after employment may also be unlawful e.g. refusing to give a reference for a reason related to one of the protected characteristics.

4.3 It is also unlawful to discriminate against or harass a member of the public or service user in the provision of services or good or to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to using services caused by disability.

4.4 The duty to make reasonable adjustments includes the removal, adaptation or alteration of physical features, if the physical features make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of services. In addition, service providers have an obligation to think ahead and address any barriers that may impede disabled people from accessing a service.

5. Types of unlawful discrimination

5.1 **Perceptive discrimination** is **direct discrimination** against someone because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person doesn't actually possess that characteristic. An example is not being offered a promotion because you're perceived to be gay / lesbian / transgender. Discrimination may be lawful if there is an occupational requirement which core to a job role and proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

5.2 **Associative discrimination** is **direct discrimination** against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic. An example of associative discrimination is not getting promoted solely because you have a disabled child.

5.3 **Indirect discrimination:** a requirement that applies to everyone but adversely affects an individual or group of people with a particular Protected Characteristic more than others, and is not justified. It can occur when you have a condition, rule, policy or practice in your company that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic. An example would be to state that only employees

who work full-time are allowed to attend training courses. As more women than men work part-time this would stop more women than men getting training, and so put them at a disadvantage.

5.4 Victimization: this includes where a person is treated unfavourably because it is suspected or known that the other person has done or intends to do a protected act. Protected acts include bringing discrimination proceedings, giving evidence or information in connection with discrimination proceedings, making an allegation of unlawful discrimination, or doing anything else under, or by reference to, discrimination legislation. For example, this includes retaliation against someone who has complained or supported someone else's complaint about discrimination or harassment. You are not protected if you've maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint.

5.5 Harassment: where someone engages in unwanted conduct related to a Protected Characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating another person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the other person; this includes sexual harassment which occurs where a person engages in unwanted conduct of a sexual nature; and the conduct has the purpose or effect of either violating another person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the other person;

5.6 Failure to make reasonable adjustments: where a requirement places an employee with a disability at a substantial disadvantage compared to an employee without a disability, an employer is under an obligation to implement reasonable adjustments to ameliorate that disadvantage; and

5.7 Discrimination arising from a disability: this is treating someone unfavourably because of something arising in consequence of a disability. This is prohibited conduct unless the treatment is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

6. Recruitment and selection

6.1 Recruitment, promotion and other selection exercises such as redundancy selection will be conducted on the basis of merit, against objective criteria that avoid discrimination. Shortlisting should be done by more than one person if possible.

6.2 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.

6.3 Job applicants should not be asked questions which might suggest an intention to discriminate on grounds of a Protected Characteristic.

6.4 Job applicants should not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made, except in the very limited circumstances allowed by law. Where necessary, job offers can be made conditional on a satisfactory medical check. Health or disability questions may be included in equal opportunities monitoring forms, which must not be used for selection or decision-making purposes.

7. Disabilities

7.1 If you are disabled or become disabled, we encourage you to tell us about your condition so that we can consider what reasonable adjustments or support may be appropriate.

8. Part-time and fixed-term work

8.1 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.

9. Breaches of this policy

9.1 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.

9.2 4.6. If you believe that you have been discriminated against you should report this to your line manager or the Chief Executive Officer under the grievance procedure. If your complaint involves bullying or harassment, follow the bullying or harassment as set out in the Employee Handbook.

9.3 4.7. If you witness what you believe to be discrimination you should report this to your line manager or the Chief Executive Officer as soon as possible.

9.4 4.8. Employees can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, the organisation for any act of unlawful discrimination. Employees who commit serious acts of harassment may be guilty of a criminal offence. Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against employees or customers are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure. Discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal without notice.

9.5 Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. Staff who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False allegations which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

10. Monitoring and review

10.1 This policy will be monitored regularly to judge its effectiveness and will be updated in accordance with changes in the law.

10.2 The Senior Management Team will report to the Board of Trustees quarterly on actions undertaken and progress made to improve equality, diversity and inclusion.

10.3 Any information provided by job applicants, employees and volunteers for monitoring purposes will be used only for these purposes and will be dealt with in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

11. Our Key EDI Strategic Priorities for 2021-24

- 11.1 Work with our colleagues and beneficiaries from under-represented groups to inform good practice
- 11.2 Build a staff and volunteer force that is more representative of the communities we serve
- 11.3 Embed equality, diversity and inclusions in all ReachOut's activities through our policies, processes and organisational culture
- 11.4 The voice of young people - their views and experiences, to play a larger role in shaping our services and processes