

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

1. About this Policy

- 1.1. ReachOut is dedicated to promoting equal opportunities, reducing inequality and ensuring all people are treated with dignity and respect and is committed to ensuring that everyone will receive equal treatment regardless of and in respect of the protected characteristics; age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation; and will have a genuine and equal opportunity to participate in all aspects of the organisation. Our purpose is to transform the lives of young people facing disadvantage and ReachOut is committed to building an environment that celebrates equality, diversity and inclusion and tackles all forms of discrimination should they occur.
- 1.2. At ReachOut, we consider that equality means breaking down barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunities and access for all groups both in employment and to goods and services. We consider diversity to mean celebrating differences and valuing everyone. Each person is an individual with visible and non-visible differences and by respecting this everyone can feel valued for their contributions which is beneficial not only for the individual but for ReachOut too. We acknowledge that equality and diversity are not inter-changeable but interdependent. There can be no equality of opportunity if difference is not valued and harnessed.
- 1.3. ReachOut's EDI strategy goes beyond legal compliance and we take an intersectional approach to EDI, which will add value to our organisation, and contribute to the wellbeing and equality of outcomes and impact on all employees. Things we have considered include accent, age, caring responsibilities, colour, culture, visible and invisible disability, gender identity and expression, mental health, neurodiversity, physical appearance, political opinion, pregnancy and maternity/paternity and family status and socio-economic circumstances, amongst other personal characteristics and experiences.
- 1.4. This policy sets out our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion within ReachOut and the avoidance of all forms of discrimination. The commitment outlined in this policy covers all aspects of the organisation and it is expected that all employees, sessional staff, consultants, agency workers, parents/carers and volunteers who work on behalf of, represent or engage with ReachOut will adhere to the principles of this policy.
- 1.5. 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 ReachOut.

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 differences 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 ensure:
- 3.1.1. Ensure ReachOut is free from discrimination and prejudice;
 - 3.1.2. That we 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;
 - 3.1.3. That we comply with UK equalities legislation and our other external obligations including equality standards set by contracts, regulatory requirements, accreditations and good practice schemes;
 - 3.1.4. We uphold ReachOut values;
 - 3.1.5. We create an environment where our staff feels able to have diversity of thoughts and opinions, to challenge each other, expect a willingness to learn and an understanding that people can make mistakes;
 - 3.1.6. Our people are aware of their responsibilities, and know how and where to seek support to actively uphold and champion equality, diversity, and inclusion;
 - 3.1.7. That we attract and retain people from the widest possible diversity of backgrounds and experiences to and at all levels of ReachOut.
 - 3.1.8. We actively promote our opportunities to a wide range of diverse communities from all backgrounds to ensure are representatives of the communities we serve;
 - 3.1.9. Robust diversity-related data collection to better understand our people and beneficiaries.

4. Responsibilities

- 4.1. 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.
- 4.2. The Chief Executive Officer is the policy owner and is responsible for ensuring that this policy is fit for purpose and up to date.
- 4.3. 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.
- 4.4. Managers are responsible for implementing the policy and role modelling inclusive behaviour and providing support to their staff and volunteers.
- 4.5. 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 other than yourself.

5. The Law

- 5.1. 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.
- 5.2. Discrimination after employment may also be unlawful e.g. refusing to give a reference for a reason related to one of the protected characteristics.
- 5.3. 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.
- 5.4. 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.

6. Types of Discrimination

- 6.1. 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.
- 6.2. 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.
- 6.3. 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.
- 6.4. Victimisation: 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.
- 6.5. 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;
- 6.6. 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

6.7. 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.

7. Employment

7.1. As an employer, ReachOut will:

- 7.1.1. Create an environment where equality and diversity and inclusion is valued, dignity and respect is promoted and all forms of discrimination and inappropriate behaviour are challenged and dealt with through the appropriate disciplinary channels;
- 7.1.2. Continue to lead by example in the development, treatment and consideration of its employees, sessional staff, volunteers and young people and their diverse needs;
- 7.1.3. Operate an open and fair recruitment and selection process and encourage inclusive application processes for all groups in the community; advertisements will avoid stereotyping and wording that may discourage applications. Adverts for positions should include a short policy statement on equal opportunities and a copy of this policy will be made available on request;
- 7.1.4. Ensure selection for employment, promotion, redundancy, training or other benefits will be on the basis of aptitude and ability and against objective criteria that avoids discrimination;
- 7.1.5. Empower our staff and ensure that the pathways into leadership positions are open to all;
- 7.1.6. Require all existing and new employees and volunteers to attend regular equality and diversity training and provide additional and appropriate training and guidance to employees and volunteers in fulfilling their role and responsibilities;
- 7.1.7. Provide training to managers to enable them to recognise and challenge unlawful practices and deal effectively with complaints of bullying and harassment;
- 7.1.8. Regularly review policies and procedures to ensure they are in line with best practice and all legal requirements.

7.2. As an Organisation ReachOut:

- 7.2.1. Aims to create an environment in which everyone is respected and valued for the diversity and individuality they bring;
- 7.2.2. Will not tolerate or allow to go unchallenged any form of discrimination, harassment and bullying by any individual towards other individuals whilst engaged in any ReachOut activities;
- 7.2.3. Reserves the right to withdraw their services if anyone they are working with participates in discriminatory behaviour. This decision will only be taken after a full investigation in the circumstances;
- 7.2.4. Fully support employees who speak out about discriminatory behaviour they have witnessed or experienced through reporting;

7.3. ReachOut expects everyone involved in activity connected to ReachOut, including those who advocate our work to:

- 7.3.1. Fully adopt and embrace the ethos of equity and diversity as outlined in this policy;

- 7.3.2. Be respectful of all others and not discriminate, bully, harass or victimise anyone;
- 7.3.3. Respect individual difference based on any characteristic;
- 7.3.4. Challenge, where appropriate, and report all forms of discrimination, bullying, harassment and victimisation to the Senior Management Team and assist in any investigation and provide accurate unbiased information.

8. Breaches of this Policy

- 8.1. ReachOut takes a strict approach to all cases of harassment, bullying, discriminations and victimisation. Any employee, consultant or volunteer who works on behalf of, represents or engages with ReachOut who displays any behaviour which is contrary to this policy or its intent will be subjected to the appropriate disciplinary procedure.
- 8.2. ReachOut regards discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation as gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal without notice. All complaints will be taken seriously and appropriate measures including disciplinary action may be brought against any individual who unlawfully discriminates against, harasses, bullies or victimises any other person.
- 8.3. Any individual may raise a complaint and no employee will be treated unfavourably for raising a case of discrimination; however, making a false allegation deliberately and in bad faith will be treated as misconduct.
- 8.4. 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 Anti-Harassment & Bullying policy.
- 8.5. 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. Monitoring & Review

- 9.1. This policy will be monitored regularly to judge its effectiveness and will be updated in accordance with changes in the law.
- 9.2. The Senior Management Team will report to the Board of Trustees annually on actions undertaken and progress made to improve equality, diversity and inclusion.
- 9.3. 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 UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Signed	
Name	Simon Hepburn
Title	Chair of Trustees
Date	17 th January 2024
Updated	17 th January 2024
Next Review	January 2026