

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Purpose

This policy sets out our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion. It explains what this means in principle and in practice, and why we think this is important.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees as well as to casual workers, agency staff, contractors, suppliers, volunteers and service users, and they have a responsibility to behave in a way that promotes an inclusive environment in our organisation.

This policy is non-contractual and hyh reserves the right to update and change policies in line with employment law updates and company practice.

Definitions

- Equity: Ensuring fair treatment, opportunities, and advancement while striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups.
- Equality: Ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents.
- Diversity: Recognizing, respecting, and valuing differences in individuals.
- Inclusion: Creating an environment where everyone feels welcomed, respected, and valued.
- Discrimination: Unequal or different treatment which leads to one person being treated more or less favourably than others are, or would be, treated in the same or similar circumstances. It is unlawful if the less favourable treatment is on the grounds of a protected characteristic.

Our strategic intent

We are committed to fostering an inclusive environment where everyone (young people and their families, hyh staff and volunteers and our external partners) is treated equitably, fairly, and with dignity and respect. We do this because it makes us a better, more effective charity. Our goal is to eliminate discrimination and promote diversity in all aspects of our organisation, ensuring that everyone has equal opportunities to succeed. We aim to make our services as accessible and responsive as possible to all existing and potential service users and to provide services that recognise and respect their differences.

Principles

- We believe that having a team with a diverse set of backgrounds, experiences and skills, working in a truly inclusive culture makes us a more effective organisation that can best meet the needs of the young people we work with.
- We value the diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences of our employees, volunteers and service users.
- We provide a welcoming, kind and supportive environment where everyone feels a sense of belonging, can bring their whole self to work and can use their talents fully.
- We provide an inclusive, open environment which aligns with our values and in which every member of the team is treated fairly and with dignity and respect.
- We do not tolerate any forms of discrimination, harassment, or bullying, including when it is based on a protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation).
- We provide all employees with equal access to opportunities for growth and advancement.

Responsibilities of Herts Young Homeless

1. Creating an inclusive environment

The actions we take to increase the effectiveness of this policy are:

- providing training and communications to raise awareness and understanding of equity, diversity and inclusion, to show their impact on the business and individuals
- ensuring that decisions on recruitment, access to training and promotion are based on ability only
- regularly reviewing our employment policies to ensure that people are treated fairly, equitably and consistently with their skills and abilities
- developing patterns of work which are consistent with the ability to maintain an appropriate work-life balance
- reviewing working arrangements to ensure that they do not restrict the opportunity for employment or career progression of members of minoritised groups
- monitoring the composition of our workforce to provide us with robust data to evaluate the effect of our policies

- routinely monitoring all actions under the grievance and disciplinary procedures by gender, race, disability, age and any other criteria we deem to be appropriate
- providing employees who believe they have been treated in any way contrary to this policy with the opportunity to raise and resolve issues.

2. Recruitment and Promotion

We take the following measures to ensure that we recruit and promote a diverse team

- Inclusive Job Adverts: Job adverts should be free from bias and encourage applications from all qualified individuals. We use inclusive language and highlight our commitment to diversity.
- Diverse Sourcing Channels: We aim to advertise job openings on platforms that reach diverse audiences and partner with organisations that support under-represented communities.
- Share career based interview questions in advance of the interview for all candidates where it is deemed appropriate.
- In the case of recruitment day events, a schedule of the order of the day along with any useful information is shared with candidates.
- Bias-Free Selection Process: Structured interviews and diverse interview panels are used to minimize bias. Hiring managers are trained on unconscious bias and inclusive hiring practices.
- Transparent Criteria: Selection criteria are based on job-related competencies and regularly reviewed to avoid outdated requirements.
- Positive Action: We actively encourage applications from under-represented groups and consider positive action measures where appropriate.
- Engage Communities: we aim to build strong relationships with diverse communities and stakeholders to drive positive social impact and innovation in the way we work with service users and attract candidates from all backgrounds.

3. Training and Development

We are dedicated to ensuring equal access to training opportunities to enhance employees' knowledge and skills, providing them with the means to develop their potential. All employees are encouraged to regularly discuss their career prospects and training needs with their manager. Opportunities for promotion and training will be communicated and made available to everyone on a fair and equal basis.

We review the provision of training to ensure that part-time workers, shift or remote workers, and those returning to work after a break can benefit from training. Our policy is to avoid unfair discrimination in the provision of training, with no age limits for entry to training or development schemes, which are open to all employees.

To achieve this, we:

- Continuously review and update training courses and literature.
- Ensure training materials are free from bias and do not discriminate, for example, by avoiding the portrayal of minority groups or disabled people in lower-skilled roles only.
- Ensure promotion and transfer criteria are justifiable.
- Ensure assessment criteria are clear and unbiased.
- Ensure staff conducting appraisal interviews, salary reviews, and bonus reviews are aware of their obligations to carry these out fairly and consistently in line with this policy.

Appropriate training will be provided to enable staff to perform their jobs effectively.

4. Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity recognises and respects the diverse range of neurological differences among individuals, including conditions such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and more.

Embracing neurodiversity within our Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) policy means fostering an environment where all employees feel valued and supported, regardless of their neurological makeup.

To achieve this we

- Implement inclusive practices,
- Discuss and provide necessary accommodations where possible,
- Promote awareness and understanding of neurodiverse conditions,
- Create and encourage an open, honest and safe culture to support everyone to be their best in the workplace.

By championing neurodiversity, we aim to create a workplace that celebrates unique perspectives and talents, ultimately driving innovation and collaboration.

5. Disability Inclusion and Access

hyh is committed to fostering an inclusive environment where individuals with disabilities are valued and empowered. We recognize the unique contributions that people with disabilities bring to our workplace and are dedicated to ensuring equal opportunities for all.

Accessibility

We strive to create a barrier-free environment by ensuring that our facilities, services, and digital platforms are accessible to everyone. This includes:

- **Physical Accessibility:** Where possible ensuring that our office and workspaces are equipped with ramps, accessible toilet facilities, and other necessary modifications.
- **Digital Accessibility:** Where possible adhering to web accessibility standards to make our online content and tools usable by people with various disabilities.
- **Communication Accessibility:** Where possible providing alternative formats and communication aids, such as sign language interpreters, captioning, and assistive listening devices.

Reasonable Accommodations

We are committed to providing reasonable accommodations to employees and applicants with disabilities. This includes:

- **Workplace Adjustments:** Modifying workstations, providing assistive technology, and adjusting work schedules to meet individual needs.
- **Support Services:** Offering job coaching, mentoring, and other support services to help employees with disabilities succeed in their roles.

Training and Awareness

We believe that education is key to fostering an inclusive culture. Therefore we:

- **Conduct Regular Training:** Provide training for all employees on disability awareness, inclusion, and accessibility best practices.
- **Promote Awareness:** Encourage open dialogue and understanding about disabilities through workshops, seminars, and awareness campaigns.

Feedback and Continuous Improvement

We are committed to continuous improvement in our disability inclusion efforts. Therefore we:

- **Encourage Feedback:** Provide channels for employees and stakeholders to give feedback on our accessibility and inclusion practices.
- **Review and Update Policies:** Regularly review and update our policies and practices to ensure they meet the evolving needs of our workforce and comply with legal requirements.

6. References

We will not discriminate against individuals who have left our organisation, including in relation to the provision of references, which will be based on accurate, factual information.

7. Retirement

We have no fixed retirement age and anyone who wishes to work beyond State Pension Age may choose to do so.

8. Positive action

We recognise that passive policies will not reverse the discrimination experienced by many groups of people. To this end, if certain groups are under-represented within our organisation, we may actively seek to encourage applications from those groups.

9. Terms and Conditions of Employment

We ensure that all our employment policies, including compensation, benefits, and any other relevant issues associated with terms and conditions of employment, are formulated and applied to eliminate or minimise any discrimination based on protected characteristics or any other characteristic unrelated to job performance. They will be regularly reviewed to ensure they are free from discrimination and align with up to date legislation including the Equality Act 2010.

These policies will be regularly reviewed to ensure they remain free from discrimination. Length of service as a qualifying criterion for additional or improved benefits will not exceed five years unless clearly justifiable.

All employees will receive fair and equitable benefits. We recognise the benefits of helping our employees balance the responsibilities of their work and private lives.

10. Complaints Procedure

We do not tolerate any form of harassment, discrimination or bullying. We recognise that making a complaint can be difficult and stressful. Sometimes the complainant simply wants the conduct or behaviour to stop and sometimes they want stronger action to be taken and therefore to take account of this we offer various routes of action to find a solution.

Any individual who feels that he/she has been subjected to bullying, or harassment should refer to our bullying and harassment policy. Equally, anyone who witnesses incidents of bullying or harassment should report this to his/her manager or an appropriate senior member of staff.

Employees who believe they have been discriminated against should bring this to their line manager's attention as soon as possible. Where this isn't appropriate employees should notify the HR team. In the first instance, they 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 grievance procedure.

An employee who, in good faith, brings a complaint of discrimination will not be victimised or less favourably treated as a result. (However, false allegations that are found to have been made in bad faith will be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure.)

We are dedicated to supporting employees who raise concerns and actively seek feedback through regular pulse surveys and one-on-one discussions.

11. Responsibilities

- **The Chief Executive Officer**

- has overall accountability for ensuring that EDI is fully integrated into the charity's processes and ways of working;
- is responsible for actively promoting the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion within the organisation; and
- will lead by example and address any issues swiftly and decisively, setting the tone for the attitudes and behaviours of all employees.

- **All people managers**

- are responsible for implementing and upholding this policy within their teams and departments;
- will ensure fair treatment of all individuals in their team and that all decisions related to recruitment, selection, training and work allocation are non-discriminatory;
- will support and provide guidance to employees who raise concerns about discrimination and harassment and take swift action in any instances of discrimination and harassment claims; and
- will create a supportive and inclusive work environment where all employees feel valued and respected.

- **All members of the hyh team:**

- should actively support and promote the principles of this policy;
- are required to read and understand the EDI policy ensuring they understand their responsibilities and the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion;
- should always adhere to the EDI policy in all aspects of their work, including interactions with colleagues, service users, and external partners;

- should treat all colleagues, clients, and stakeholders with respect and dignity, regardless of their background or identity; and
- work collaboratively with colleagues from diverse backgrounds, valuing and respecting different perspectives and experiences.

12. Related Policies and Documents

- 4.07 Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment Policy
- 4.05 Disciplinary Policy
- Equal Opportunity Monitoring Form
- 4.06 Grievance Policy
- 4.00 Recruitment and Selection Policy
- 4.04 Training and Development Policy
- 4.09 Whistleblowing Policy