

# Equal Opportunities, Diversity & Inclusion Policy (Employees, Workers & Volunteers)

Her Way Forward (CIC)

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## 1. Policy Statement

Her Way Forward is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion (*EDI*). We will promote a working and volunteering environment and deliver community services where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, and where unlawful discrimination is not tolerated.

We aim for our workforce (*including volunteers*) to be inclusive and representative, and for people who engage with our services to feel safe, welcomed and supported.

## 2. Purpose

This policy sets out how we will:

- Provide equality, fairness and respect in recruitment, employment, volunteering and service delivery.
- Comply with the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant UK law.
- Prevent and address unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation.
- Make reasonable adjustments for disabled people and others who need support to participate.
- Monitor practice and continuously improve.

## 3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All employees, workers and casual staff
- All volunteers (*including sessional and community volunteers*)
- Directors/Board members (*in their governance role*)
- Job applicants
- Contractors/consultants working on our behalf (*where relevant to conduct*)
- Third parties interacting with our organisation (*service users/participants, suppliers, visitors*)

**Note on protected characteristics:** The Equality Act 2010 protects people from unlawful discrimination because of protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership (**employment-related protection**)
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race (*including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origins*)
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

#### 4. Key Definitions

- **Discrimination:** Unfair treatment because of a protected characteristic (*including direct, indirect, discrimination arising from disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments*).
- **Harassment:** Unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that violates dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.
- **Victimisation:** Detrimental treatment because someone has made, supported, or intends to make a complaint under this policy (*or related processes*).
- **Bullying:** Offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour (*not necessarily linked to a protected characteristic, but still prohibited*).

#### 5. Our Commitments

We will:

1. **Recruit fairly and inclusively** using consistent selection criteria based on role requirements.
2. **Provide a safe environment** free from discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation.
3. **Train and brief** staff, volunteers and Board members so they understand expected conduct and responsibilities.
4. **Make decisions on merit** (*skills, experience, performance and organisational need*), except where lawful and proportionate steps are taken under the Equality Act (*see Section 7*).
5. **Deliver accessible services** by removing barriers and meeting support needs where reasonably practicable.
6. **Respond promptly and fairly** to concerns, complaints and breaches.

#### 6. Responsibilities & Accountability

##### Board of Directors (*Policy Owner*)

- Has overall accountability for this policy and its annual review.
- Ensures appropriate resources for implementation, training and safe reporting routes.

- Receives anonymised monitoring and learning reports.

#### **Director/CEO/Operational Lead (or delegated EDI Lead)**

- Implements the policy day-to-day.
- Ensures managers and volunteer leads apply fair processes.
- Oversees investigations, outcomes and organisational learning.

#### **Managers / Volunteer Leads / Session Leads**

- Model inclusive behaviour and intervene early where issues arise.
- Ensure fair allocation of opportunities (*shifts, training, progression, leadership roles*).
- Support reasonable adjustments in work/volunteering and service settings.

#### **All Staff, Volunteers, Contractors**

- Treat others with dignity and respect.
- Follow this policy, report concerns, and cooperate with investigations.

### **7. Lawful Targeting, Positive Action & Service Design (Important for Our Mission)**

Her Way Forward's community programmes are designed to improve the wellbeing of **Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) women** in Wandsworth. We may take **lawful and proportionate** steps to address disadvantage, unmet need, and under-representation.

This may include (*where appropriate*):

- **Targeted outreach and engagement** to improve access for groups facing specific health inequalities.
- **Culturally responsive provision** (*e.g., language support, women-led spaces, faith-sensitive delivery*).
- **Positive action in recruitment/volunteering** that is permitted by law, such as encouraging applications from under-represented groups, and (*where lawful*) using a "tie-break" approach when candidates are genuinely of equal merit.

Where we offer women-only or separate spaces, we will ensure this is **lawful, justified, and proportionate**, and we will seek advice where needed. Where someone falls outside eligibility for a particular programme, we will aim to **signpost** to appropriate alternatives where possible.

### **8. Reasonable Adjustments & Accessibility**

We will make **reasonable adjustments** to remove barriers for disabled people and others with support needs, including:

#### **Recruitment & Selection**

- Alternative formats for application materials
- Accessible interview arrangements (*e.g., step-free access, remote interview, additional time*)
- Adjustments to assessment methods where reasonable

## **Employment & Volunteering**

- Adjusted duties or schedules where feasible
- Additional supervision/support, buddying, or phased onboarding
- Accessible equipment/communications where needed

## **Service Delivery**

- Accessible venues where reasonably practicable
- Inclusive communications (*e.g., plain English, translated materials when feasible*)
- Options to share support needs confidentially in advance
- Clear routes to request adjustments for classes/workshops

Requests for adjustments will be handled sensitively and confidentially, and we will not disadvantage anyone for asking.

## **9. Complaints, Reporting & Procedure**

We take concerns seriously and will handle them promptly, fairly and confidentially.

### **9.1 Reporting routes**

You can report concerns to:

- Your line manager / volunteer lead (*where appropriate*), **or**
- The operational lead/EDI lead, **or**
- A Board-designated contact (*especially if the concern involves senior staff*)

### **9.2 Informal resolution (*where appropriate*)**

Where safe and suitable, we may attempt an early/informal resolution (*e.g., facilitated conversation, mediation, agreed boundaries*). Informal steps are optional and will not prevent access to formal processes.

### **9.3 Formal process (*timescales*)**

- **Acknowledgement:** within **5 working days**
- **Initial assessment:** confirm the process and investigator within **10 working days**
- **Investigation and outcome:** aim to conclude within **20 working days** (*or update regularly where complex*)

- **Right to be accompanied:** employees may be accompanied in line with organisational procedures; volunteers may request a support person where appropriate.

If the allegation involves a safeguarding issue, we will follow safeguarding procedures immediately.

#### **9.4 Protection from victimisation**

No one will be treated unfavourably for raising a concern in good faith, supporting a complaint, or participating in an investigation.

#### **9.5 Outcomes and action**

Breaches may result in action up to and including:

- Management action, training or supervision measures
- Formal warnings or (*for employees*) disciplinary action in line with our disciplinary procedure
- Ending a volunteer arrangement (*for volunteers*) where appropriate and proportionate
- Removing contractors from our work where contractually possible

All decisions will be made following a fair process and consistent with applicable procedures.

### **10. Third-Party Conduct (*Service Users, Participants, Suppliers, Visitors*)**

We do not tolerate discriminatory, harassing, bullying or abusive behaviour towards our staff, volunteers, participants, or partners by any third party.

We may take appropriate action such as:

- Setting behavioural expectations and boundaries
- Issuing warnings
- Ending a booking/participation arrangement
- Restricting access to premises or services (*where lawful and proportionate*)
- Reporting to relevant authorities if required

### **11. Monitoring, Learning & Data Protection**

We will monitor this policy's effectiveness and identify barriers or patterns in:

- Recruitment and selection outcomes
- Training participation
- Complaints and outcomes (*anonymised*)
- Service participation and feedback (*where relevant and appropriate*)

Where we collect equality monitoring information, it will be:

- **Voluntary** (*where applicable*)
- Used only for legitimate purposes (*improving fairness/access*)
- Stored securely and accessed on a need-to-know basis
- Handled in line with data protection requirements and our privacy practices

We will use learning from monitoring to improve practice, training and service design.

## 12. Review & Related Policies

This policy will be reviewed **annually** (*or sooner if the law, organisational structure, or community needs change*).

Related documents (*as applicable*):

- Grievance Procedure
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Volunteer Handbook / Volunteer Problem-Solving Procedure
- Safeguarding Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy (*Service Users/Participants*)
- Data Protection / Privacy Policy

## 13. Policy Details

Feature	Details
<b>Policy Owner</b>	Board of Directors
<b>Operational Lead</b>	Shannon Lee/Director
<b>Board Contact (<i>Escalation Route</i>)</b>	Nasiya Vorajee/Director/info@herwayforward.co.uk

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### **CIC Note (*for governance and reporting*)**

Actions taken under this policy (*e.g., inclusive outreach, accessibility improvements, staff/volunteer training, and service-user feedback outcomes*) can be summarised in the annual **CIC34** report as evidence of community benefit and responsible organisational practice.