**Equal Opportunities Policy**

**Policy statement**

1. The Acorn Centre recognises that discrimination and victimisation is unacceptable and that it is in the interests of the Centre and its volunteers to utilise the skills of the total workforce. It is the aim of the Centre to ensure that no volunteer or applicant receives less favourable facilities or treatment (either directly or indirectly) in recruitment or employment on grounds of age, disability, gender / gender reassignment, marriage / civil partnership, pregnancy / maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation (the **protected characteristics**).
2. Our aim is that our volunteers will be truly representative of all sections of society and each employee feels respected and able to give of their best.
3. We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination or victimisation. To that end the purpose of this policy is to provide equality and fairness for all in our employment.
4. All volunteers, whether part-time, or temporary, will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, training or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. All volunteers will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
5. Our staff will not discriminate directly or indirectly, or harass customers or clients because of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation in the provision of the Company’s goods and services.
6. This policy and the associated arrangements shall operate in accordance with statutory requirements.

**Our Commitment**

* To create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all our volunteers are recognised and valued.
* Every employee is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.
* Training, development and progression opportunities are available to all staff.
* To promote equality in the workplace which we believe is good management practice and makes sound business sense.
* We will review all our volunteers’ practices and procedures to ensure fairness.
* Breaches of our equality policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

**Responsibilities of management**

Responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation and operation of the arrangements will rest with the Trustees. The Centre Coordinator will ensure that they and the volunteers operate within this policy and arrangements, and that all reasonable and practical steps are taken to avoid discrimination.

**Responsibilities of staff**

Responsibility for ensuring that there is no unlawful discrimination rests with all volunteers and the attitudes of volunteers are crucial to the successful operation of fair volunteer practices. In particular, all volunteers should:

* comply with the policy and arrangements;
* not discriminate in their day to day activities or induce others to do so;
* not victimise, harass or intimidate other volunteers or groups who have, or are perceived to have one of the protected characteristics.
* ensure no individual is discriminated against or harassed because of their association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.
* inform the Trustees if they become aware of any discriminatory practice.

**Third parties**

Third-party harassment occurs where the centres’ volunteer is harassed, and the harassment is related to a protected characteristic, by third parties such as clients or customers. The Acorn Centre will not tolerate such actions against its volunteers, and the volunteer concerned should inform the Trustees at once that this has occurred. The Acorn Centre will fully investigate and take all reasonable steps to ensure such harassment does not happen again.

**Rights of People with a Disability**

The Acorn Centre attaches particular importance to the needs of people with a disability.

Under the terms of this policy, the trustees are required to:

* Make reasonable adjustment to maintain the services of a volunteer who becomes disabled, for example: training, provision of special equipment, reduced working hours.
* Give full and proper consideration to people with a disability who apply for volunteer placements, having regard to making reasonable adjustments for their particular aptitudes and abilities to allow them to be able to do the job.

**Monitoring**

The Acorn Centre will regularly evaluate its services in light of the Equal Opportunities Policy.

**Grievances/discipline**

Volunteers have a right to pursue a complaint concerning discrimination or victimisation via the Acorn Centre Grievance or Harassment Procedures.

Discrimination and victimisation will be treated as disciplinary offences, and they will be dealt with under The Acorn Centres Disciplinary Procedure.

**Policy date: October 2018**

**Last Review: February 2022**

**Next Review: February 2023**