



# Equality & Diversity Policy

WE ARE COMMITTED TO REVIEWING OUR POLICY AND GOOD PRACTICE REGULARLY. THIS POLICY WAS LAST REVIEWED ON:

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## 1 Aims

Acacia Dreams is open to anyone who needs it. Our aim is to provide a support group that is open, friendly and non-judgemental. In particular, we aim to treat every member equally, regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

We must comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. As a group this means that we must treat everyone fairly and not discriminate in our workforce activities, group activities, for example, in recruiting staff, working with members or in how we work together. For us being a fair organisation goes beyond meeting our legal obligations. It's about treating everyone fairly and with dignity and respect. In fact, treating everyone fairly, being respectful, and striving to be open and transparent, are all part of our organisational values.

## 2 Who is this policy for?

This policy covers all employees, prospective employees, volunteers, members or professional affiliate. The policy applies to all aspects of engagement, from recruitment and selection through to termination of engagement.

## 3 What is the Equality Act 2010?

The Equality Act 2010 protects nine groups of people from unlawful discrimination. These groups are known as 'protected characteristics'. They are:

- age
- disability
- sexual orientation
- religion and belief
- race
- sex
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity

The law means that no employee, potential employee, professional affiliate, volunteer or member can be treated less favourably on the grounds of a 'protected characteristic'.

## 4 What are our responsibilities as an organisation?

As an organisation we are committed to:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation or any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not share it.
- Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Creating an environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.
- Making sure that our policies and procedures comply with employment and equality legislation.
- Evaluating the impact of our policies, services and functions and making changes to them where they impact unfairly or adversely on any group(s).
- Making sure that selection for employment, engagement, promotion, training or any other benefit is on the basis of merit and ability.
- Making reasonable adjustments for disabled staff, affiliates, volunteers and members.
- Creating an environment in which individual differences and contributions are recognised and valued.
- Taking seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities. Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under our grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and any appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to appropriate action. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

## 5 Accessibility

Our monthly meetings are held in St Denys Community Centre which is accessible to wheelchair users. All meetings are open and anyone who needs a carer or support is welcome to bring them. We are committed to ensuring anyone is able to attend our activities, so we will reassess our access requirements to meet the needs of new group participants.

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.

## 6 Inclusion and respect

Every participant in the Acacia Dreams Support Group should be made to feel equally welcome and included at all Acacia Dreams meetings and events. We expect everyone that

is a member, affiliate, volunteer, facilitator to be respectful and to make people feel included. Any offensive and inflammatory remarks and behaviour are not acceptable. We do not tolerate any form of discrimination.

## 7 Dealing with discrimination and harassment

If anyone feels that they have been discriminated against by Acacia Dreams or harassed by anyone at any events that are held or associated with Acacia Dreams they should raise this with the group facilitators. The facilitators will investigate the complaint, listening to all members involved. (If the complaint is against a facilitator, that facilitator will not be part of conducting the investigation).

If the complaint is against a particular individual, this person will have the opportunity to express their point of view, accompanied by a friend. The person making the complaint will also have this opportunity.

If the complaint is against Acacia Dreams as a whole, we will engage with an external company to mediate and review the complaint. Acacia Dreams must work to ensure that such discrimination is not repeated in the future, the recommendations from the external company are adhered to and must inform the members of future actions.

Any decision to exclude a person from the organisation due to discriminatory or harassing behaviour will be made with reference to Acacia Dreams' policy. Acacia Dreams will support people who feel they have been harassed or discriminated against, and will not victimise or treat them less favourably because they have raised this. Appropriate guidance and support from external companies will be provided as much as possible.

Acacia Dreams reserves the right to refuse to work with anyone if they are in breach of the above policy. If required, relevant services will be informed.

## 8 Glossary of terminology

Here is an explanation of some of the common equality and diversity terms that you may come across. These are listed in alphabetical order.

### 8.1 Advancing equality of opportunity

Involves considering the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages that people suffer because of their protected characteristics
- meet the needs of people who have protected characteristics
- encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where participation is low.

### 8.2 Age

A person of a particular age (for example, 32 years), or from a specific age group (for example, 18–30 years).

### 8.3 Associated discrimination

Discriminating against someone who does not have a protected characteristic because of their association with someone who does – for example, the parent of a disabled child.

### 8.4 Direct discrimination

Less favourable treatment of a person compared with another person because of a protected characteristic.

### 8.5 Disability

The law says that a person has a disability 'if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. 'Substantial' is more than minor or trivial (for example, it takes much longer than it usually would to complete a daily task like getting dressed). 'Long-term' means 12 months or more, (for example, a breathing condition that develops as a result of a lung infection). HIV, Cancer and Multiple Sclerosis are covered from the point that they are diagnosed.

### 8.6 Diversity

Recognising, respecting and valuing the differences that everyone has, as well as leveraging the opportunities that different people bring to the work that we do.

### 8.7 Equality

Challenging discrimination, removing barriers faced by people from different groups, and creating a fairer society where everyone can participate and has the same opportunities to

fulfil their potential. Equality is not about giving preferential treatment to some people when they are applying for jobs, or lowering the standards that they have to meet.

### 8.8 Fairness

'Fairness' for us means conforming with rules and standards, making judgements that are free from bias, discrimination and dishonesty, and being just to everyone.

### 8.9 Fostering good relations

Involves tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people who share a protected characteristic and others.

### 8.10 Gender or sex

A male or female adult or child. In our organisation we recognise non-binary and intersex Gender as well.

### 8.11 Gender reassignment

The process of transitioning from one gender to another. The law does not require a person to undergo a medical procedure to be recognised as transsexual.

### 8.12 Harassment

Unwanted behaviour that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or that creates a degrading, humiliating, hostile, intimidating or offensive environment.

### 8.13 Indirect discrimination

Discrimination that occurs when a provision, criteria or practice is applied that creates disproportionate disadvantage for a person with a protected characteristic compared with those who do not share that characteristic.

### 8.14 Marriage or civil partnership

In England and Wales, marriage is no longer restricted to a union between a man and a woman, but now includes a marriage between a same sex couple. Same-sex couples can have their relationships legally recognised as civil partnerships. Civil partners must be treated the same as married couples on a wide range of legal matters.

### 8.15 Perceived discrimination

Discriminating against a person in the belief that they have a protected characteristic, whether or not they do have it.

### 8.16 Positive action

A range of lawful actions that seek to overcome or minimise disadvantages (for example, in employment opportunities) that people who share a protected characteristic have experienced, or to meet their different needs.

### 8.16 Positive discrimination

Treating someone with a protected characteristic more favourably because you think they have been discriminated against in the past. It is generally not lawful with the exception of

the duty to make reasonable adjustments, where treating a disabled person more favourably may be required by law.

### 8.17 Pregnancy and maternity

A woman is protected against discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity during the period of her pregnancy and any statutory maternity leave that she is entitled to. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

### 8.18 Protected characteristics

The legal term for the nine grounds on which discrimination is unlawful, as listed in the Equality Act 2010.

### 8.19 Race or ethnicity

Refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins.

### 8.20 Reasonable adjustment

Where a disabled person is at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with people who are not disabled, there is a duty to take reasonable steps to remove that disadvantage. In other words the employer has to make a 'reasonable adjustment'.

### 8.21 Religion and belief

Belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs, including lack of belief (for example atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

### 8.22 Sexual orientation

This refers to whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex, both sexes or asexuality.

### 8.23 Vicarious liability

The legal basis whereby an organisation may become legally liable for the acts of its employees. This can apply even where the organisation had no knowledge of the acts and where, if it had been aware, it would disapprove or have disapproved of the acts in question.

### 8.24 Victimisation

Subjecting a person to a detriment because they have done a 'protected act' or there is a belief that they have done a 'protected act'. A 'protected act' could include making a claim or complaint of discrimination under the Equality Act 2010, or helping someone else to make a claim by giving evidence or information.