Equality and Diversity Policy

Approved by Trustees: 30th January 2024
Next review date: January 2027

Hope's Place is committed to safeguarding, child protection and promoting the wellbeing of all children, young people and members of the Hope's Place community.

Hope's Place is committed to encouraging equality and diversity and eliminating unlawful discrimination among facilitators, trustees and the young people we support.

The aim is for our facilitators and trustees to be truly representative of all sections of society and for each Hope's Place team member, and the young people we support, to feel respected and able to give of their best.

Hope's Place is committed against unlawful discrimination of facilitators, trustees, young people and the public.

This policy is closely linked with the Dignity at Work policy and takes in to account changes under the Equality Act 2010.

The 'protected characteristics' which qualify for protection from discrimination under the act include:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The policy's purpose is to:

- Provide equality, fairness and respect for all in our employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time, and for all young people supported by Hope's Place.

- Oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination of 'protected characteristics' and, in addition, discrimination in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities.

Hope's Place commits to:

- Encouraging equality and diversity in the workplace;

- Creating an environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination;

- Promoting dignity and respect for all;

- An environment where individual differences and the contributions of all are recognised and valued.

These commitments include training of trustees and facilitators about their rights and responsibilities under the equality policy. Responsibilities include all conducting themselves to help Hope's Place provide equal opportunities in employment and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

All trustees and facilitators should understand they can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination against fellow Hope's Place team members, school staff, young people and/or the public

- Taking seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by trustees, facilitators, school staff or young people, the public and any others in the course of the Hope's Place work activities. Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under Hope's Place's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and any appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

Sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. 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.

- Making opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of Hope's Place;

- Decisions concerning staff being based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act);

- Reviewing employment practices and procedures to ensure fairness, and updating them and the policy to take account of changes in the law;

- Monitoring the make-up of the trustees and facilitators regarding characteristics such as age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability.

Monitoring will also include assessing how the Equality and Diversity Policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice by reviewing them biennially, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

The Equality and Diversity Policy is fully supported by trustees and has been agreed with facilitators.

Details of the Hope's Place grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures can be found in the Hope's Place Employment Handbook. This includes with whom an employee should raise a grievance.

Use of the Hope's Place grievance and/or disciplinary procedures does not affect an employee's right to make a claim to an employment tribunal within three months of any alleged discrimination.

Recruitment

Hope's Place recruitment policy and procedure together provide a fair and equitable process for recruiting. Hope's Place will follow the policy and procedure to ensure that appointments are based on:

- Candidates' ability to do the job (based on skills, experience and knowledge)
- Equality of opportunity
- current legislation

Professional Development
Access to training and development will be related to the needs of the role, the available resources and by an assessment of the individual's needs.

Equal Pay
The Equality Act 2010 states that men and women doing equal work, rated as equivalent or work of equal value are entitled to equal pay (unless there is a material factor which is not gender related that means that they should be paid differently). Hope's Place commits to acting in line with equal pay guidance.

Types of Discrimination
Direct discrimination - Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic.
Indirect discrimination can occur when you have a provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic and you cannot objectively justify that practice.
Discrimination by association - This is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.
Perception discrimination - This is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic.
Harassment - Harassment is "unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual." Individuals are able to complain of behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at them, and the complainant need not possess the relevant characteristic themselves.
Victimisation - Victimisation occurs when an individual is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act; or because they are suspected of doing so.

Related policies and procedures
Hope's Place Grievance Policy (Employment Handbook)
Hope's Place Disciplinary procedures (Employment Handbook)
Hope's Place Complaints Policy

Appendix A

Statement on Gender Identity

Hope's Place aims to create a safe, inclusive and supportive environment for all young people; an environment free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation in which everyone is treated with respect.

Hope's Place recognises that individuals can identify with a range of gender identities and that gender identity may or may not be associated with the sex assigned at birth. Hope's Place strives to be responsive to each young person's needs, enabling them to live in the manner consistent with their gender identity and understands that it is the right of the individual to decide whether they wish to share information about their gender identity.

Young people's access to Hope's Place courses is decided by the school, in consultation with the young person and the young person's parent /carer. Young people will not be denied access to Hope's Place courses or fair and equal treatment while attending courses because of their gender identity or because they propose to transition or have transitioned.

Decisions about attendance, whilst made by the school, following consultation with the young person and parents/carers, should give due consideration to the best interests and wellbeing of the young person, the group **and** the facilitator.

In Addition Hope's Place:

- Appreciates that trans and non-binary young people, although likely to be a small group within a school community, are potentially vulnerable if not supported effectively.
- Will make every effort to be supportive and nurturing, so that trans and non-binary young people can flourish and thrive.
- Will ensure course material does not rely on or reinforce stereotypical assumptions about trans and non-binary people and positively represents trans and non-binary people.
- Recognises that transphobic abuse, harassment or bullying (e.g. name-calling, derogatory jokes, intrusive questions, 'outing' someone) are unacceptable.
- Will stay true to our pledge of confidentiality unless a young person's safety is compromised. This will always be explained to course attendees prior to the course commencing.
- With the agreement of the young person, will share disclosures of trans identity with an appropriate member of the school teaching staff, to facilitate decisions being made to support the young person.
- Will respect and use a trans person's new name, pronouns and title.
- Will explore the challenges posed by the specific needs of transgender children and seek solutions that are in the best interest of the young person.
- Will avoid viewing the transgender young person as a problem.
- Will strive to challenge and prevent sexism, transphobia, homophobia and biphobia and seek to raise awareness of these terms.

Resources

Gender Identity Clinic: https://gic.nhs.uk/info-support/support-groups-and-resources/
Mermaids: https://mermaidsuk.org.uk/professionals/resources-for-professionals/
GIRES: https://www.gires.org.uk/resources/
Young Minds: https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/a-z-guide/gender-identity/
NSPCC: https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/sex-relationships/gender-identity/
LGBT Foundation: https://lgbt.foundation/who-we-help/trans-people/resources-for-trans-people
Gender Identity Development Service: https://gids.nhs.uk
Gender Identity and the Law: https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8969/