



Holloway Neighbourhood Group

Equal Opportunities Policy

1. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES - STATEMENT OF INTENT :

HNG's vision is of empowered, happy and inclusive communities where all people are valued. We provide support and services and build connections to empower people to lead fulfilled lives as part of their community.

HNG is committed to promoting equal opportunities and challenging discrimination wherever it occurs. HNG will, as far as possible, promote and advance equal opportunities in all of our activities, services and practice.

HNG will not tolerate discrimination, on any basis, including on the basis of:

- Race
- Colour
- Gender
- Sexual orientation or identity
- Ethnic or national origin
- Disability
- Relationship status or caring responsibilities
- Health, including mental health and HIV or AIDS status
- Age
- Political or religious belief
- Trade union activity
- Socio-economic background
- Refugee or asylum seeker status

We aim to ensure that job applicants, staff members, volunteers and individuals who use our services neither receive less favourable treatment on these grounds, nor are disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable.

HNG will seek to prevent discrimination and ensure equal representation in the services it provides, the structures that it facilitates and the way that it carries out its work. This includes the development of diversity in the Trustees, staff, volunteers, service users and networks and membership, to ensure a genuinely wide representation that as far as possible reflects the local population.

2. SUMMARY

HNG is aware of its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and the 'protected characteristics' under this law, namely: age; disability; pregnancy and maternity (including breastfeeding); race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

Discrimination can be direct, associative, perceptive, indirect, harassment (including by 3rd parties) or victimisation. See glossary for definitions. All forms of discrimination are unacceptable, regardless of whether there was any intention to discriminate or not.

HNG will not:

- treat anyone worse than others because that person has, or is thought to have, a protected characteristic ('direct discrimination');
- do anything that would have a worse impact on someone with a protected characteristic than on others who do not share that characteristic unless it can be objectively justified ('indirect discrimination');
- treat a disabled person unfavourably because of their disability when we know or should know about the disability unless it can be objectively justified;
- treat a person badly ('victimise' them) because they have complained about discrimination or helped someone else complain or done anything to uphold equality law rights;
- harass any person on any grounds.

HNG will, as far as is practicable, make reasonable adjustments so that disabled people can use HNG services and premises to the standard usually offered to non-disabled people. This includes considering the needs of people with a range of impairments who might want to use HNG services in the future, as well as today. It also includes considering future premises.

HNG recognises that some users of its services may, because of their past or present distress or illness, say or do things which would otherwise be unacceptable. HNG will, as far as possible, make reasonable adjustments for these individuals whilst also doing all it can to challenge and prevent such behaviour. However, ultimately HNG reserves the right to exclude from its activities any individual or organisation who over time actively works against its equal opportunities policy despite reasonable adjustments, support and/or warnings to change their behaviour.

HNG will work to prevent unfavourable treatment, directly or indirectly, of individuals from any group facing discrimination in its recruitment and deployment of staff and volunteers.

HNG will make all its premises user friendly and accessible, as far as possible, especially to people with disabilities, older people and carers with children

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Responsibility

The Board of HNG has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy, with day to day responsibility lying with the Chief Executive. However, all staff, volunteers, partners and service users have a duty as part of their involvement with HNG to do everything they can to ensure that the policy works in practice. Those responsible for recruiting staff and volunteers to work in HNG projects are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of HNG's Equal Opportunities Policy and adhere to it in their activities with HNG.

HNG will bring to the attention of all volunteers and service users the existence of this policy which will include messages on noticeboards and provision of such training as is necessary to ensure that the policy is effective and that everyone is aware of it.

If any employee, service user or volunteer feels that they have been, or are being discriminated against, in any way, they are entitled to pursue the matter with the Chief Executive or the Board of Trustees (via the Chair of Trustees or any Trustee).

All instances or complaints of discriminatory behaviour will be treated seriously and properly investigated.

Unfounded or malicious complaints or allegations will also be treated as serious.

Use of Language

Staff, volunteers, partners and service users should avoid and challenge the use of language which, in any way, belittles anyone

Where the language used has a personal impact on others, and it has been made clear to the person concerned that their use of such language is unwelcome and/or offensive, disciplinary action may be taken if they persist with it.

All materials used or developed by HNG will be judged in the light of the promotion of equal opportunities, and any considered to be discriminatory will not be used.

Sexual Harassment

No employee, volunteer or service user should be subject to sexual harassment.

This is interpreted as unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature including:

- verbal sexual abuse
- physical contact
- repeated remarks which an individual finds offensive

If it has been made clear to the person concerned that their behaviour is unwelcome and they persist with it, then the person who is the recipient of the behaviour will be entitled to make a formal complaint.

See also the HNG Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy.

Planning, Delivering and improving Services / Activities

In general, HNG would expect the range of people who use its services to reflect the local population. And HNG believes that the best way to improve services is to ask users and non-users and volunteers and staff whether it is offering what people need.

So HNG will in the course of its work:

- Analyse who uses HNG services and how effective services are at meeting the needs of the community and disadvantaged groups. This will help us in developing our future policies and the services we provide.
- Consult with users and those who might use services to help us develop services for the future.
- Find new ways of consulting people - so that we can reach people other methods have not reached.
- Consult staff and volunteers, who have day to day contact with the public and will have ideas and views on their needs aspirations and problems.
- Act on the outcomes of consultations by changing our services where practicable.
- Make information about services widely available and, as far as possible, make sure it reaches everyone who might benefit from it.
- Use plain English and, where reasonably practicable, provide information in relevant formats and languages e.g. Braille, large print, non-English languages.
- Ensure our website is accessible

Equal Opportunities for Staff and Volunteers

HNG will ensure that no employee, job applicant or volunteer receives discriminatory treatment on the grounds of age; disability; pregnancy and maternity (including breastfeeding); race; religion or belief; sex; or sexual orientation.

Reasonable adjustments, for example to working hours, will be made for staff with caring responsibilities or particular religious/cultural needs, as far as is reasonably practicable without compromising business need.

Part-time staff will not be treated less favourably than full-time staff.

A disabled candidate shall not be barred from employment or volunteering with HNG where with reasonable efforts and expenditure the barriers relating to their disability could be overcome.

Adhering to this Equal Opportunities Policy is a condition of service for employees and failure to do so shall be cause for disciplinary measures to be taken.

Monitoring and Review

This implementation of this policy will be regularly (at least annually) reviewed by the Board of Trustees to ensure that no person involved with HNG is put at an unfair disadvantage, either directly or indirectly. This monitoring will apply to the representation and practices of Trustees, staff, volunteers, partners, and to the provision of services. The review will include whether there is a case for positive action to be taken in any area.

It is the responsibility of every individual to eliminate discrimination and to ensure the practical application of this Policy.

HNG's Board of Trustees will review this policy every three years.

For Office Use Only:

Reviewed : June 2019

Next Review Date: June 2022 or upon changes in legislation,
whichever is sooner

Glossary

Protected Characteristics

The protected characteristics as listed in the Equality Act 2010 are sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, age, disability, pregnancy and maternity.

Disability

Under the Equality Act 2010, a person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Gender reassignment

A transsexual person is someone who proposes to, starts or has completed a process to change his or her gender. The person does not have to be under medical supervision.

Race

Race includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins. A racial group can be made up of two or more different racial groups (eg Black Britons).

Religion or belief

Under the Equality Act 2010, religion includes any religion. It also includes lack of religion, in other words if someone does not follow a certain religion or has no religion at all. Additionally, a religion must have a clear structure and belief system. Belief means any religious or philosophical belief or a lack of such belief. To be protected, a belief must satisfy various criteria, including that it is a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour.

Sexual orientation

Includes bisexual, gay, heterosexual, and lesbian people.

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 (see perceptive discrimination below), or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic (see associative discrimination below).

Associative discrimination

This is direct discrimination against someone because they are linked or associated with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.

Perceptive 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.

Indirect discrimination

Indirect discrimination can occur when you have a condition, rule, policy or even a practice in your company that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic and which cannot be justified in relation to the job.

Harassment

Under the Equality Act 2010, 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”.

Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when an employee is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint about discrimination or harassment, or raised a grievance under the Equality Act; or because they are suspected of doing so. An employee is not protected from victimisation if they have maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint.

Positive action

Some people with protected characteristics are disadvantaged or under-represented in some areas of life, or have particular needs linked to their characteristic. They may need extra help or encouragement if they are to have the same chances as everyone else. The new positive action provisions held within the Equalities Act 2010 enable service providers to take proportionate steps to help people overcome their disadvantages or to meet their needs.

Reasonable adjustment

In deciding whether an adjustment is reasonable, HNG can consider:

- how effective the change will be in assisting disabled people in general or a particular disabled person
- whether it can actually be done
- the cost, and
- HNG’s resources and size.

The overall aim should be, as far as possible, to remove any disadvantage faced by disabled people. The easier an adjustment is, the more likely it is to be reasonable. However, just because something is difficult doesn’t mean it can’t also be reasonable – this needs to be balanced against other factors.

If an adjustment costs little or nothing and is not disruptive, it would be reasonable unless some other factor (such as impracticality or lack of effectiveness or affordability) made it unreasonable.

Objective justification

This is a shorthand way of referring to the legal (Equality Act 2010) test of objective justification, ie that the service provider’s treatment of the service user must be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.