

## Equality and Diversity Policy

This 'Equality and Diversity Policy Statement' was written in partnership with the people who use our services and staff of the Mary Frances Trust to express our commitment to equality and set standards to achieve equality and value diversity in all our working practices.

This policy has been written to cover everyone who works or volunteers at, or who uses services provided by the Mary Frances Trust.

It is our intention to implement this policy in a way that will demonstrate our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and valuing the diversity of the people that use our services, staff, and community partners. This statement represents our corporate approach to equality.

The Equality Act can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>

*"Diversity is about taking account of the differences between people and groups of people and placing a positive value on those differences. Diversity is about celebrating and valuing how different we all are. This is strongly linked with promoting human rights and freedoms, based on principles such as dignity and respect. Diversity is about recognising, valuing, and taking account of people's different backgrounds, knowledge, skills, and experiences, and encouraging and using those differences to create a productive and effective workforce. Diversity is something that applies to everyone and should be part of everything we do. It is an important part of our work and not just a side issue. It requires everyone to play a full part. It is important to recognise that none of us fit neatly into separate 'packages' which can be neatly labelled or discriminated against" (TUC)*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Patrick Wolter, Chief Executive

Agreed by Policy Board:

Nov 2022

Review Date:

Nov 2023

**Our commitments to equality in our employment practice and service provision are:**

- Listening, responding, and working together, non-judgementally, with the people who use our services, staff and communities to provide an appropriate and effective service.
- Continually improving and building positive practice.
- Eliminating all forms of discrimination, particularly those with protected characteristics as defined by the 2010 equality act (listed on page 3).
- Providing a service that is accessible to all, the support for individuals to enjoy that access equally, including those with hidden disabilities.
- Developing environments where people are valued and respected.
- Providing learning and developing opportunities for all the people who use our services and staff to enable us to fulfil our commitment to equality.
- Working with other agencies to ensure our commitments to equality are delivered.
- Action will be taken to support all complaints are dealt with in a timely and effective manner.
- Our annual reporting processes will ensure that our performance against equality and diversity policy, for service users and staff is measured and noted. This includes training provided, complaints made, investigations undertaken, and any enforcement actions taken.

**MFT is committed to inclusion.**

As an inclusive workplace means everyone feels valued at work. It lets all employees feel safe to:

- come up with different ideas.
- raise issues and suggestions to managers, knowing this is encouraged.
- try doing things differently from how they have been done before for improvement, with management approval.

An inclusive workplace can help lower the risk of bullying, harassment, and discrimination.

<https://www.acas.org.uk/if-youre-treated-unfairly-at-work>

## The Equality Act (2010)

- The Act brings together all the legal requirements on equality that the private, public and voluntary sectors need to follow.
- It affects equality law at work and in delivering all sorts of services.
- It replaces all the existing equality law including:
  - The Equal Pay Act 1970
  - The Sex Discrimination Act 1975
  - The Race Relations Act 1976
  - The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Most of the new law is based on current legislation which has been streamlined but there are some important differences.

The Equality Act can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>

## Who the law protects -

- Whether at work as an employee or in using a service, the message (or purpose) of the Equality Act is that everyone has the right to be treated fairly at work or when using services.
- It protects people from discrimination on the basis of certain characteristics. These are known as protected characteristics and they vary slightly according to whether a person is at work or using a service.

There are nine protected characteristics:

- *Disability*
- *Gender reassignment*
- *Marriage or civil partnership\**
- *Pregnancy and maternity*
- *Race*

- *Religion or belief*
- *Sexual orientation*
- *Sex (gender)*
- *Age*

\* Under the Equality Act marriage and civil partnership applies only to employees however at Mary Frances Trust we are committed to protecting people who use our services equally.

### **What the law protects against:**

These are the main forms of prohibited conduct.

#### ➤ *Discrimination.* This includes:

- Treating a person worse than someone else because of a protected characteristic (known as direct discrimination). Although in the case of pregnancy and maternity direct discrimination, this can occur if they have protected characteristic without needing to compare treatment to someone else.
- Putting in place a rule or way of doing things that has a worse impact on someone with a protected characteristic than someone without one, when this cannot be objectively justified (known as indirect discrimination).
- Treating a disabled person unfavourably because of something connected with their disability when this cannot be justified (known as discrimination arising from disability).
- Failing to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people.

#### ➤ *Harassment*

- Unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or which is hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive to someone with a protected characteristic or in a way that is sexual in nature.

#### ➤ *Victimisation*

- Treating someone unfavourably because they have taken (or might be taking) action under the Equality Act or supporting somebody who is doing so.

➤ As well as these characteristics, the law also protects people from being discriminated against:

- By someone who wrongly perceives them to have one of the protected characteristics.
- Because they are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic. This includes the parent of a disabled child or adult or someone else who is caring for a disabled person.

### How do we demonstrate equality?

- a) In our employment practices
- b) Providing a service
- c) Board selection
- d) Have a robust Complaints Policy which can be located at - <https://mft-wp.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/content/uploads/2022/07/18144713/MFT-Compliments-Complaints-Procedure.pdf>
- e) By offering reasonable adjustments to all people as appropriate

### Equality involves:

- Providing fairness and equality of opportunity.
- Recognising that everyone is different and that these differences must be equally respected.
- Challenging discrimination so that we demonstrate our commitments to equality in a manner that does not exclude individuals or make them feel victimised.

We are committed to addressing all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination.

## What will we do to tackle discrimination?

- Support victims of discrimination and halt a discriminatory practice as soon as it is identified.
- Investigate any complaints or suspicions of discriminatory practices speedily and in accordance with our Compliments & Complaints, Grievance and Disciplinary policies.
- Support individuals to identify and overcome their prejudices including challenging them appropriately about their views and educating on how MFT respects and values diversity within the organisation.
- Support individuals to develop a personal value and belief system that will equip them to value the beliefs and culture of others.
- Support people who use our services and staff to ask and research the support need of others, to find out and not assume, so all decisions and planning is based on fact and not assumptions.
- Diversity and Equality training to support everyone within the organisation to consider how they, as individuals need to behave in order to achieve equality, it is not about treating everyone the same, but recognising and respecting differences and treating each other with respect and dignity.

## Who is responsible For Equality?

- **Mary Frances Trusts Senior Management Team** is responsible for providing the people who use our services, volunteers, and staff with equal access to our services, for encouraging communities to talk with us about improvements we need to make and providing a fair environment and equal opportunities for staff.
- **People who use our services:** have a responsibility to act in accordance with this policy.
- **Employees and Volunteers** are responsible for ensuring that they work together to recognise and remove barriers so that they can promote equality, and fairness and dignity, and behave in accordance with this policy.
- **The Chief Executive** is responsible for leading the organisation on our commitments to equality, for ensuring that this policy is delivered, and we promote equality.

### Who should read this policy?

- This policy is a working document to promote equality for people who use our services, volunteers, staff, trustees and those who personally carry out work for the Mary Frances Trust as agents.
- Visitors to the Mary Frances Trust should be made aware of our policy and procedure to treat others with respect and dignity at all times.

### How do we implement our policy?

- **Policy and Planning:** We put our policies into action based on consultation, discussions, raising awareness and developing outcomes that make a difference with people using our services, volunteers and staff.
- The actions from our policy are linked to improving our services. We want to be known for our positive approach to equality.
- **Employment and Recruitment:** Our workforce is built on open and fair employment and recruitment practices. Our staff are valued throughout their working lives with us.

### How will we provide training on equality?

We will raise awareness about equality and provide training for our employees. We will run discussion forums on equality and diversity, where we hope to gather information; we will ask people using our service about how we might address these issues and work with us to turn these issues into positive actions.

### How will we monitor equality?

To ensure the effectiveness of our Equality policy, we will carry out regular monitoring across the Mary Frances Trust. We will monitor our workforce to make sure that our practices are free from discrimination. The Trustees will review and discuss our performance on equality at least annually.

We will also seek feedback from people using our services and staff as part of our commitment to listening and continually improving what we do.

The feedback we seek includes how we are doing on these aims:

- Show respect and dignity to others

- Be open and honest, expressing any criticisms in a sensitive and constructive way.
- Take a stand against discrimination by showing personal responsibility such as speaking out against discriminatory jokes and remarks.
- Make a formal complaint if you witness a racist or other discriminatory attack, through the Mary Frances Trust complaints procedures.
- Work towards providing accessible information /services for all the people who use our services and staff. Recognising individual differences.
- Develop team and partnership approaches in all that we do.