



Mary Frances Trust
MFT - Equality & Diversity_Jul 2026
Internal Use Only

Document Control

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AGREED BY	Policy Committee and Board of Trustees
CLASSIFICATION	Internal Use Only
DATE OF ISSUE	July 2026
ISSUE	v0.2
REASON FOR ISSUE/UPDATE	Annual policy review, including governance and clarity updates.
NEXT REVIEW	July 2027
DISTRIBUTION	All Mary Frances Trust Employees

VERSION	AUTHOR	SUMMARY OF CHANGES	DATE
0.1	An Other	Addition of appendix C	01/05/2025
0.2	MFT	This version introduces formal document control information, clarifies legislative scope, and strengthens statements on the regular review of employment policies to support equality and inclusion	06/06/2026

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1. Introduction

This policy has been written in partnership with the people who use our services and the staff of Mary Frances Trust (MFT). It expresses our commitment to equality and sets standards to enable us to work towards this in all our working practices including overseeing work carried out on our behalf by others such as consultants, partners and suppliers.

It is our intention to implement this policy in a way that demonstrates our commitment to the promotion of equality of opportunity, the valuing of diversity of the people that use our services, our staff and community partners and the inclusion of a broad and wide-ranging legislation that provides us insight into good practice.

The policy applies to everyone who works or volunteers at MFT or who uses our services.

2. Context

The Equality Act 2010

We recognise our legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and see these as a minimum standard which we would hope to exceed by being constantly proactive in promoting inclusion, diversity and equality and by opposing prejudice and discrimination.

Under this Act the law seeks to protect anyone with the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability including hidden disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Sex (gender)

Employees, other workers, users of our services and applicants for employment with any of these characteristics are protected from all forms of unlawful discrimination which can be:

- Direct and indirect discrimination
- Discrimination by association
- Discrimination by perception
- Discrimination arising from disability and failing to make reasonable adjustments for disabled persons
- Harassment
- Victimisation

In addition to the Equality Act 2010 the following legislation is taken into consideration:

- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Human Rights Act 1998

- Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999
- Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006
- Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013 plus any amendments to the above legislation.

Codes of Practice issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission

We are committed to promoting inclusion and diversity and recognise its importance and benefits. We value fairness and respect for difference and equality of opportunity and treatment. We wish to provide an inclusive workplace where everyone feels safe to come up with different ideas, raise issues and make suggestions to their managers of alternative ways of doing things, knowing this is encouraged.

3. Our beliefs about inclusion, diversity, and equality

We believe...

- Everyone has inherent dignity
- Inclusion and diversity are critical to our effectiveness, authenticity and credibility
- We are stronger and more effective when we are a diverse group with differing viewpoints and persuasions working as an integrated team
- Our services will be strengthened if our Board and staff can bring a broad range of experience, and both lived and learned expertise, to inform our decision making
- Inclusion and diversity will result in a better performing organisation with
 - Greater breadth of thought and experience
 - Being more creative, innovative and responsive to change
 - Being more open and understanding of service user, partner and stakeholder needs

4. Policy

- The aims of this policy are to:
 - Create a culture of inclusion in which diversity is respected and valued and is reflected in the way we treat each other, those we work with and users of our services.
 - Ensure that our programmes, services, tools and resources are accessible, inclusive and meet the needs of a diverse range of users
 - Ensure that inclusion, diversity and equality considerations are embedded in all our internal and decision-making practices
- We wish to ensure that the individual needs of our staff, volunteers, trustees and service users are recognised. We strive to be welcoming and to ensure that everyone is treated with equality, dignity and respect in all aspects of our work.
- Unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and bullying are serious breaches of this policy, and disciplinary procedures will apply.
- We will make reasonable adjustments to prevent people from being disadvantaged.
- We will aim to make improvements and implement good practice and to learn from our mistakes. If we get things wrong, we will listen carefully when people let us know and we will

do our best to sort it out. Grievance procedures are in place for staff and a complaints policy for others who use our services.

- Our employment policies and procedures will be reviewed regularly to improve, amend or adapt current practices to promote equality of opportunity within MFT, and to remove barriers experienced by members of disadvantaged social groups in seeking employment with us and working with us.
- We will ensure that all of our employment policies including compensation, benefits and any other relevant issues associated with terms and conditions of employment, are formulated and applied without regard to age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage or civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.
- These will be reviewed regularly to ensure there is no discrimination

5. Working at, and with, Mary Frances Trust

When working at, and with, MFT, colleagues can expect the following:

5.1. Recruitment and selection

- As wide a range of people as possible will be welcomed, enabled, and encouraged to apply to work with us as a staff member, volunteer, consultant and trustee.
- We will always be aware of the danger of preferring a candidate because they resemble the current profile of the team. We believe that inclusion and diversity is a strength, and we will actively seek to represent the communities we work in and for. We will be conscious of and reach out to underrepresented groups in our work force whether by protected characteristic or other areas such as socio-economic background.
- We will work with partners who share our commitment to valuing inclusion, diversity and equality.
- When MFT is required to make decisions, for example disciplinary matters, selection for training, promotion, pay increases, redundancy etc. We will always ensure that merit, experience, skills and temperament are considered as objectively as possible.
- MFT have a robust recruitment policy which promotes fair recruitment process and equality, diversity and inclusion which can be found [location]

5.2. Development

- All staff, trustees and volunteers will receive training in inclusion, diversity and equality appropriate to their role.
- We will provide opportunities for learning and development of knowledge and skills for all staff, volunteers and trustees.

5.3. Dignity, respect and value

- The individual needs of all our staff, volunteers and trustees should be recognised
- We will include and welcome all kinds of people
- Everyone will be treated with dignity and respect and differences valued

5.4. Access to, involvement in and delivery of services

- We will ensure that our tools, programmes, services, resources and support are accessible and inclusive
- We will seek to identify, reach and serve people from underrepresented groups
- We will involve our service users in the delivery and development of our services and will make particular effort to include and hear the voices of the most marginalised groups
- We will ensure that individual needs are recognised, that we include and welcome all kinds of people and that everyone is always treated with dignity and respect
- Coproduction is one of the key pillars of our strategy we live and breath it. This is reflected in how we develop our service with people who use them, and which recognise and value their diversity.

5.5. Implementation and Monitoring - How are we inclusive.

- We have person centre inductions for both staff and service users alike, allowing them to feel included and safe from the start and allowing MFT the relevant information to best support them.
- We will implement physical adaptations where possible to facilitate best possible for access for all. e.g. This could include blended activities, with remote options, accessible easy reads and physical adaptations to improve access for those
- As a disability confident employer, we will provide the appropriate arrangements in works schedules and line management to accommodate people with lived experiences, and neurodiversity to succeed in working with us.
- Inclusion, diversity and equality are at the centre of our Strategic plan
- We aim to work in a trauma-informed way, so that people feel emotionally and psychologically safe when engaging with our services and with us as an organisation
- We are committed to the continuing development of the co production of our service.
- We have a Biennial equality and diversity report which is brought to the Board for review and discussion

5.6. Training and development

- We recognise that our ability to meet the diverse needs of our service users is improved by having a workforce which has the skills and understanding to achieve our objectives. All workers will be encouraged to discuss their career prospects and training needs with their manager. We are committed to ensuring that, wherever possible, all workers receive the widest possible range of development opportunities for advancement in line with the needs of the Mary Frances Trust.
- The provision of training will be reviewed to ensure that provisions are made where necessary to enable part-time workers, or remote workers or those returning to work following a break to benefit from training.

5.7. Flexibility

- We recognise the benefits of helping our workers to balance the responsibilities of their work and private life. We will consider any requests for flexible working in a way which aims to balance the needs of the individual and our organisation.

5.8. Disability

- We aim to provide a safe working environment for workers with disabilities. We will make reasonable adjustments to the workplace and/or working arrangements for people with disabilities where they cause disadvantage to the person.
- If, due to changing circumstances, an employee with disabilities is unable to carry out their existing duties, every effort will be made to find suitable alternative employment within the organisation, and retraining will be provided as necessary.
- Where an employee without disabilities becomes disabled during their employment, we will make every effort to facilitate continued employment in their existing job. Where this is not possible, suitable alternative employment will be considered, and we may provide training and support as required.
- Whilst we will make every effort to retain employees in these circumstances, we cannot make any guarantees about continued employment.

5.9. References

- It is MFT's policy to give factual references only.

5.10. Retirement

- We have no fixed retirement age and employees who wish to work beyond State Pension Age may choose to do so.

5.11. Involvement

- We will take appropriate steps to encourage the participation of all workers to ensure that, wherever possible, our employment practices recognise and meet their needs. We will involve our workers in determining what can be done to make sure they develop and use their abilities at work.

5.12. Service provision

- We aim to make our services as accessible and responsive as possible to all existing and potential service users and to provide a service to them which recognises and respects their differences. We recognise that our ability to meet their needs is improved by having a diverse workforce which generally reflects our service user base.
- Anyone who feels they have been denied equality of opportunity whilst in receipt of our services will be encouraged to make their complaint in writing so that their concerns can be investigated and responded to. Workers are expected to make our service users aware of their rights and responsibilities with regards to equality of opportunity and should be referred to our Complaints Policy for further information.
- We reserve the right to withdraw our services to any service user if that individual behaves in a discriminatory, disruptive or abusive manner to any worker, trustee or other person.
- We are committed to meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and will make every effort to ensure that our services and communications are accessible to people with special requirements, including those with visual, audio, cognitive and/or physical impairments, and those who are unable to communicate effectively in English.

6. Related MFT policies

- Safeguarding Policy
- Modern Slavery Policy
- Recruitment Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Compliments and Complaints Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- MFT Code of Conduct

7. Summary of changes

- A document control section has been added so staff can clearly see who owns the policy, who approves it, when it was issued, and when it will be reviewed.
- The policy now clearly states that equality legislation includes any future amendments.
- Additional clarity has been added about regularly reviewing employment policies and practices to remove barriers and promote equality.
- Minor wording and formatting changes have been made to improve clarity and consistency; the core commitments of the policy remain unchanged.

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