



EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

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1. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Sheiling School as part of Thornleigh Camphill Communities (TCC) is founded on the principle of building an inclusive community in which vulnerable individuals and staff can learn, work and live in positive social relationships based on mutual care, support and respect.

We place the respect for the dignity and human rights of all who share in our endeavours at the core of all we do.

TCC recognises that discrimination and disadvantage exist in society and that some individuals and groups suffer discrimination.

We fully support the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion in all our activities including in the admission and exit of those whom we support and in the recruitment, training and development volunteers, staff and trustees.

We oppose all forms of discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, race/ethnicity, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation, being a transsexual person, marriage or civil partnership, maternity or being pregnant, socio-economic background or spent convictions and also of any other reason that does not pertain to membership of one of these groups.

All those who share in the work and life of TCC's activities have personal responsibility for the practical application of this Policy.

TCC promotes its commitment to equality and diversity through developing and regularly reviewing its equality and diversity, anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies and procedures; through awareness raising and training of all those sharing in the activities of the community and through taking decisive action on any breaches of these policies.

2. VALUES

2.1. Valuing individuals

Children and young people are at the heart of our work. They matter and we aim to provide opportunities for them to realise their potential. We respect diversity in nationality, culture and beliefs.

2.2. Valuing diversity

Diversity is an inclusive concept. It takes account of the fact that people differ from one another in many ways: age, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical ability, mental capacity, religion or belief, education, economic status, personality, communication style and approaches to learning and work, for example. We believe that by understanding, valuing and positively working with these differences, we are more likely to enhance the genuine and positive contribution each individual can make to our shared work, which in turn benefits the quality of life of all involved and our contribution to society.

2.3. Valuing internationalism

We believe in internationalism. Countries are increasingly interdependent and we think that the UK can contribute to, and learn from, the experience of others. We also believe in the power of partnerships in enhancing international understanding.

2.4. Valuing integrity

We demonstrate integrity. We strive to meet our commitments and believe that everyone has a right to be treated with fairness, openness, honesty and respect.

3. LEGISLATION

Our Equality and Diversity Policies are based on legislation and legal standards governing equal opportunities. We aim to abide by and promote this legislation by following the spirit and the letter of it. The following are the key pieces of legislation that address equality, diversity and anti-discrimination:

Equality Act 2010

Human Rights Act 1998

Children's Act (2004)

Civil Partnership Act 2004

Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulations 2005

Equality Act 2006

Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006

Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006, Schedules 6 and 8

3.1. DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination is a barrier to equal opportunities and unjustified discrimination on all the grounds identified within this Policy, irrespective of whether they are covered by law or not, is unacceptable within the activities of TCC.

Relevant legislation aims to address the barriers posed by discrimination and stipulates that it is unlawful to discriminate either directly or indirectly on the grounds of age, disability, gender, race/ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, being a transsexual person, maternity or being pregnant, marriage or civil partnership. There must therefore be no discrimination on these grounds in the treatment of people within TCC or in the course of our work, except on the basis of genuine occupational qualifications as allowed for and defined within the relevant legislation.

Under the legislation there are two types of discrimination.

Direct discrimination - this occurs when a person treats another person less favourably on the grounds of age, disability, gender, race/ethnicity, religion or belief, or sexual orientation. This kind of unlawful discrimination can occur even if a person did not openly express an intention or motive to treat someone less favourably.

Indirect discrimination - this occurs when a requirement, condition or criterion is applied equally to everybody but is discriminatory in its effect, as between the genders, or in relation to one particular group of people. This means that the proportion of one particular group or gender that can comply with the requirement, condition or criterion is considerably smaller than another. Furthermore, the requirement, condition or criterion cannot be justified and is to the detriment of the person who cannot comply with it.

Discrimination – motives and stereotypes

Discrimination does not only occur as a result of a conscious decision to discriminate on the grounds referred to earlier. There are subtle and unconscious varieties of discrimination that may not be easily perceived. This may result from general assumptions

about the capabilities, characteristics and interests of a particular group and from applying requirements, conditions or criteria without considering whether they advantage or disadvantage particular groups.

Stereotypes have the potential to lead to discrimination and so should be carefully examined and if necessary challenged. Stereotypical and discriminatory language and terminology should be avoided.

3.2. Victimisation

Under relevant UK legislation victimisation is defined as occurring when one person is given less favourable treatment than others in the same circumstances because it is suspected or known that the person has:

- made a complaint under the relevant legislation; or
- given evidence or information relating to any complaint investigation, legal proceedings or appeal under the relevant legislation; or
- done anything else under or by reference to the relevant legislation; or
- alleged a contravention of the relevant legislation.

Less favourable treatment does not amount to victimisation if the person concerned made a complaint that was false and was not made in good faith.

3.3. Admission Process

Sheiling School has a separate policy on the admission process for children and young people who wish to join our school community. We are committed to working with the principles of equal opportunities throughout the admission process. This is particularly relevant where there are several applications for a given vacancy.

3.4. Staff Recruitment And Development

Volunteers, often from overseas, who may spend some 6-24 months supporting the work of our communities; these are Volunteers in terms of employment legislation and their relationship to the charity is a non-contractual one.

Employees with responsibilities in specific areas of the work of TCC; their relationship to TCC are subject to all aspects of employment law and equal opportunities legislation.

The recruitment and selection procedures for those joining TCC in a Volunteer capacity and for those joining as employees on one hand have many features in common; on the other hand there are distinct differences deriving from the non-contractual relationship of Volunteers to the organisation. TCC has a Recruitment Policy which reflects these differences and is in tune with the principles of equal opportunities.

We believe that it is positive to have a team of volunteers and employees of diverse ages and we are committed to ensure that there is no unjustified age discrimination.

3.5. Positive Action

Relevant legislation within the UK provides for, among other things, positive action measures. This holds where members of a particular gender, racial or religious group has been underrepresented over the previous 12 months in particular work. In these instances, employers may encourage them to take advantage of any opportunities for doing that work, or provide training and development to help them develop the skills needed for it.

We welcome applications for volunteer or employment positions from under-represented communities, minorities or gender and may identify positive action measures to address under representation.

3.6. Work-Life Balance - Combining Work And Domestic Responsibilities And Choices

It is in our interests to retain trained staff members. Consistent with the justifiable needs of the work, efforts will therefore be made to enable staff members to reconcile work with domestic responsibilities and choices. In order to achieve this, TCC provides initiatives to support work/life balance through, for example: flexible working hours, part-time working, maternity and paternity leave, sabbatical opportunities, career breaks, special leave and assistance with childcare.

Where employees and volunteers have particular cultural and religious needs which may conflict with existing work requirements, consideration will be given to whether it is reasonably practical to vary or adapt these requirements to enable these needs to be met.

3.7. Bullying And Harassment

Bullying and harassment play no part in our life, learning and working culture or practices and our Equality and Diversity policy statement requires each individual involved in our work to guard against all harassment. TCC has a separate Anti-Harassment Policy.

If bullying or harassment involves issues of age, disability, gender, race/ethnicity, religious belief or sexual orientation equality legislation may apply.

4. COMPLAINTS

Any individual participating in our work who feels that they have not been treated in accordance with our Equality and Diversity Policy has a right to register a complaint. No one must be intimidated, discriminated against or treated differently for raising a concern, complaining or assisting in an investigation. If this happens it could amount to victimisation. TCC has a separate Complaints Policy.

5. WHISTLE BLOWING

Our Whistle Blowing Policy aims to protect TCC by providing a framework that encourages and enables any individual involved in our work to raise concerns about serious malpractice. These concerns may be about financial malpractice, breaches of the law, serious misconduct by another person and breaches of policies in health and safety, or

equality and diversity. Built into the policy is an assurance that there will be no risk to the person's position if actions are based on good faith.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

As an organisation active in the field of care, education and support of vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals, it is particularly important that we reflect and promote equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice. Further, it is important that we adhere to legislation and behaviours addressed within this Policy. We must, as an organisation, be mindful of these obligations and note that as a general principle of law, organisations are liable for acts of discrimination committed by their employees and volunteers in the course of their employment or voluntary work.

Putting the Policy into practice is the responsibility of every individual involved in our work. All staff members, regardless of length of service, are responsible for playing their full part in adhering to the Policy. This means becoming familiar with its terms, carrying them out and critically examining attitudes to ensure that discrimination is not allowed to affect judgement. The law and the existence of an Equal Opportunities Policy cannot by themselves prevent discrimination.

All individuals involved in our work will be supported to be aware of the forms which discrimination can take, to guard against them and to avoid any action that might influence others to discriminate unfairly. This will be achieved through ongoing awareness and training initiatives.

Responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the Policy and for dealing with matters arising from it lies with the CEO and the School Management Group. As part of fulfilling this responsibility, members of the SMG must take care to deal effectively with complaints of discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation. They must not make assumptions that complaints are a result of over-sensitivity and must take them seriously and deal with them sympathetically.

If a staff member discriminates against another person or fails to co-operate with the measures that are designed to promote equal opportunities, or induces others to do so, they will be subject to disciplinary action.

TCC opposes any conduct or activity by any individuals involved in our work which is contrary to its Equality and Diversity Policy or which is likely to bring it into disrepute in relation to equality issues.

Nothing in the Equality and Diversity Policy is intended to interfere with the legitimate freedom of artistic or intellectual expression, investigation or discussion. It is understood that there can often be a fine line between what is acceptable and unacceptable and each case will be considered on its merit.

7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation assists us in establishing the effectiveness of our Equality and Diversity Policy.

We currently monitor the main HR functions by gender, age, religion or belief, disability and ethnic origin. Information is treated in the strictest confidence, does not breach the Data Protection Act 1998 and is only used for the purposes of monitoring the effectiveness of the Policy.

8. COMMUNICATION

A copy of the Equality and Diversity Statement and the Policy will be made accessible to all vulnerable persons we support, our volunteers and employees. Thornleigh Camphill Communities Trustees will ensure that all those who have influence over staff recruitment and development within the organisation are aware of the Policy.

All staff members will be made aware of the Policy and the responsibilities of both TCC and the individual in achieving the equality objectives. In addition, the Policy will feature whenever appropriate in relevant training programmes, guidance notes and manuals.

9. REVIEW

We commit ourselves to undertaking a formal review of the Policy at least once every year and to communicate changes to all concerned. Responsibility for this lies with the individuals responsible for Policy Review and Quality Assurance, namely the CEO and School Management Group members.