



Sussex MS Centre Equality and Diversity Policy

Introduction

Sussex MS Centre recognises that it has a responsibility to create and encourage equal opportunities and acknowledges that every person has a contribution to make to society and the right to equality of treatment within society. The Centre is committed to equality and diversity and sees this as part of empowerment in the organisation.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all Staff, Volunteers, and Members are treated fairly, with respect and dignity, and as far as possible to remove potential barriers to improving mental and physical health, employment or volunteering caused by discriminatory practices. We have developed this policy in addition to our responsibility to take all relevant legislation into consideration but in particular:

- the Equality Act 2010 which makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person because of one of the following protected characteristics:
 - Age
 - Disability (The Equality Act defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. **The Act states that a person who has Multiple Sclerosis is a disabled person.**)
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and Civil Partnership
 - Pregnancy and Maternity
 - Race
 - Religion or Belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual Orientation(Hereafter referred to as the “protected characteristics”)
- the Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000 which make it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of a person’s part-time employment status
- the Fixed-Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 which make it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of a person’s fixed-term employment status
- the Equal Opportunities Commission, Commission for Racial Equality, and Disability Rights Commission Codes of Practice

Policy

The Equality and Diversity Policy underpins all the organisation's policies and procedures. The policy is intended to create a culture where all forms of discriminatory behaviour are unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

The Centre seeks to provide equality of opportunity through its:

- staff recruitment, employment, and support by improving access to advertisements, posts, training and support.
- volunteer recruitment and support by advertising widely, broadening the range of tasks, providing training and extra help / support / encouragement to those with varying needs.
- overall image / communications through using positive images that reflect diversity, equality, and inclusiveness.
- provision of services which will be anti-discriminatory, appropriate to varying needs, and whenever possible, encouraging of user involvement.
- provision of training, enabling staff and volunteers to understand, comply with and implement this policy.

Strategy

The Centre will aim to:

- ensure that the building and facilities are accessible to people with any type of impairment and ensure that their needs are considered
- ensure that the services it offers are open and accessible to all members
- be flexible and recognise that everybody is different
- be aware of how people may find it difficult to join in and to offer support and encouragement to help those who find it difficult to participate
- recognise that the Centre cannot meet everyone's needs, but can address the needs of those who feel unable to participate because of discrimination
- consider the most appropriate ways of circulating and displaying information about their services.

Responsibilities

The consistent application and effectiveness of the policy will be regularly reviewed and overall responsibility for its implementation rests with the manager. The Board of Trustees may also request a review of the policy when issues are identified. It is the duty of the manager and the Board of Trustees to promote this policy within the Centre.

Sussex MS Centre manager is responsible for the successful application of the policy by:

- not discriminating in the course of employment against job applicants, employees, customers, suppliers, or members of the public with whom contact is made
- not inducing or attempting to induce others to practice unlawful discrimination
- bringing to the attention of employees that they will be subject to disciplinary action for failure to adhere to the policy
- encouraging employees to bring any concerns of unlawful discrimination to the management's attention

- ensuring all reasonable steps are taken to prevent employees from being harassed during the course of their employment by any third party such as members, clients, suppliers, contractors, and visitors on the premises.

Employees are responsible for ensuring that they co-operate with the implementation of the policy by:

- not discriminating in the course of their employment against fellow employees, members, volunteers, suppliers, contractors, or members of the public with whom contact is made
- not inducing or attempting to induce others to practise unlawful discrimination
- reporting any discriminatory action observed

Employees who act in a discriminatory way or in breach of this policy will be liable to disciplinary action, up to and including summary dismissal. Employees who consider that they have been discriminated against should report the matter directly to the manager or Board.

Sussex MS Centre expects all Staff, Centre Members, Volunteers and Visitors to adhere to and abide by this policy.

Inclusive and supportive provision

- Event and programme planning ensures that, as much as possible, activities are offered at different times (including evenings) so that as many members as possible are able to attend
- Members are invited to feedback to the Centre through our feedback and suggestions book, putting comments in the Trustees feedback box or by email to the Centre Manager or Trustees
- Any complaints, especially about bullying and harassment of members or staff, are to be taken seriously, investigated and acted upon swiftly.

Discrimination

It is important that all employees are aware of and understand the legislation concerning equality:

- It is unlawful to discriminate directly i.e. by treating a person less favourably because of a protected characteristic or because of their part-time or fixed-term status
- It is also unlawful to discriminate indirectly i.e. by applying a provision, criterion or practice, which when or if it were to be applied equally to all persons, would have the effect of putting a group of people who share a protected characteristic at a disadvantage compared to those who do not share that protected characteristic
- It is unlawful to unjustifiably discriminate against a person because of something that arises in consequence of their disability
- Employees who commit acts of discrimination will be liable to disciplinary action, up to and including summary dismissal. Employees must be wary of using words or phrases which offend or may cause offence to people because of one of the protected characteristics.

Victimisation

Any person found to have victimised another person in these circumstances will be liable to disciplinary action, up to and including summary dismissal.

Harassment

This arises when a person is subjected to unwanted conduct related to one of the protected characteristics, and the conduct has the purpose or effect of violating that person's dignity, or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, embarrassing, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

It may include any unwanted non-verbal, verbal, or physical abuse, which is derogatory and potentially offensive. Harassment will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Sussex MS Centre will do all that is reasonably possible to prevent harassment occurring.

Examples of harassment include offensive and insensitive quips and jokes which are related to a person's sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation or disability, the deliberate exclusion and isolation of an individual, threatening, or insulting words or behaviour, and the display of abusive writing or pictures.

Sussex MS Centre considers that harassment by an employee amounts to gross misconduct, which will be dealt with under its disciplinary procedure and may lead to summary dismissal. Any complaint of harassment should be made to the Manager. The matter will be dealt with in a discreet and confidential manner and appropriate action taken.

Date Created/Reviewed by Centre Manager	Date Approved by Board of Trustees	Next Review Date
15 March 2022	28 March 2022	March 2023
4 September 2024	10 September 2024	September 2026