



Title of Policy: Equality of Opportunities

Effective Date: October 2014

Review Date: November 2017, Next review due: November 2018

1. Rationale or background to policy:

Wecan believes in a policy of equal opportunities for all. We aim to offer dignity and respect and to foster good relations to all people on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential regardless of gender, race, ethnic or national origin, age, socio-economic background, disability, religious or political beliefs, sexual identity or family circumstances. Treating people equally does not necessarily involve treating them all the same. Our policies, procedures and activities must not discriminate but must nevertheless take account of differences of life-experience, outlook and background, and in the kinds of barrier and disadvantage which people may face, in relation to:

- disability, so that reasonable adjustments are made
- ethnicity, so that different cultural backgrounds and experiences of prejudice are recognised
- gender, so that the different needs and experiences of girls and boys, and women and men, are recognised
- religion, belief or faith background
- Sexual identity.

2. Policy Statement:

We intend that our policies, procedures and activities should promote:

- positive attitudes towards disabled people, good relations between disabled and non-disabled people, and an absence of harassment of disabled people
- positive interaction, good relations and dialogue between groups and communities different from each other in terms of ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin or national status, and an absence of prejudice-related bullying and incidents
- Mutual respect and good relations between boys and girls, and women and men, and an absence of sexual and homophobic harassment.

Employment

We ensure that policies and procedures should benefit all employees and potential employees, for example in recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development. We can will not discriminate on the grounds of disability, ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin or national status, gender and sexual identity against anyone who is employed by the organisation or who applies for employment.

Individuals will be selected, promoted and treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities, having regard to their skills, qualifications and experience. Recruitment methods will be used that welcome applications from disabled people and which ensure that they are not unfairly excluded from consideration because of disability. All employees will have the same access to training, career development and promotion opportunities within the organisation. All employees will be expected to provide support to colleagues whenever appropriate.

Inclusive Practice

We aim to maximise positive impacts by reducing and removing inequalities and barriers that may already exist between disabled and non-disabled people. We intend that our policies and activities should benefit society as a whole, both locally and nationally, by fostering greater social cohesion and inclusion, and greater participation in public life of all people, regardless of their disability, ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin or national status, gender or sexual identity.

We believe it is the right of all people to lead a fulfilling life and we are opposed to all forms of prejudice which stand in the way of this. All staff members are expected to promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos in their groups and outings and deal with any prejudice-related incidents that may occur. We will ensure that all staff, including support and administrative staff, receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development, both as individuals and as groups or teams.

Legal framework

- 1 We welcome our duties under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations in relation to age (as appropriate), disability, ethnicity, gender, religion and sexual identity.
- 2 We recognise these duties are essential for achieving the five outcomes of the Every Child Matters framework, and that they reflect international human rights standards as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and the Human Rights Act 1998.

Guiding principles

In fulfilling the legal obligations cited overleaf, we are guided by nine principles:

Principle 1:

All children and young people are of equal value.

We see all children and young people, and their parents and carers, of equal value:

- whether or not they are disabled
- whatever their ethnicity, culture, national origin or national status
- whatever their gender and gender identity
- whatever their religious or non-religious affiliation or faith background
- whatever their sexual identity.
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Principle 2:

We recognise and respect difference.

Treating people equally (Principle 1 above) does not necessarily involve treating them all the same. Our policies, procedures and activities must not discriminate but must nevertheless take account of differences of life-experience, outlook and background, and in the kinds of barrier and disadvantage which people may face, in relation to:

- disability, so that reasonable adjustments are made
- ethnicity, so that different cultural backgrounds and experiences of prejudice are recognised
- gender, so that the different needs and experiences of girls and boys, and women and men, are recognised
- religion, belief or faith background
- sexual identity.

Principle 3:

We foster positive attitudes and relationships, and a shared sense of cohesion and belonging.

We intend that our policies, procedures and activities should promote:

- positive attitudes towards disabled people, good relations between disabled and non-disabled people, and an absence of harassment of disabled people
- positive interaction, good relations and dialogue between groups and communities different from each other in terms of ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin or national status, and an absence of prejudice-related bullying and incidents
- mutual respect and good relations between boys and girls, and women and men, and an absence of sexual and homophobic harassment.

Principle 4:**We observe good equalities practice in staff recruitment, retention and development**

We ensure that policies and procedures should benefit all employees and potential employees, for example in recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development:

- whether or not they are disabled
- whatever their ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin or national status
- whatever their gender and sexual identity, and with full respect for legal rights relating to pregnancy and maternity.

Principle 5:**We aim to reduce and remove inequalities and barriers that already exist**

In addition to avoiding or minimising possible negative impacts of our policies, we take opportunities to maximise positive impacts by reducing and removing inequalities and barriers that may already exist between:

- disabled and non-disabled people
- people of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds
- girls and boys, women and men.

Principle 6:**We consult and involve widely**

People affected by a policy or activity should be consulted and involved in the design of new policies, and in the review of existing ones. We consult and involve:

- disabled people as well as non-disabled
- people from a range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds
- both women and men, and girls and boys.
- Gay people as well as straight.

Principle 7:**Society as a whole should benefit**

We intend that our policies and activities should benefit society as a whole, both locally and nationally, by fostering greater social cohesion, and greater participation in public life of:

- disabled people as well as non-disabled
- people of a wide range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds
- both women and men, girls and boys
- gay people as well as straight.

Ethos and organisation

We ensure the principles listed above apply to the full range of our policies and practices, including those that are concerned with:

- children and young people’s personal development, welfare and well-being
- admissions and attendance
- staff recruitment, retention and professional development
- care, guidance and support
- behaviour, discipline and exclusions
- working in partnership with parents, carers and guardians
- working with the wider community.

Addressing prejudice and prejudice-related bullying

Wecan is opposed to all forms of prejudice which stand in the way of fulfilling our legal duties as outlined in this policy.

- prejudices around disability and special educational needs
- prejudices around racism and xenophobia, including those that are directed towards religious groups and communities, for example anti semitism and Islamophobia, and those that are directed against travellers, migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum
- prejudices reflecting sexism and homophobia.

There is guidance in our procedures about on how prejudice-related incidents should be identified, assessed, recorded and dealt with.

We take seriously our obligation to report regularly to the local authority about the numbers, types and seriousness of prejudice-related incidents at Wecan and how they are dealt with.

Roles and responsibilities

The Board of Trustees are responsible for ensuring that Wecan complies with legislation, and that this policy and its related procedures and action plans are implemented.

The Service Manager is responsible for implementing the policy; for ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and are given appropriate training and support; and for taking appropriate action in any cases of unlawful discrimination.

Senior staff have day-to-day responsibility for co-ordinating implementation of the policy.

All staff are expected to:

- promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos during sessions and deal with any

prejudice-related incidents that may occur

- plan and deliver sessions that reflect the principles above
- support children and young people for whom English is an additional language
- keep up-to-date with equalities legislation relevant to their work.

Information and resources

We ensure that the content of this policy is known to all Trustees, staff and volunteers and, as appropriate, to all children, young people and their parents and carers.

Religious observance

We respect the religious beliefs and practice of all children and young people and parents, and comply with reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice.

Staff development and training

We ensure that all staff, including support and administrative staff, receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development, both as individuals and as groups or teams.

Breaches of the policy

Breaches of this policy will be dealt with in the same ways that breaches of other Wecan policies are dealt with, as determined by the Service Manager and Board of Trustees.