



## Equalities Policy

### 1. Introduction

Amaze is an organisation set up to empower children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and their families. We champion inclusion and lobby against inequality experienced as a result of a special educational need, disability or long-term health condition.

We pride ourselves on creating a culture that challenges prejudice, and values diversity. We are committed to ensuring that all the families we support, staff we employ and volunteers we involve feel welcome and are not discriminated against or treated unfairly. Challenging discrimination is central to Amaze's core values, as well as those of its service users and within the local community.

It is a priority for Amaze to consider how protected characteristics and disability combine for many families in Sussex, and how this impacts experiences of SEND. An organisation we are committed to looking harder at how different kinds of discrimination are interconnected, which can create even greater inequality. This is called 'intersectionality'.

This policy sets out the steps taken by Amaze to prevent discrimination in our governance, services and employment.

Our equality, diversity and inclusion goals are to:

- Ensure fair and equal access to our services including understanding the needs of the families we currently support and will support in the future
- Develop our services with an awareness and understanding of equality and diversity issues.
- Show clear leadership and good governance on equality, diversity, and inclusion, with action plans in place to drive forward policy and practices
- Make sure that the make-up of our Board and staff team reflects the communities we serve and are well-informed about equality, diversity, and inclusion.

### 2. Definitions

This Equalities Policy aims to prevent direct, indirect, associative and perceptive discrimination.

- Direct Discrimination is treating a person less favourably than others are or would be treated in the same or similar circumstances on the grounds of age, disability, race (including colour, ethnic origin or nationality), gender reassignment, sex, sexual orientation, responsibility for dependants (including pregnancy and maternity), religion/belief, marital status or sexual health status (all these will be described as protected characteristics in this document from this point onwards).
- Indirect Discrimination is an unjustifiable requirement or condition which appears to apply equally to everyone but which has a discriminatory effect on people who possess a protected characteristic.
- Associative Discrimination is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.
- Perceptive Discrimination is direct discrimination against someone because others think they possess a protected characteristic.

The policy also covers harassment, third-party harassment and victimisation.

- Harassment is defined as any uninvited, unwelcome or unreciprocated behaviour which is offensive to a person (even if it is not directed at them) and causes that person to feel



threatened, intimidated, humiliated or embarrassed or creates an environment which is hostile or offensive to that person.

- Third-party harassment is defined as harassment by people other than workers at the Amaze (e.g. members of the public, suppliers, users of the same buildings as us).
- Victimisation is defined as harassment that occurs as a result of a worker or service user making or supporting a complaint, or raising a grievance, or because they are suspected of having done so.

### **3. Scope**

- Amaze will ensure all staff and volunteers are aware of the Equalities Policy and will support them to apply it to promote equality, recognise diversity and counteract discrimination throughout their work.
- It is a condition of employment that every member of staff understands, complies with and implements this policy.
- All staff are responsible for making every effort to prevent all types of discrimination within the organisation and ensuring our services are equally accessible to groups and individuals from all communities.
- Staff must not:
  - discriminate against other staff or users of our services
  - encourage others to practise discrimination
  - harass, abuse or victimise other staff or members of the public

### **4. Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion working group**

Amaze runs an internal Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion working group in which all staff are invited to participate. The group aims to:

- Evaluate Amaze as a service provider to, an engagement partner with, and as a place of work for, people with different protected characteristics
- Develop our inclusive practice to better reach, support and represent these communities
- Provide courageous leadership around, and challenge anti-discriminatory practice, as a leader in Sussex's charity-sector

The working group is a safe space to discuss ideas and opinions and it determines what it wants to cover, how issues are prioritised, and how to share the thinking with the wider team. The group oversees an action plan which seeks to address barriers to inclusion and strives to achieve good practice across different equality strands. The group has input to this policy being developed/updated

### **5. Equality in governance**

- Amaze will aim to ensure that its trustees and management committee reflect, as far as possible, the diverse community served by Amaze. In addition to a skills audit, we collect diversity monitoring information on trustees which is used to identify gaps and target recruitment
- In particular, parent carers will be encouraged to become trustees in line with the Amaze ethos of being a parent-led organisation seeking to empower parent carers of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Amaze will ensure that the views of young people are also represented in the governance arrangements of the organisation, using a variety of ways to secure this, eg by inviting young people from our Amazing Futures project to attend and contribute to management committee meeting as observers, by the young people interns facilitating discussion in voice group meetings which are then fed into management/governance meetings and we are also working towards supporting young people to join the Committee directly, with the appropriate support in place

### **6. Equality in our services**



Amaze is mindful of this policy in planning, delivering and evaluating all its services. Amaze will ensure all staff and volunteers involved in delivering Amaze services are aware of the Equalities Policy and will support and train them to apply it, to promote equality, recognise diversity and counteract discrimination throughout their work.

Amaze aims to make its services as accessible as possible. These are some examples of how we do this:

- Amaze exists to provide a service to the local community. Users are therefore drawn from a wide variety of communities present in Sussex. Staff and volunteers will ensure that they treat all users with respect and dignity. Where users have particular needs, we will do everything possible to meet these needs.
- We are committed to offering services in a manner appropriate to the needs and abilities of each individual user.
- Services are provided at times/locations which seek to ensure maximum accessibility. We aim to ensure that daytime workshops, conferences or meetings are held during school term times during the school day, and are supported by a crèche or reimbursement of childcare costs wherever possible. Such events will be held at venues that are easily accessible by public transport and are accessible to wheelchair users and people with mobility and/or sensory difficulties. We also endeavour to hold some workshops and events in the evening in order to accommodate working parents and carers. Events for young people are generally after the school day has finished.
- Our main Brighton premises are fully accessible to wheelchair users, with wide doorways and passages throughout, and an accessible toilet.
- When using others' venues we ensure these too are fully accessible, booking facilities such as a hearing system and a portable induction loop for use where people are using hearing aids.
- Our publications and publicity materials are available in different formats on request.
- Our main service leaflet is translated and available on our website in 9 different languages.
- Our website has an area dedicated to our approach to equalities, diversity and inclusion
- We have developed a statement on the language we use around disability, showing this is rooted in the social model of disability and we use the most commonly understood language around disability at the current time
- Amaze accesses and provides interpreting services where necessary and whenever possible. We have an agreed pathway with Sussex Interpreting Services (SIS). Users who would find it hard to contact us in the first instance due to a language barrier can contact SIS first. They will identify if Amaze can help, which of our services they need and let us know to set up an interpreter for this.
- We have regard to readability in all our publications and ensure that the website meets good practice standards for accessibility.
- As a matter of policy, our services are either free at the point of delivery or prices are kept as low as possible, in order to ensure we are accessible to as many families as possible.
- Amaze has a specific commitment to promoting equality in relation to disability and caring responsibilities. Amaze promotes the voice of parent carers and the voice and social inclusion of disabled children and young people. This will include support for the Parent Carer Forums, involvement in local and national consultations and representation on local strategic bodies.

### **Right to withdraw services**

In some circumstances Amaze reserves the right to withdraw services, for example when a service user is persistently discriminatory or threatening in their language or behaviour. Trustees and managers will support staff and acknowledge that individual members of staff have the right to decide when a particular situation has become serious enough for a service to be withdrawn. In this instance the following procedure should be followed:

- Staff and volunteers should give a verbal warning that the behaviour and/or comment is unacceptable and must cease. The service user will be informed that continuation of this behaviour could result in their support being withdrawn.



- If this verbal warning does not lead to the behaviour ceasing, the member of staff or volunteer may temporarily withdraw the service. The Chief Executive should then be consulted and the service user may be given a written warning that the service will be withdrawn if the discriminatory behaviour continues.
- If this fails, the service can be withdrawn either for a specified period or permanently. This decision must be confirmed in writing by the Chief Executive and the trustees informed.

## **7. Equality in employment**

- Amaze is committed to creating and maintaining a supportive working environment based on mutual respect and trust, celebrating and valuing diversity within its staff, volunteers and in the wider community.
- Amaze will aim to promote equality of opportunity and to challenge and strive to eliminate discrimination in relation to recruitment of staff and volunteers; working environment and conditions of employment or volunteering; opportunities for training and development. This will include making reasonable adjustments for disabled employees, as set out in our Reasonable Adjustments Policy and associated Health Passport.
- All job applicants are considered on the basis of merit, abilities and potential. No job applicant or member of staff will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of a protected characteristic that they might have.
- Amaze has a separate policy document to be read in conjunction with this Equalities Policy on Recruitment and Selection Procedures. This outlines:
  - Our approach to use of an open recruitment process to avoid discrimination through selection
  - Positive action in the employment of parent carers, disabled people and people from diverse communities
  - That vacancies are advertised locally, on our website and through advertisements in the local press/charity media etc, and through notices on email listings which are accessed by other voluntary organisations and diverse communities in Sussex
  - Job applicants are given information about the access details of the building, and are offered reasonable adjustments/ assistance necessary in attending an interview, if shortlisted
  - That Amaze collects diversity monitoring information in relation to recruitment and Amaze's staff and volunteers and take appropriate steps to review procedures to encourage applications from under-represented groups.
- It is a term of both the Contract of Employment and Volunteer Agreement that employees and volunteers familiarise themselves with the Equalities Policy and co-operate in its implementation. Breaches of this Equality Policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings. Staff and volunteers are entitled to use the Grievance Procedures referred to in the Contract of Employment and Volunteer Agreement in cases of perceived discriminatory behaviour by other staff/volunteers.
- Responsibility for ensuring that there is no unlawful discrimination rests with all staff and the attitudes of staff are crucial to the successful operation of fair employment practices. In particular, all members of staff are required to:
  - Comply with the policy and arrangements;
  - Not discriminate in their day to day activities or induce others to do so;
  - Not victimise, harass or intimidate other staff, service-users or groups who have, or are perceived to have, one of the protected characteristics.
  - Ensure no individual is discriminated against or harassed because of their association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.
  - Inform their manager if they become aware of any discriminatory practice.
- Staff training is planned and implemented with the aim of achieving appropriate levels of skill and knowledge among staff.

## **8. Tackling discrimination, harassment or anti-social behaviour**



Amaze will tackle discriminatory comments and behaviour in a way that demonstrates that they are inconsistent with the principles and implementation of this equality policy.

- Amaze will ensure that staff and volunteers are supported in challenging service users who make discriminatory comments by stating directly to the perpetrator that such behaviour and/or comments are regarded by Amaze as unacceptable.
- Amaze will investigate any concerns or complaints that service users may have regarding discrimination by its staff and/or volunteers. Where appropriate, Amaze will offer service users the opportunity to make a formal complaint which will then be investigated as outlined in the Complaints Policy and appropriate action taken, if necessary.
- Any member of staff or volunteer who harasses another staff member or volunteer, or any user of Amaze, or behaves in a way which creates an offensive and hostile environment, will be subject to disciplinary proceedings.
- Amaze will take steps to ensure that members of staff are protected from harassment from third parties, as soon as such behaviour is reported to another member of staff, or if it is witnessed by another member of staff.
- Amaze will ensure that members of staff do not treat another member of staff or member of the community badly because they have made a complaint or raised a grievance or supported another member of staff who has.

#### **9. Monitoring**

- The CEO has overall responsibility for ensuring that the Equalities Policy is implemented and adhered to; they also have overall responsibility for monitoring its effectiveness through monitoring recruitment, complaints and grievances
- Staff recruitment and selection is monitored by means of a confidential Diversity Monitoring form. These forms are separated from the application forms as soon as they are received. The monitoring forms are used for statistical analysis only and form no part of the selection process.
- We monitor individuals accessing our services and use this information to review how diverse our community involvement is, and target publicity accordingly.
- The CEO will report on the effectiveness of this policy to the trustee as part of regular updates to the Personnel Sub-Group.