



# Equality and Diversity Policy

**Reviewed and adopted Nov 2020  
Next review due Nov 2022**

## **Policy Statement**

Read for Good recognises that certain individuals, groups and communities face discrimination, harassment and victimisation and we believe it is essential to have an equality and diversity policy to help us think clearly about how we can ensure all individuals are treated equally and with respect. We are committed to promoting and valuing equality and diversity in all of our activities and respect all forms of difference in individuals while positively striving to meet the needs of different people.

Read for Good welcomes and celebrates the diversity of the communities in which we work, and are strongly committed to achieving equal opportunities and access for all people and groups in society.

Equality and diversity is the cornerstone of all of our policies and procedures. We are proud of the actions we take to eliminate discrimination and prejudice to ensure inclusion and engagement for all the people who work and volunteer with us or wish to use our services. We will continue to strive towards a culture that is diverse and which recognises and develops the potential of all our staff, volunteers and service.

## **Diversity**

Diversity is about respecting and valuing all forms of difference in individuals and positively striving to meet the needs of different people. It goes beyond equal opportunities legislation, encompassing any aspect of an individual that isn't directly related to their ability to do a specific job or undertake a particular task such as:

- Approach to work
- Values
- Experience
- Family commitments
- Where someone lives

People with different backgrounds and attitudes bring fresh ideas and perceptions, and as a diverse organisation we can draw upon the widest range of experiences so that we can offer the best services possible and be a welcoming place to work.

Read for Good will encourage diversity to maximise achievement, creativity and good practice and to bring benefits to individuals and communities. We will encourage all people we work with, and for, to contribute to an environment in which people feel comfortable expressing how they feel and what they need, knowing they will be treated with respect and that their contribution is valued. We will endeavour to deliver services in a way that genuinely recognises the importance of an inclusive society and that brings opportunities and access, not barriers to individuals.

## **Definitions**

Special legislation exists to promote equality of opportunity. In this policy “discrimination” means where a person is treated less favourably on the grounds defined in:

### **Equality Act 2010**

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) became law on 1 October 2010 harmonising and replacing previous legislation including the Equal Pay Act 1970, the Sex Discrimination Act 1995, the Race Relations Act 1976, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and three major statutory instruments protecting discrimination in employment on grounds of religion or belief, sexual orientation and age.

The Act covers the same groups as were protected by previous equality legislation, now known as ‘protected characteristics’ as set out below.

### **Protected Characteristics**

**Age** - the Act protects people of all ages. It continues to allow a default retirement age of 65 until April 2011.

**Disability** - a person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, which would include things like using a telephone, reading a book or using public transport.

**Gender reassignment** - a transsexual person is someone who proposes to, starts or has completed a process to change his or her gender. The Act no longer requires a person to be under medical supervision to be protected.

**Marriage and civil partnerships** - the Act protects Personnel who are married or in a civil partnership against discrimination.

**Pregnancy and maternity** - a woman is protected against discrimination during the period of her pregnancy and any statutory maternity leave to which she is entitled.

**Race** - the definition of race includes colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins.

**Religion or belief** - religion includes any religion which has a clear structure and belief system and also no religion. Belief means any religious or philosophical belief or lack of such belief. The criteria for belief must include weighty and substantial aspects of human life and behaviour.

**Sex** - this protects both men and women.

**Sexual orientation** - bisexual, gay, heterosexual and lesbian people are protected.

The types of discrimination covered by the Act and this policy are:

### **Direct Discrimination**

This occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have (see perception discrimination below) or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic (see discrimination by association below).

### **Indirect Discrimination**

This now applies to all the above protected characteristics except pregnancy and maternity and can occur when there is a condition, rule, policy or practice that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic. Indirect discrimination can be justified if it can be shown that an employer acted reasonably in managing their charity i.e. it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. A legitimate aim may be any lawful decision made in running their charity.

### **Discrimination by Association**

This applies to all the above protected characteristics except marriage and civil partnerships and pregnancy and maternity and is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.

### **Perception Discrimination**

This applies to all the above protected characteristics except marriage and civil partnerships and pregnancy and maternity and is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic, even if that person does not actually possess that characteristic.

### **Harassment**

This is unwanted conduct by Personnel related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual and applies to all protected characteristics except pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnerships.

### **Victimisation**

This is where an employee is treated badly because they have made or supported a valid complaint or raised a true grievance under the Act or because they are suspected of doing so.

## **Discrimination arising out of disability**

This is where discrimination arises when a disabled person is treated unfavourably because of something connected with their disability (e.g. a tendency to make spelling mistakes arising from dyslexia). This type of discrimination is unlawful where the employer or other person acting for the employer knows or could reasonably be expected to know, that the person has a disability. This type of discrimination is only justifiable if an employer can show that it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

## **Policy**

Read for Good will:

- Fulfil its social responsibility towards its Personnel (staff, freelancers including storytellers, trustees and volunteers) and the community. We believe that this policy and practice is a means of maximising the effective use of human resources in its own and its employee's best interests. We also believe that the promotion of equal opportunity in respect of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation is important for local community harmony and the projection of Read for Good's public image.
- Protect Personnel from discrimination arising from disability i.e. treating a disabled person unfavourably because of something connected with their disability, unless it is not possible to make reasonable adjustments or such discrimination is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- Review recruitment and selection criteria, training and promotion procedures on a regular basis to maintain a system where individuals are selected, promoted and treated solely on the basis of their merits, performance and abilities which are appropriate to do the job.
- Not use pre-employment health questionnaires or questions in the recruitment process prior to offer unless it is to establish whether a candidate can undergo an assessment for the job such as a test or interview; carry out an intrinsic function of the job itself or to monitor diversity.
- Seek to give equal opportunity and encouragement to all Personnel to progress within the charity.
- Publicise our policy statement throughout the charity and elsewhere as appropriate.
- Provide equal opportunities information and training to those involved in recruitment and/or line management and generally enhance Personnel understanding of the need for an equal opportunities programme.
- Provide both formal and informal procedures for any employee who believes that he/she has been treated inequitably within the scope of this policy.

The charity will take positive action such as providing training to particular groups of Personnel, where appropriate as a proportionate means of enabling or encouraging people with a protected characteristic to overcome or minimise disadvantage, or participate in activity where they are underrepresented

## **CODE OF PRACTICE**

### **Recruitment**

The recruitment process must result in the selection of the most suitable person for the job. Job advertisements will encourage applications from all suitably qualified and experienced people through internal and external advertising. Advertisements will be carefully worded to ensure that no intent of either direct or indirect discrimination is interpreted nor is there indication of stereotyping of roles.

All applicants will be advised that the charity is an Equal Opportunities Employer and that the policy is to ensure that no job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which have a disproportionately adverse effect on his/her age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation which cannot be shown to be justified.

Selection criteria and procedures are intended to ensure that individuals are selected, promoted and treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities. All information provided by applicants will be treated as confidential.

### **Selection Process**

The selection process must be carried out consistently for all jobs at all levels within the charity and must be seen to be fair and non-discriminatory. Selection criteria must be objective, job related and carefully assessed to ensure that the characteristics specified are necessary to carry out the duties of the job safely.

### **Interviews**

If you are involved in conducting recruitment interviews you must ensure you have read and understood this procedure. You should ensure that you take an unbiased approach towards candidates and only ask questions which relate to the job and which are non-discriminatory (e.g. questions about marriage plans and intention to have a family may be construed as showing discrimination against women).

### **Employee Training and Development**

The charity is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity in terms of access to training in order to increase Personnel knowledge and skills and to provide opportunities to develop their potential. This shall be implemented through:

- continuous review of any training courses and literature
- ensuring training materials are free from bias and do not discriminate
- ensuring criteria for promotions are justifiable and unbiased
- ensuring any performance, salary and bonus reviews are carried out fairly and consistently in line with procedure.

## Read for Good Policies in Practice

- This policy is reviewed on the date shown by the CEO and Operations Manager, with any changes approved by the Board of Trustees.
- Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Board of Trustees delegated to the CEO.
- This policy applies to all Read for Good personnel (including staff, trustees, freelancers, storytellers and volunteers) because embracing diversity and providing equality is relevant to everyone and promotes a work culture which values talent beyond stereotypes and helps people reach their potential by contributing their best beyond any prejudice.
- This policy is shared with all relevant personnel via: induction, team meetings, board reports, website, shared drive.
- Read for Good ensures implementation and compliance of this policy by: making sure staff have appropriate input into the review process, discussion and training, leadership team modelling and reinforcing policy content into day to day work, by trustees showing focus and leadership over policy issues and a regular review process.
- Any personnel or service user who believes that he/she has been the subject of discrimination on any of the grounds contained within this procedure, should follow Read for Good's Complaints policy. Complaints or concerns about adherence to the policy are handled with regular opportunities for all staff to speak in confidence to their manager, or the CEO or Trustee if the complaint or concern is about their line manager or CEO not adhering to a policy. Staff are encouraged to explain clearly what the lack of adherence relates to. The CEO and the person responsible for the policy have the opportunity to discuss the issue, and establish if it is a systems error, or an individual issue. For a systems error, systems will be improved and updated, and training for all staff will be undertaken. In a case of clear policy breach by an individual, the individual is given an opportunity to correct their error. If the adherence issue is persistent then training and monitoring will be offered and implemented, with reviews at appropriate points. Continued breaches may put the individual at risk of dismissal.