



Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

1. Introduction:

Essex Family Forum is committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion among our workforce, and eliminating unlawful discrimination. The aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and our service users, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

Essex Family Forum - in executing its duties as a Parent Carer Forum - is also committed against unlawful discrimination of the public and individuals in other organisations we may link with.

This policy is fully supported and agreed by the Essex Family Forum Management Committee.

2. Policy Scope:

This policy applies to all employees, workers and volunteers, including the Management Committee.

3. Policy Purpose:

This policy's purpose is to:

- Provide equality, fairness and respect for all in our employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time
- Not unlawfully discriminate according to the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010, which are:
 - age
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage or civil partnership
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin)
 - religion or belief

- sex
- sexual orientation
- Oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in:
 - pay and benefits
 - terms and conditions of employment
 - dealing with grievances and discipline
 - dismissal
 - redundancy
 - leave for parents
 - requests for flexible working
 - selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities

4. Policy Background:

4.1 The following legislation and guidance are relevant to this policy:

- Equality Act 2010
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- ACAS Code of Practice

This list is not exhaustive.

5. Policy Guidance:

5.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Essex Family Forum Disciplinary procedure and the Essex Family Forum Grievance Procedure, which includes information on Harassment, Bullying and Victimisation. The Company Handbook, which contains the Code of Conduct, should also be referred to.

6. Policy Wording:

6.1 The organisation commits to:

- Encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace as they are good practice and make business sense
- Creating a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.

6.2 This commitment includes training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the equality, diversity and inclusion policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

- 6.3** All staff should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, service users, suppliers and the public.
- 6.4** Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities.

Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

Further, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

- 6.5** Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
- 6.6** Make decisions concerning staff being based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
- 6.7** Review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.
- 6.8** Monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality, diversity and inclusion policy.

Monitoring will also include assessing how the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

7. Policy Procedure:

7.1 For employees:

Any breach of this policy and/or the legislation underpinning this, which includes any incidence of Harassment, Bullying or Victimisation should initially be raised following the Essex Family Forum Grievance procedure.

The Essex Family Forum Grievance procedure can be found in the files of the Microsoft Teams Channel: HR Staff Portal > Policies and Guidance or by contacting Human resources and requesting a copy.

7.2 For non-employees:

Non-employees, includes workers, volunteers and members of the public or other service providers.

Any breach of this policy and/or the legislation underpinning this, which includes any incidence of Harassment, Bullying or Victimisation should initially be raised following the Essex Family Forum Complaints procedure.

The Essex family Forum Complaints Procedure can be found on the Essex Family Forum Website: www.essexfamilyforum.org

7.3 Following an investigation under the appropriate procedure (Grievance or Complaints procedure), where allegations are proved to be founded that a breach of this policy may have occurred, appropriate action will be taken to prevent further incidences.

This may include further investigation involving the Company's Disciplinary Procedure, or potentially involvement of the police, where a potential crime may have been committed.

7.4 Where the allegation is about an employee and it is appropriate for The Essex Family Forum Disciplinary Procedure to be used, an investigation will be carried out in to the allegations. In the most serious of circumstances a breach of this policy may amount to Gross Misconduct, which may result in dismissal without notice.

7.5 Use of the organisation's Grievance or Disciplinary Procedures does not affect an employee's right to make a claim to an employment tribunal within three months of the alleged discrimination.

8. Approval and Review Dates:

Approved on: 14th September 2022

Approved by: Management Committee

Date for Review: September 2023