

Equality Diversity And Inclusion Policy

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1.Introduction & Scope

Sarah's Star is committed to fostering an environment grounded in Accessibility, Collaboration, Enablement, Innovation, and Quality. These values guide us in creating a workplace where our staff, volunteers, and trustees feel a profound sense of purpose and belonging. Our members and beneficiaries experience consistent support and recognition, as we prioritize being approachable, inclusive, and proactive—adapting our services to meet the varied needs of our community. We treat every individual who interacts with us, regardless of their background, with equal respect and courtesy.

What do we mean by Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion?

- **Equality** is about fairness and impartiality, acknowledging each person's unique circumstances and providing them with the resources needed to achieve equitable outcomes.

- **Diversity** recognizes and values our differences, encouraging everyone to contribute their unique perspectives, skills, and experiences to positively impact the broader community.
- **Inclusion** reflects the positive experiences people have within the workplace and society, fostering a sense of belonging and value.

Our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) policy is central to Sarah's Star values, setting out our commitment to:

- Promote equality, fairness, and respect across all employment and volunteer roles within Sarah's Star, whether full-time, part-time, or temporary.
- Ensure that service users, employees, suppliers, potential hires, and everyone we work with are treated equitably.
- Actively oppose and prevent any form of discrimination, whether related to pay, benefits, employment terms, grievances, disciplinary actions, redundancy, parental leave, flexible working requests, or development opportunities, as well as in the services we provide.

We celebrate the diversity of the communities and organizations we collaborate with, recognizing that every person brings value to society and has a right to equitable treatment. Our commitment is to foster an environment that is fair, supportive, and empowering for our service users and staff alike.

Sarah's Star Commitment as an Employer

As an employer, Sarah's Star is dedicated to nurturing a positive, supportive workplace for staff, trustees, and volunteers. We aim to have a workforce that reflects all sections of society, where each team member feels valued, safe, fulfilled, and empowered to be their best.

Sarah's Star Commitment as a Service Provider

We value the diversity of our service users, providing a safe and supportive experience for all. We see lived experience as an asset, not a barrier, and actively work to give a voice to marginalized groups, supporting their participation in shaping policies, services, and decision-making. Our environment is welcoming and free from harassment, intimidation, or discrimination, with an expectation that all who work with us treat each other with respect.

Every Sarah's Star staff member plays a role in upholding this policy, ensuring equal opportunity, promoting diversity, and preventing discrimination. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion are integral to nearly all aspects of our organization. Related policies—such as Discipline, Grievance, Recruitment and Selection, Respect and Dignity, Training, and Whistleblowing—are regularly reviewed to align with our EDI commitments.

2. Legal & Policy Framework

Whilst the main driver of this Policy is Sarah's Star desire to do whatever is necessary to provide genuine equality of opportunity, it is underpinned by legislation. The main legislation that covers equality and discrimination is the Equality Act (2010) The Equality Act covers the rights of everyone that we work with (including - actual and prospective - trustees, employees, volunteers, service users, partners and visitors) and protects against discrimination because of nine protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race • Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Sarah's Star will also have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty which came into force on 6th April 2011 and which emphasises the need for organisations carrying out a public function to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. Other legislation which impacts on equality, diversity and inclusivity includes but is by no means restricted to:

- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997;

- The Employment Act 2002;

- The Part Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000;

- The Fixed Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002; and

- The Human Rights Act 1998 Sarah's Star is committed to complying with all relevant legislation enacted or amended from time to time which underpins the principles of equality, diversity and inclusivity.

3. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the Recruitment and Selection of Employees

We recognize the value of employing individuals from diverse backgrounds, as this fosters a workforce where creativity flourishes, and differences are appreciated. By ensuring a fair and transparent recruitment process, Sarah's Star aims to build a team that better reflects the community it serves, brings together a broader range of talents, ideas, and creativity, and enhances overall employee satisfaction and well-being.

All trustees and employees involved in recruitment are required to follow Sarah's Star recruitment and selection policies and procedures, which aim to:

- Avoid both direct and indirect discrimination in job advertisements, as well as in where and how roles are promoted.
 - Prevent discrimination at any stage of the recruitment process, whether intentional or unintentional. Conditions and requirements must be justifiable, and reasonable adjustments should be made for candidates with disabilities if barriers are identified.
- Ensure that no applicant or potential candidate for employment or promotion within Sarah's Star is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that disproportionately impact them due to their protected characteristics.

In practical terms, this means that:

- Positions are advertised thoughtfully to attract a wide pool of applicants, avoiding wording or depictions that might deter candidates from applying.
 - Job adverts must accurately represent the role's requirements and avoid language that could be interpreted as discriminatory based on protected characteristics.
 - Job descriptions are crafted to be objective and inclusive, steering clear of language or requirements that may unintentionally discriminate based on any protected characteristic.
- Roles will be advertised externally, except when there is a clear reason not to do so.
- Sarah's Star is committed to treating all candidates for posts fairly, equitably, and efficiently, with respect and courtesy, aiming to ensure that the candidate experience is positive, irrespective of the outcome.

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The decision as to which applicant is offered a post (either recruitment or promotion) must be based entirely on the suitability of the individual for the post. However, where two candidates are equally qualified and suitable in all other respects, we may decide to offer the post to a candidate who is from a group that is under-represented in our workforce at that level.

3. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the Recruitment and Selection of Employees

We understand that our commitment to Equality and Diversity extends beyond recruitment, and we focus on three main objectives to support everyone at Sarah's Star

:

1. **Attracting, Developing, and Retaining Diverse Talent:** Sarah's Star will continue to recruit individuals from underrepresented groups and support our diverse talent by offering excellent development and career growth opportunities, ensuring everyone has the chance to thrive.
2. **Fostering Inclusive Leadership:** Sarah's Star will prioritize developing leaders who embody inclusivity, equipping them with the skills, confidence, and behaviors needed to build strong, positive relationships with colleagues and service users, fostering a culture of mutual support and accountability.

3. **Creating an Exceptional Employee Experience for All:** Sarah's Star is committed to cultivating an inclusive, respectful, and supportive culture. Staff will receive the tools and skills needed to uphold this environment, prioritizing well-being, respect, and the freedom to be authentic in the workplace.

In practice, this commitment includes:

- Offering all Sarah's Star staff, trustees, and volunteers equality and inclusion training to foster critical thinking, challenge inequality, and address inappropriate behavior.
- Applying all policies, pay structures, rewards, and benefits equitably, with regular reviews to ensure these are free from discrimination and unrelated to any characteristics beyond job performance.
 - Conducting regular staff health and well-being surveys and implementing findings, particularly regarding equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- Promoting a balanced approach to work and personal commitments, with flexible working options to enhance equal opportunities for all.
- Providing comprehensive training and development opportunities tailored to each individual's potential, as identified through induction, support, and personal development processes.
 - Addressing any instances of direct or indirect discrimination, victimization, or harassment through appropriate channels, including disciplinary procedures and whistleblowing protocols.
- Striving to maintain a trustee board that reflects the diversity of the communities Sarah's Star serves.

4. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in employment of staff

We understand that our commitment to Equality and Diversity extends beyond hiring, and we have three core objectives to enhance the experience for everyone working at Sarah's Star:

- **Attracting, Developing, and Retaining Diverse Talent:** Sarah's Star is dedicated to bringing in individuals from underrepresented groups and retaining our diverse team by providing exceptional development and career opportunities to support everyone's growth and success.
- **Cultivating Inclusive Leaders:** Sarah's Star focuses on empowering staff with the skills, confidence, and behaviors necessary to build positive, inclusive

relationships with colleagues and service users. This approach ensures everyone can thrive in an environment of shared expectations, accountability, and mutual respect.

- **Creating an Outstanding Employee Experience for All:** Sarah's Star is committed to fostering an inclusive, supportive, and respectful culture. Staff are encouraged to develop the skills and use the resources needed to sustain this environment, promoting well-being, respect, and authenticity within the workplace.

In practice, this commitment means:

- All Sarah's Star staff, trustees, and volunteers will have opportunities to participate in equality and inclusion training, developing critical-thinking skills to identify and address inequality and inappropriate behavior.
- All Sarah's Star policies, pay structures, rewards, benefits, and other employment conditions will be developed and applied without regard to **protected** characteristics or any factors unrelated to job performance, with regular reviews to ensure fairness and prevent discrimination.
- Regular staff health and well-being surveys will be conducted, with actionable insights implemented, including those addressing specific equality, diversity, and inclusion matters. We will create an appropriate balance between work and home commitments to maximise equal opportunities for all, including flexible working.
- • We will aim to give all employees the training and development opportunities needed to attain their full potential, as identified through induction /Support and Supervision and Personal Development and Review processes.
- Sarah's Star will respond to any allegations of direct or indirect discrimination, victimisation, or harassment through appropriate internal processes, including our disciplinary procedure and whistleblowing protocol.
- • Sarah's Star will aim to have a trustee board which is representative of the communities that Sarah's Star serves.

5. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Service Provision

Sarah's Star is dedicated to offering inclusive, accessible, and effective services and facilities to all, including trustees, employees, volunteers, service users, partners, and visitors. Recognizing the diverse backgrounds of those we serve, we are committed to fostering an environment that is welcoming and celebrates diversity.

In practice, this commitment means:

- Sarah's Star will take all reasonable steps to ensure that all trustees, employees, volunteers, service users, partners, and visitors are treated with respect and dignity in an environment free from harassment, bullying, and discrimination. We do not tolerate any form of harassment or discrimination, whether by Sarah's Star team members or by external parties, including clients, service users, contractors, and suppliers.
- We will make our offices, facilities, and any external venues used for events and training welcoming and accessible to all.
- Sarah's Star will offer a variety of channels to enable service users to access our services, including training, independently and appropriately.
 - Our communications will reflect our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion, and we will ensure that information provided, whether on our website or social media, is accessible and understandable for its intended audience.
 - We aim to broaden our outreach and engage with a representative range of individuals and organizations from the communities we serve, creating opportunities for members from underrepresented groups to share information across the Sarah's Star network.
 - Sarah's Star will provide a platform for marginalized groups, supporting their involvement in shaping policies, services, and decision-making.
 - Significant decisions, policies, plans, practices, and procedures will be informed by Equality Impact Assessments to promote inclusive practices across our operations.

6. Monitoring Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Sarah's Star will monitor its practices, services, and recruitment processes to ensure adherence to the highest standards of equality, diversity, and inclusion, sharing findings when appropriate to encourage best practices.

In practice, this means:

- Sarah's Star will analyze anonymized equality data to ensure that our services address the needs of underrepresented, under-resourced, or characteristic-based groups effectively.
- Sarah's Stars's Board will regularly review reports on the organization's progress in implementing Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (including issues like gender pay gaps, flexible working options, etc.) to ensure Sarah's Star strategic direction remains inclusive.

- Information on Sarah's Star commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, along with progress toward these objectives, will be featured in the Sarah's Star Annual Report.

Sarah's Star understands that some monitoring may feel intrusive and will only collect data that has a clear, meaningful purpose.

7. Promoting Good Practice

Sarah's Star will ensure that partner organizations are informed of our Equality and Diversity Policy and will encourage them to adopt similar policies. Our commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion will be clearly stated on the Sarah's Star website.

When Sarah's Star places volunteers with an organization, we will support both the organization and the volunteers in fostering strong practices in equality and diversity.

8. Implementing this Policy

The Management Team and trustees hold overall responsibility for implementing and assessing the effectiveness of this Policy. An Action Plan has been developed to track and evidence Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion within Sarah's Star, and this will be regularly reviewed.

Managers and supervisors are accountable for applying this policy within their specific areas of responsibility. All employees, regardless of role or seniority, have a personal duty to:

- Keep their equality training and awareness current;
- Treat colleagues and service users with respect and dignity;
- Actively promote and deliver equality within the workplace and when working with local voluntary and community organizations;
- Behave in ways that support this policy and comply with relevant laws and codes of practice;
- Report and, where safe to do so, challenge any discriminatory behavior or practices they encounter at work.

All job applicants, employees, and trustees will be informed of this policy, with copies included in the Employee and Trustee Handbooks for all new hires. We will also make this policy known to other individuals and organizations we work with whenever possible

9. Document Details

This policy will be reviewed every two years, unless new guidance or legislation is produced before the next review date

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