



Equal Opportunities Policy

1. General Statement of policy

New Beginnings Reading believes that an equal opportunities approach must be embedded in the culture of the organisation. Discrimination in our society takes many forms. It may be direct and based on overt prejudice. It may be indirect and based on lack of awareness and understanding.

New Beginnings Reading is fundamentally opposed to all these types of discrimination and seeks to ensure that in all its activities it does not take place against individuals or groups for any reason.

New Beginnings Reading recognises the legal status of the protected characteristics contained within the Equality Act 2010. New Beginnings Reading also recognises and seeks to ensure that employees, volunteers and service users are not discriminated against or suffer harassment because of an association with another individual who has a protected characteristic or because they are perceived to have a protected characteristic.

Political beliefs which, in themselves, promote prejudice and discrimination (eg neo Nazism) are not tolerated by New Beginnings Reading. The relevance of unspent criminal convictions is determined at the discretion of the Board of Trustees.

New Beginnings Reading's commitment to oppose discrimination and promote equality of access to services places an obligation on all personnel: paid staff, volunteers, trustees and service users. It is the aim of New Beginnings Reading to create a welcoming and safe working environment for paid staff, volunteers, trustees and service users from diverse communities and to acknowledge the benefits of diversity.

Partner organisations are expected to support New Beginnings Reading's anti-discrimination values and will be asked to endorse them.

Users of New Beginnings Reading's services are expected to respect the values contained in this statement. It is understood that people have different levels of awareness with regard to equal opportunities and need opportunities to learn. Nevertheless, any behaviour that is seen as oppressive or discriminatory by trustees or management will be considered a serious breach of this policy.

New Beginnings Reading will take positive action to challenge disadvantage and discrimination and to promote diversity and full access to opportunity in all areas of its work and structures. By 'positive action' we mean measures undertaken with the purpose of achieving full access to opportunity for people and groups that face the consequences of past or present discrimination or disadvantage.

2. Delivery of service to users

The service users of New Beginnings Reading include all members of the public who access our services, our partners and colleagues from the voluntary and the public sector, our paid staff, volunteers and trustees.

In order to ensure that discrimination in delivery of services does not take place, New Beginnings Reading will:

- treat everyone who has contact with the organisation for whatever reason with dignity and respect;
- plan the delivery of services in a way that will not negatively affect how someone accesses our services because of a protected characteristic. In particular New Beginnings Reading will consider in advance what disabled people with a range of impairments might reasonably need and make reasonable adjustments;
- take steps to establish what services are required by different sections of the community and the voluntary and community groups which represent their interests;
- seek to maximise the flow of information and support to groups and organisations based in communities which experience discrimination and social exclusion;
- not permit discriminatory advertisements or news items to appear on our website;
- seek to ensure that New Beginnings Reading's meetings, literature, website, publicity, training events and all other forms of communication are accessible to the widest possible range of individuals and communities;
- publicise its Complaints Procedure which is available for use by any service user who believes he/she has experienced adverse discrimination on the part of the organisation.

3. The use of buildings and venues

New Beginnings Reading will ensure that all visitors to our premises and events are not discriminated against, harassed or victimised when accessing our premises and we will make reasonable adjustments for disabled people.

When selecting venues for events or training, or when making decisions about office and shop space New Beginnings Reading will consider the following and make reasonable adjustments:

- how people enter
- how they find their way around
- signage
- how information is provided
- how tables and counters are laid out and designed
- accessible toilet facilities.

4. Recruitment & selection of New Beginnings Reading's personnel

- The trustees will seek to ensure that the composition of the staff and volunteers reflects that of the local community. This is vital if the voice of excluded communities is to be heard within the organisation;
- Applicants for employment and voluntary work by New Beginnings Reading will be given a copy of the Equal Opportunities Policy;

- All new staff, volunteers and committee members will be helped to assess their equal opportunities training needs and offered appropriate training at New Beginnings Reading expense.

5. Protection for employees, volunteers and partners

- New Beginnings Reading will not tolerate its staff, volunteers, trustees or partners to be subjected to harassment by another person, whether they are service users or other partners, and will monitor policy and staff feedback to minimise the risk and take action should an incident occur;
- Any member of staff who feels they have been subjected to harassment should raise the matter with the Trustees;
- Employees will not be subjected to a detriment, such as being denied a training opportunity or a promotion because he or she made a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010 or because he or she is suspected of doing so, or being about to do so;
- New Beginnings Reading considers harassment to be a disciplinary offence.

6. Monitoring and evaluation

Responsibility for the implementation of this policy lies with the Trustees. They will review this policy every year.

On receipt of an equal opportunities complaint the Trustees will acknowledge the complaint and investigate by collecting evidence and interviewing witnesses. A report of the findings and recommendations will be made available to the complainant and any other person involved. where a complaint is justified, appropriate action will be taken.

Owner: Chairperson

Date of last review: October 2020

Date of next review: October 2021