



## Equal Opportunities Policy

Old Rayne playgroup is committed to providing equality of opportunity for all children and families who use the service and to encouraging diversity and inclusion across the range of the group's activities. The policy is written in accordance with current best practice and has been drafted in line with the Equality Act 2010.

### Policy

The policy aims to communicate the group's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity for all children, parents and carers within the group, and reflect the diverse needs of members and future members of the group and the wider community.

The policy applies to all those who work paid or unpaid for (or apply to work for) the organisation, to parents and carers who use the service, and to volunteers, student placements and others who, from time to time have dealings with the organisation.

In order to implement this policy the group will:

- communicate the policy to employees, job applicants, parents, carers and relevant others
- incorporate specific and appropriate duties in respect of implementing the equal opportunities and diversity policy into job descriptions and work objectives of all staff
- provide equality training and guidance as appropriate
- incorporate equal opportunities notices into general communication practices, for example newsletters, websites
- ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfil the objectives of the policy.

The group is committed to:

- Promoting equality of opportunity for all persons
- Promoting a good and harmonious working environment in which all persons are treated with respect
- Preventing occurrences of unlawful direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Fulfilling all our legal obligations under the equality legislation and associated codes of practice
- Complying with our own equal opportunities and diversity policy and associated policies
- Taking lawful affirmative or positive action, where appropriate
- Regarding all breaches of equal opportunities policy as misconduct which could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

### Employment

The group is opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. The policy will provide employment equality to all, irrespective of:

- Gender, including gender reassignment
- Marital or civil partnership status
- Having or not having dependants
- Religious belief or political opinion
- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, being a traveller)
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Age.

Decisions about recruitment and selection, promotion, training or any other benefit will be made objectively and without unlawful discrimination. All job applicants, employees and others who work for us will be treated fairly and will not be discriminated against on any of the grounds listed above.

### **Information about the group**

The group will ensure that everyone in the community has access to information about the group. This will be done by informing other agencies including the local health visitor about the group so that the information can be passed on to parents and carers. Whenever possible, information posters will be written in other languages as well as in English, if necessary for a particular community, and will be displayed in the local doctors' surgeries, post office, library, shops etc.

### **Staff recruitment**

Whenever possible, advertisements will be written in other languages as well as in English, if necessary for a particular community. Advertisements will be placed externally in the local newspaper and job centre and internally on the notice board.

Each applicant will have a copy of relevant information and will be treated as an individual in compliance with current employment legislation. The group will treat all applicants for jobs fairly and the best person for each job will be appointed.

Only questions relevant to the job will be asked. Each candidate will be asked broadly the same questions. A welcoming and professional approach to interviews will be ensured. Commitment to implementing the group's equal opportunities policy will form part of the job description for all workers.

Age positive practices will be adopted by the management group. Recruitment, training, promotion and retiral<sup>2</sup> of staff will not be done on the basis of age unless it can be objectively justified. The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations cover young and old alike throughout their working lives.

### **Admissions**

The group will be open to every family in the community. The individual needs of each child and family wishing to join the group will be considered. The waiting list will be operated flexibly and not on a first come first served basis. Children need not attend every session. The group will be flexible in providing sessions to suit the majority of parents, carers and children. Whenever possible, the child's first language will be used and the use of other languages will be encouraged, as appropriate.

## **Parents' role in the group**

The group will encourage the involvement of parents and carers by making them welcome and by respecting the differences in families, their language and culture, and by encouraging them to contribute in whatever way they can.

## **Meetings**

The time, place and manner in which meetings are conducted will ensure that all families are enabled to attend, contribute and have an equal opportunity to be involved in the running of the group.

## **Children in the group**

All children will be respected and their individuality and potential recognised, valued and nurtured. Activities and the use of play equipment will offer children opportunities to develop in an environment which is free from prejudice and discrimination. Opportunities to experience other cultures, languages and celebrations will be included in the curriculum. Opportunities will be given to children to explore, acknowledge and value, similarities and differences between themselves and others.

## **Festivals**

The aim of the group is to show respectful awareness of all the major events in the lives of the children and families in the group, and in our society as a whole, and to welcome the diversity of backgrounds from which they come. In order to achieve this, the group aims to acknowledge all the festivals which are celebrated in our area and/or by the families involved in the group:

- Without indoctrination in any specific faith, children will be made aware of the festivals which are being celebrated by their families or others and will be introduced where appropriate to the stories behind the festivals.
- Before introducing a festival with which adults in the group are not familiar, appropriate advice will be sought from people to whom the festival is familiar. Families who celebrate these festivals will be invited to share their experiences with the rest of the group.
- Children will be encouraged to welcome a range of different festivals, together with the stories, celebrations, food and clothing they involve, as part of the diversity of life.

## **Language**

Any information, written or spoken, will be clearly communicated in as many different languages as necessary.

## **Food**

Medical, cultural and dietary requirements will be met.

## **Resources**

The group will regularly check its books, posters and other resources to ensure that they reflect a multi-racial society, positively and accurately. Boys and girls will have the opportunity to use, and be actively encouraged to use, all activities.

## **Additional support needs**

The group recognises the wide range of additional support needs of children and families in the community and will consider what part it can play in meeting these needs. Planning for group meetings will take into account the needs of people with disabilities.

## **Discriminatory behaviour or remarks**

These are unacceptable in the group. All parents, carers and staff will be encouraged to understand the effects of stereotyping and discrimination. Discriminatory remarks which are sexist, racist or which reinforce stereotypes will be challenged. The response will aim to be sensitive and supportive of the feelings of the victim(s) and to help those responsible to understand and overcome their prejudices.

## **Complaints**

Employees who believe that they have suffered any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation are entitled to raise the matter through the agreed procedures:

## **Policy Notes**

### **The Equality Act 2010**

The Equality Act 2010 brings together, harmonises and in some respects extends the current equality law. It aims to make it more consistent, clearer and easier to follow in order to make society fairer. The Act protects the same groups of people that were covered by previous equality legislation, by reference to what are now called 'protected characteristics'. These characteristics are disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The Act applies to all organisations that provide a service to the public, or a section of the public (service providers). It also applies to anyone who sells goods or provides facilities.

Under the Equality Act 2010, employers may utilise positive action in recruitment and promotion from 6 April 2011. 'Positive action' means the steps that an employer can take to encourage people from groups with different needs or with a past record of disadvantage or low participation, to apply for jobs. Employers are permitted, not required to take positive action. One of the conditions of the positive action provisions is that employers must not routinely treat people with a protected characteristic more favourably; it must be used only in tie-break situations.

The Equality Act 2010 also makes it unlawful for a company to discriminate against anyone on the grounds of race, sex, pregnancy and maternity, marriage or civil partnership status, gender reassignment, disability, religion or belief, age or sexual orientation. It is also possible for

employees to claim for discrimination on a combination of two of these grounds. Similarly if your employees discriminate against a colleague or customer your company could be held vicariously liable for their acts, and be responsible for paying the compensation or damages to the victim of the discrimination.

If a group can prove that it has done all that was reasonable to prevent the discriminatory acts from occurring then its liability can be reduced or entirely eliminated. Having an equal opportunities policy and apprising all staff of its existence is one of the things that a reasonable employer should do.

### **Examples of the different kinds of conduct that are prohibited under the Act:**

#### **Direct discrimination**

Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic. Direct discrimination can also take place because of a protected characteristic a person does not personally have. For example, it includes a person being treated less favourably because they are linked or associated with a person who has a protected characteristic.

#### **Indirect discrimination**

Indirect discrimination happens when there is a rule, a policy or even a practice that applies to everyone but which particularly disadvantages people who share a particular protected characteristic. Indirect discrimination can be justified if it can be shown that the rule, policy or practice is intended to meet a legitimate objective in a fair, balanced and reasonable way. If this can be shown it will be lawful. When considering introducing a new rule or policy, you should first consider whether there is any other way to meet your objectives that would not have a discriminatory effect or that is less likely to disadvantage people who have a protected characteristic.

#### **Harassment**

Harassment means unwanted behaviour related to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

#### **Discrimination against breastfeeding woman**

The Equality Act has specifically clarified that it is unlawful to discriminate against a woman because she is breastfeeding.

*From 6 April 2011 employers can no longer compulsorily retire employees using the default retirement age (DRA) unless the default age can be objectively justified. More information on the Default Retirement Age Regulations can be found at [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)*