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LA14 1XL
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Equal Opportunities Policy

Introduction

Drop Zone Youth Projects is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of employment, volunteering, governance and service delivery.

We aim to create an environment where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect, where differences are valued, and where unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation are not tolerated.

This policy applies to:

- Trustees
- Employees
- Volunteers
- Session workers and contractors
- Young people accessing our services
- Partner organisations
- Members of the public engaging with our services

The organisation recognises its responsibilities under current UK equality legislation and will take all reasonable steps to ensure compliance with:

- The Equality Act 2010
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- The Children Act 1989 and 2004
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- The Employment Rights Act 1996
- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Relevant statutory guidance and safeguarding frameworks

Drop Zone Youth Projects is committed to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion into everyday practice and decision-making.

Policy Statement

Drop Zone Youth Projects will:

- Promote equality of opportunity for all.

- Prevent unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation.
- Foster positive relationships between people from different backgrounds.
- Provide inclusive and accessible services.
- Create a culture where everyone feels safe, respected and valued.
- Ensure recruitment, employment and progression decisions are fair, transparent and based on merit.
- Make reasonable adjustments for disabled people.
- Challenge discriminatory behaviour and language.
- Take complaints seriously and investigate them fairly and promptly.

No person will receive less favourable treatment because of a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

The protected characteristics are:

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

We also recognise the importance of addressing discrimination linked to:

- Socio-economic disadvantage
- Caring responsibilities
- Mental health
- Neurodiversity
- Looked-after status
- Refugee or asylum status
- Health conditions

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all aspects of organisational activity including:

- Recruitment and selection
- Terms and conditions of employment
- Pay and benefits
- Training and development

- Promotion opportunities
- Supervision and appraisal
- Discipline and grievance procedures
- Redundancy and dismissal
- Service delivery
- Youth programmes and activities
- Partnerships and procurement
- Public events and communications

All individuals associated with Drop Zone Youth Projects are expected to behave in accordance with this policy.

Legal Framework

This policy is primarily based on the Equality Act 2010, which brought together previous anti-discrimination legislation into a single legal framework.

Under the Equality Act 2010, unlawful conduct includes:

- **Direct Discrimination**

Treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic.

- **Indirect Discrimination**

Applying a policy, rule or practice that disadvantages people with a protected characteristic and cannot be objectively justified.

- **Harassment**

Unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

- **Sexual Harassment**

Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. Under the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, employers have a proactive duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.

- **Victimisation**

Treating someone unfairly because they have made or supported a complaint under equality legislation.

- **Discrimination Arising from Disability**

Treating a disabled person unfavourably because of something connected to their disability where this cannot be justified.

- **Failure to Make Reasonable Adjustments**

Failure to remove barriers experienced by disabled people.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Principles

Drop Zone Youth Projects believes that:

- Diversity strengthens organisations and communities.

- Young people should be able to participate safely and confidently regardless of background or identity.
- Inclusion requires active effort and ongoing reflection.
- Discrimination and prejudice can be systemic as well as individual.
- Everyone has the right to be treated fairly and with dignity.

We are committed to creating inclusive youth work practice that:

- Encourages participation and belonging
- Challenges stereotypes and prejudice
- Promotes understanding and respect
- Supports underrepresented groups
- Removes barriers to access and engagement

Roles and Responsibilities

- **Board of Trustees**

The Board of Trustees is responsible for:

- Ensuring compliance with equality legislation
- Monitoring organisational equality performance
- Approving and reviewing this policy
- Promoting a culture of inclusion and accountability

- **Senior Management**

Senior managers are responsible for:

- Implementing the policy effectively
- Ensuring staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities
- Responding appropriately to concerns and complaints
- Promoting inclusive working practices
- Ensuring reasonable adjustments are considered and implemented

- **Staff and Volunteers**

All staff and volunteers must:

- Treat others with dignity and respect
- Avoid discriminatory behaviour or language
- Report concerns appropriately
- Participate in equality and safeguarding training
- Promote inclusive practice in all activities

Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action.

Recruitment and Employment

Drop Zone Youth Projects is committed to fair and inclusive recruitment practices.

We will:

- Advertise opportunities openly wherever possible
- Use objective and non-discriminatory selection criteria
- Base recruitment decisions on merit, skills and experience
- Make reasonable adjustments during recruitment and employment
- Monitor recruitment data in line with UK GDPR requirements
- Provide equal access to training and development opportunities

We will not ask inappropriate questions relating to protected characteristics unless legally permitted or necessary for safeguarding or monitoring purposes.

Positive action initiatives may be used where lawful to address disadvantage or underrepresentation.

Safeguarding and Young People

Drop Zone Youth Projects recognises that discrimination, exclusion and prejudice can increase safeguarding risks.

We are committed to:

- Providing safe and inclusive environments for young people
- Responding appropriately to discriminatory incidents
- Supporting young people experiencing bullying, harassment or hate incidents
- Ensuring safeguarding procedures reflect equality and inclusion principles
- Taking account of cultural, religious and communication needs

Discriminatory bullying, hate incidents or harassment involving young people will be addressed under safeguarding and behaviour procedures where appropriate.

Accessibility and Reasonable Adjustments

We are committed to improving accessibility and removing barriers to participation.

Reasonable adjustments may include:

- Accessible venues
- Adapted communication methods
- Flexible working arrangements
- Additional support during activities
- Provision of information in alternative formats
- Consideration of sensory or neurodiverse needs

Requests for adjustments will be considered individually and sensitively.

Inclusive Practice

Drop Zone Youth Projects will work to ensure that:

- Language and behaviour are inclusive and respectful
- Publicity and materials reflect diverse communities
- Activities are accessible and welcoming
- Different cultural and religious needs are respected
- Staff receive appropriate equality, diversity and safeguarding training
- Participation barriers are identified and reduced

We recognise intersectionality and understand that individuals may experience discrimination in multiple ways.

Harassment, Bullying and Hate Incidents

Drop Zone Youth Projects has zero tolerance for:

- Bullying
- Harassment
- Hate incidents
- Victimisation
- Sexual harassment
- Discriminatory abuse

This includes behaviour relating to:

- Race or ethnicity
- Religion or belief
- Disability
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity
- Age
- Appearance
- Health condition
- Neurodiversity

Incidents may occur:

- In person
- Online
- Through social media
- During activities or events

- In the workplace

All concerns will be taken seriously and addressed promptly.

Complaints and Reporting

Anyone who experiences or witnesses discrimination, harassment or victimisation is encouraged to report it.

Complaints may be raised through:

- Line management
- Designated safeguarding lead
- Senior management
- Trustee reporting channels
- Formal grievance or complaints procedures

All complaints will:

- Be handled sensitively and confidentially where possible
- Be investigated fairly and promptly
- Be recorded appropriately
- Result in action where necessary

No individual will suffer detriment for raising a genuine concern.

Malicious or knowingly false allegations may result in disciplinary action.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

Information relating to equality monitoring or complaints will be handled in accordance with:

- UK GDPR
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Confidentiality requirements

Monitoring information will be anonymised where possible and used only for legitimate organisational purposes.

Monitoring and Review

Drop Zone Youth Projects will monitor the effectiveness of this policy through:

- Recruitment and workforce monitoring
- Complaints and incident reporting
- Feedback from young people and stakeholders
- Training records
- Service participation data
- Policy reviews

The policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if legislation or organisational needs change.

Appendix A – Equality Incident and Complaint Reporting Procedure

- **Purpose**

This procedure provides a framework for reporting and responding to incidents involving:

- Discrimination
- Harassment
- Bullying
- Hate incidents
- Victimisation
- Sexual harassment
- Equality-related concerns

- **Reporting**

Concerns may be reported by:

- Young people
- Staff
- Volunteers
- Parents/carers
- Visitors
- Partner organisations

Reports should be made as soon as possible to a line manager, safeguarding lead or senior manager.

Where safeguarding concerns exist, safeguarding procedures must also be followed.

- **Recording Information**

The following should be recorded:

- Date and location of incident
- People involved
- Nature of the concern
- Protected characteristic involved (if applicable)
- Immediate action taken
- Witnesses
- Outcome and follow-up actions

- **Investigation**

The organisation will:

- Investigate concerns fairly and promptly

- Maintain confidentiality where possible
- Keep appropriate records
- Take action proportionate to findings
- **Outcomes**

Outcomes may include:

- Informal resolution
- Mediation
- Training or supervision
- Safeguarding intervention
- Disciplinary action
- Referral to external agencies
- **Support**

Support will be offered where appropriate to:

- Complainants
- Victims
- Witnesses
- Staff members involved

This policy was approved by the Board of Trustees of Drop Zone Youth Projects.