

Equal Opportunities Policy

1. Scope and purpose of the Policy

- 1.1. Read Easy UK and its Affiliated Groups (the “Organisations”) are committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all. We aim to create a working and learning environment in which all individuals are able to make best use of their skills, free from discrimination or harassment, and in which all decisions are based on merit.
- 1.2. All volunteers and employees working within the Organisations (“Volunteers and Employees”) and those who use their services (“Service Users”) have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and treat other Volunteers, Employees and Service Users with dignity at all times. Volunteers, Employees and Service Users are not to discriminate against or harass other Volunteers, Employees or Service Users, regardless of their status. Your attention is drawn to our separate Anti-harassment Policy.
- 1.3. This policy applies to all aspects of our relationship with Volunteers and Employees and to relations between Volunteers, Employees and Service Users at all levels. This includes advertising for volunteer or other positions, recruitment and selection procedures, training and development, conduct at work, complaints procedures, and (where applicable) notice to cease volunteering within the Organisations.

2. Who is covered by the Policy?

- 2.1. This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades for the Organisations, whether they are working as Employees or in a voluntary capacity as Trustees, Trainers, Pioneers, Management Committee members, Coordinators or Reading & Learning Coaches.

3. Forms of discrimination

- 3.1. Discrimination against Volunteers, Employees or Service Users on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation (“Protected Characteristics”) is generally prohibited, unless there is a specific legal exemption. The Organisations endeavour to combat the following types of discrimination:
- 3.2. **Direct discrimination** occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the Protected Characteristics set out above.
- 3.3. **Indirect discrimination** occurs where a person is disadvantaged by a particular provision, criterion or practice (“PCP”) that places other people with the same Protected Characteristic at a disadvantage, and the PCP cannot be justified.
- 3.4. **Harassment** is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person’s dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or



offensive environment. Harassment is prohibited within the Organisations. Please see our separate Anti-harassment Policy for further details.

- 3.5. **Victimisation** is less favourable treatment of someone who has complained or given information about discrimination or harassment, or supported someone else's complaint. Victimisation is also prohibited within the Organisations.

4. Recruitment and selection

- 4.1. We aim to prevent discrimination against Volunteers and Employees on the basis of any of the Protected Characteristics. Selection of Volunteers and Employees is based on individual merit.
- 4.2. When advertising for Volunteers and Employees, the Organisations aim to avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage groups with a particular Protected Characteristic from applying.
- 4.3. During an interview, applicant Volunteers or Employees who wish to work for the Organisations ("Applicants") should not be asked about health or disability. There are limited exceptions that should only be used with prior approval from the Management Committee. For example:
- 4.3.1. Questions necessary to establish if an Applicant can perform an intrinsic part of the work within the Organisation concerned (subject to any reasonable adjustments).
- 4.3.2. Questions to establish if an Applicant is fit to attend an assessment or any reasonable adjustments that may be needed at interview or assessment.
- 4.3.3. Equal opportunities monitoring (which will not form part of the decision-making process).
- 4.4. Applicants should not be asked about past or current pregnancy or future intentions related to pregnancy. Applicants should not be asked about matters concerning age, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or gender reassignment.
- 4.5. For the purpose of monitoring diversity and underrepresented groups only, the Organisations may ask about an Applicant's ethnic group, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or age when he/she makes the initial application. This information will be gathered on a separate page to the main body of the application, and the answers will only be seen by a member of the Management Committee of the Affiliated Group not involved in the recruitment process [Name:] and by Read Easy UK for the same purposes. The Applicant may choose not to complete this page, as it will not form part of the recruitment process.

5. Training

- 5.1. During the recruitment process and upon joining the Organisations, all Volunteers and Employees will be given appropriate access to training to enable them to work within the Organisations. Further training may then be offered according to an individual's need for additional guidance and development.



6. Disability discrimination

- 6.1. Volunteers, Employees and Service Users who are disabled, or become disabled, are encouraged to tell the Organisation concerned about their condition so that we can support them appropriately.
- 6.2. Those who experience difficulties due to a disability should contact their local Coordinator (or other suitable person) to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help to minimise or overcome the difficulties experienced.
- 6.3. The Organisation concerned will consider the matter carefully and try to accommodate any needs, within reason. If the Organisation considers that a particular adjustment would not be reasonable it will explain the reasons and try to find an alternative solution so that the Volunteer, Employee or Service User might continue working.
- 6.4. The Organisations will aim to use venues that are accessible for disabled Volunteers Service Users and Employees.

7. Breaches of this Policy

- 7.1. If you believe that you may have been discriminated against you are encouraged to raise the matter with the Coordinator or similarly appropriate person. If you believe that you may have been subject to harassment or bullying you are encouraged to raise the matter through our Anti-harassment Policy. If you are uncertain which applies or if you need advice on how to proceed please speak to either the Coordinator or the Safeguarding Champion.
- 7.2. Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. Volunteers, Employees and Service Users who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result.
- 7.3. A Volunteer, Employee or Service User who makes false allegations which are found to have been made in bad faith, or a Volunteer or Employee who acts in contravention of this Policy may be given notice by the Organisation concerned to cease working.