

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

1. Scope and purpose of the Policy

- 1.1. Read Easy UK and its Affiliated Groups (the “Organisations”) are committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion for all. Read Easy’s vision is for *all* adults in the UK to have the literacy skills they need to realise their potential and live life to the full, regardless of background. Our mission is to harness the initiative, energy, skills and experience of volunteers to provide the necessary reading coaching.

To achieve our mission and realise our vision, we recognise that the range of service users, volunteers and employees that we engage with should reflect the diversity of the population within the United Kingdom. We therefore aim to reach into all parts of the communities where we operate to ensure that there are opportunities for everyone, wherever possible.

We also aim to create a positive and supportive 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. **Equality** means that we remove barriers, eliminate discrimination and ensure equal opportunities and access for all volunteers and employees working within the Organisations.

Diversity is understanding, recognising and valuing differences both visible (e.g. race, gender, age) and non-visible (e.g. religious beliefs, values, preferences). It means we recognise that everyone is unique.

Inclusion means that we focus on attracting and developing talent and ability wherever it exists and encourage everyone in our Organisations to reach their full potential in whatever they do. We aim to have an organisational culture where differences are not merely accepted, but valued and where everyone has the opportunity for personal development in line with Read Easy UK’s ethos and values.

- 1.3. 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.
- 1.4. 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 of the Organisations, whether they are Service Users, working as Employees or in a voluntary capacity as Trustees, Trainers, Pioneers, Management Team 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, selection and enrolment of Service Users

- 4.1. When advertising for Volunteers, Service Users or Employees, the Organisations aim to be proactive in reaching a diverse range of people and to avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage groups with a particular Protected Characteristic from applying.
- 4.2. We aim to prevent discrimination against Volunteers, Service Users and Employees on the basis of any of the Protected Characteristics. We welcome diversity and fully appreciate that everyone has something unique to offer. We respect and understand these differences and aim to make the most of everyone’s abilities. The selection of Volunteers and Employees is based on individual merit and aptitude. The enrolment of Service Users is based on their level of need, their command of the English language and the availability of Read Easy coaching in their area.
- 4.3. During the recruitment or enrolment process, applicant Volunteers or Employees who wish to work for the Organisations (“Applicants”), or potential Service Users, should not be asked about health or disability. There are limited exceptions that should only be used with prior approval from the Management Team. For example:



- 4.3.1. Questions to establish if an Applicant or potential Service User is fit to attend an interview or if there are any reasonable adjustments that may be needed to enable them to attend an interview, carry out their role or access the service.
- 4.3.2. Questions necessary to establish if an Applicant has the specific capacities required for the role (subject to any reasonable adjustments).
- 4.3.3. Questions necessary to establish if a potential Service User has the specific capacities required to be able to learn and make progress.
- 4.4. Applicants and potential Service Users 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 or potential Service User's ethnic group, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or age using Read Easy's Equalities Monitoring Form when he/she makes the initial application. This form will be separated immediately from the application and the answers will not inform the decision-making process. The Applicant or potential Service User may choose not to complete this page, as it will not form part of the recruitment or enrolment 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 and discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help to minimise or overcome the difficulties experienced.
- 6.2. 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.
- 6.3. 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 read the advice laid out in Appendices B and C of Read Easy's Volunteer Policy. 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, please seek advice from an appropriate person.



- 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.

This policy was reviewed and revised by Read Easy UK in December 2019.