

**St Mary Bourne Village Centre  
(Registered Charity no. 301936)**

**Equal Opportunities Policy and Procedures**

**1. Statement of Intent**

St Mary Bourne Village Centre is opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination and is committed to challenging them both in terms of employment and service provision. It recognises that many groups and individuals within society have been and continue to be discriminated against, both directly and indirectly, on the grounds of, for example, their race, nationality, ethnic or cultural origins, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religious belief, including non-belief, political belief, social class, employment status, low income, mental health, marital status and civil partnership, gender reassignment, HIV/AIDS status, appearance, refugee status, caring responsibilities and unrelated criminal conviction. (This list is not in any order of priority.)

**Equality Act 2010**

The Equality Act 2010 identifies 9 protected characteristics which are included in the above list they are:

Age  
Disability  
Gender Reassignment  
Marriage & Civil Partnership  
Pregnancy & Maternity  
Race  
Religion or Belief  
Sex  
Sexual Orientation

All trustees, volunteers, staff and users of our facilities will be treated fairly and will not be discriminated against on any of the above grounds. Decisions on the operation of our contracts, services, training or any other benefit will be made objectively, without unlawful discrimination, and based on aptitude and ability.

**Definitions**

St Mary Bourne Village Centre recognises and will not tolerate any type of discrimination.

- **Direct discrimination:** treating someone less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic.
- **Discrimination by association:** discriminating against an individual because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.
- **Perception discrimination:** discriminating against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic, even if the person does not possess this characteristic.
- **Indirect discrimination:** St Mary Bourne Village Centre will endeavour to not implement any condition, rule, policy or practice which applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic.
- **Harassment:** employees can complain of any behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at them or they do not possess the relevant characteristic themselves. St Mary Bourne Village Centre will not tolerate the harassment of its staff by people who are not employed by them.

- **Victimisation:** St Mary Bourne Village Centre will not treat any member of staff badly who supports or has made a complaint or raised a grievance.

## **Responsibilities**

St Mary Bourne Village Centre will follow the requirements and guidance (including amendments) contained in all relevant equality and discrimination legislation and regulations in all of our work (e.g. The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, The Human Rights Acts 1998 and 2001, The Equality Act 2010) and any other relevant legislation.

St Mary Bourne Village Centre recognises that in our society power is not held equally and that groups and individuals have been and continue to be discriminated against on many grounds and acknowledges the right to dignity and respect of every person the organisation has contact with.

Every possible step will be taken to ensure the implementation of this policy - no one seeking access to our services will be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable.

Implementation of this policy is an on-going process. Responsibility for the day-to-day implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this Policy rests with the Chair of the Management Committee, answering to the Trustees and the Management Committee and with the advice and assistance of the widest possible audience, however, every committee member, volunteer and employee has a personal responsibility to accept, follow, implement and promote this Policy and to do everything they can to ensure that it works in practice. Specifically, paid staff are expected to co-operate with measures taken to implement this Policy, report any suspected acts of discrimination, and take particular care to ensure that enquiries from groups facing disadvantage are dealt with in a way which those groups find helpful, relevant, and appropriate.

## **Positive Action**

St Mary Bourne Village Centre is committed to:

- Working in an anti-discriminatory manner (e.g. anti – racist, anti-sexist etc.);
- Promoting a supportive and welcoming environment in which all persons are treated with respect and dignity and in which no form of intimidation, harassment or discrimination is tolerated;
- Actively promoting and implementing this policy throughout all its' work and services;
- Requiring all trustees and volunteers to respect and support the principle of this policy;
- Recognising and fulfilling all legal obligations under the anti-discrimination legislation and associated codes of practice;
- Complying with our own equal opportunities policy and associated policies;
- Providing relevant training, information, advice and resources to staff and trustees on working in an anti-discriminatory way;
- Taking lawful affirmative or positive action, where appropriate;
- Listening to the voices of facility users and individuals/groups from the community who are experiencing discrimination;

- Conducting staff recruitment (employees, trustees and other volunteers) that ensures selection on merit (skills, experiences, aptitude etc.);
- Ensuring decisions on the operation of our contracts, services, training or any other benefit will be made objectively, without unlawful discrimination, and based on aptitude and ability; and
- Dealing quickly and fairly with any accusation of harassment or discrimination.

## **2. The Policy**

St Mary Bourne Village Centre recognises the importance of equal opportunity to our whole effectiveness, and it has in place a range of policies and procedures, which should be viewed alongside our Equal Opportunities Policy. All St Mary Bourne Village Centre policies are intended to reinforce the basic principles of equal opportunities.

All new trustees/management committee members, short-listed job applicants, volunteers and hirers will be made aware of this Policy and provided with a copy on request.

This policy covers:

- Monitoring and evaluation
- Membership of the management committee and board of trustees
- Service delivery
- Access and premises
- Employment of paid workers
- Publicity
- Complaints

## **3. Monitoring and Evaluation**

This Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Management Committee to assess its effectiveness and any need for amendment to reflect new legislation/good practice issues. As well as monitoring complaints, compliments and incidents we will collect and analyse information on users, staff, volunteers, trustees and others by a range of protected characteristics to determine the equalities impact of the charity and any measure we should take to improve our approach to equalities. This information will be reported back to Trustees, the community and other key stakeholders on at least an annual basis.

## **4. Membership**

Membership of the management Committee shall reflect the diversity of the local community it serves. Membership will be monitored regularly and if necessary measures taken to address any under-represented groups.

Membership of the board of trustees shall be monitored on each occasion on which trustees are nominated for election and any under-represented groups will be encouraged to stand for election.

Training and support will be offered to enable trustees to fully take part. (E.g. understanding roles and responsibilities, chairing meetings, managing conflict, meeting out of pocket expenses, providing papers in appropriate formats and providing them with sufficient time for trustees to read and prepare for meetings, providing hearing loop/signing and making meetings fully accessible and participatory.)

## **5. Service Delivery**

St Mary Bourne Village Centre is committed to equality of opportunity for everyone using our services. We will prioritise our services and target resources in order to be responsive to

communities and groups in greatest need and/or facing discrimination. Our services are designed and publicised to reflect these commitments, and are regularly monitored. As far as possible and reasonable given our resources, we will try to provide our services in ways and in premises which are accessible to the communities we seek to serve.

## **6. Access and Premises**

St Mary Bourne Village Centre aims to make its service delivery as accessible as possible and wherever possible will ensure that:

- Fully accessible premises are used for meetings, training and other events
- Issues of safety and timings of meetings are taken into account
- Support aids such as loop system, signers, interpreters, translators are available on request
- Written information is made available in other formats as appropriate e.g. large print, Braille, audio
- different needs are taken into account: religious or cultural, dependent responsibilities (e.g. child/parent care)

The two principal rooms available for hire in St Mary Bourne Village Centre are fully accessible.

## **7. Employment of Paid Workers**

### **Recruitment & Selection**

St Mary Bourne Village Centre will conduct our recruitment and selection procedures openly and fairly, and these procedures will be kept under review. All jobs with *us* will have a job description and person specification, which relate strictly to the job itself. Job descriptions will be reviewed annually to ensure that they remain relevant and that they do not impose any unjustifiable or non-essential experience, qualifications, or conditions, which may be discriminatory.

Job advertisements will be written in non-discriminatory language (except where there is a genuine occupational need as permitted by legislation), and will not be restricted to areas or publications, which exclude or disproportionately reduce the number of applicants from the groups listed in section 1 of this Policy. Where funding allows adverts will be placed in specialist press e.g. black and ethnic minority, disability and so on. It is our expectation that vacancies will be publicly advertised except for vacancies during proposed redundancies. Job advertisements and application packs will include an Equal Opportunities statement, and application packs will include a monitoring form and a statement explaining the purposes of monitoring and the way in which the data will be managed and used. Applications in formats appropriate for candidates with a physical or sensory impairment (e.g. tape/disk/Braille) will be welcomed.

The composition of interview panels will be taken into account and all panel members will be given training where necessary. Adjustments will be made as needed for interview candidates with a physical or sensory or mental health impairment or learning disability, and all reasonable adaptations will be made to work stations, etc. for employees with a physical/sensory impairment or other need. Recruitment and selection will be on merit by open and fair competition and will be conducted to ensure that no job applicant receives less favourable treatment on any of the grounds laid out in the first section of this Policy. Records will be kept of all interviews and their outcomes.

Having a criminal record may not prevent being employed by *us*. It will depend on the offences committed and the nature of the job. At interview or a separate discussion we will provide discussion space for the disclosure of any offences or other issues that may be relevant to the post. Failure to reveal such information may lead to the withdrawal of a job offer or dismissal.

The relevant posts will be subject to a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) CRB check. We will discuss any matter revealed by this check before withdrawing any offer of employment.

## **References**

References will only be used to support or deny an appointment and will not be used to choose between candidates.

## **Terms & Conditions**

St Mary Bourne Village Centre will seek to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment for all individuals, and will not discriminate in the setting or provision of our terms and conditions of employment including facilities, pay and benefits on any of the grounds listed at the beginning of this Policy. We will try to meet all reasonable requests from staff to vary their working hours, particularly where this is compatible with the effective functioning of our organisation. Should a member of staff acquire an impairment during their employment with us, provision will be made wherever possible for that staff member to continue their normal duties via the provision of equipment/aids, or changed working patterns, or redeployment if available.

Grievance and disciplinary conditions are not part of the terms and conditions of employment and staff are consulted before any changes are made.

## **Staff Support and Supervision**

All staff will receive line management supervision which will be carried out paying due regard to equal opportunities.

## **Promotion**

Promotion within St Mary Bourne Village Centre will be on merit by open and fair competition and in a manner, which ensures that no staff member receives less favourable treatment on any of the grounds laid out in the first section of this Policy.

## **Training**

St Mary Bourne Village Centre is committed to staff training and development. No staff member will receive less favourable treatment in terms of access to training. We will seek to overcome any problems, which may prevent staff members from taking advantage of training opportunities. We will ensure that **all** staff receive Equalities training as well as training on our Equal Opportunities Policy and that they are informed of and consulted on any reviews/revision of the Policy. Where possible, internal short-term secondment may be used to enable staff development and expansion of skills and experience; such secondments will be decided in line with our commitment to equality of opportunity in staff training.

## **Leave Entitlement**

St Mary Bourne Village Centre recognises that leave entitlement and the way that this is organised may be of particular concern to certain groups of employees (for example: black/minority ethnic staff who may need time off for religious observance, or extended leave to visit family/friends abroad; staff who may need extra time off for reasons linked to their impairment; staff who are parents or who have other dependents may need time off relating to school holidays, etc.). We will try to ensure that all leave requests received are dealt with both appropriately under the relevant policy/procedure, and in accordance with the spirit of our Equal Opportunities Policy.

## **Harassment & Bullying**

St Mary Bourne Village Centre recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of its employees and to promote a working environment free from harassment and bullying. Whether the harassment or bullying is personal, sexist, racist, heterosexist, or relating to any other item listed in the first section of this Policy, St Mary Bourne Village Centre views this issue with the utmost seriousness. Any individual who feels that they are being harassed or bullied by anyone associated with St Mary Bourne Village Centre is actively encouraged to report this to management without fear of reprisal. Harassment and bullying in any form are contrary to this Policy, and are viewed as serious

disciplinary offences, which could lead to dismissal. Management and any staff with supervisory responsibility will ensure that all allegations of harassment and/or bullying are taken seriously and fully investigated. They are also expected to challenge unacceptable language and behaviour whenever this occurs.

## 8. Publicity

In all publicity and information materials, including electronic versions developed and used by us, we will try to ensure that:

- Clear direct language is used and if jargon is necessary it is explained
- Positive images of a wide range of groups are used
- Advertising will be placed in a variety of settings in order to reach as many different sections of the local community as possible
- Materials will be produced in different formats (e.g. large print, Braille, audio) when requested
- Any material to be considered discriminatory will not be used
- Proactively target/visit specific disadvantaged groups/areas of the community to inform them of our services and facilities

## 9. Complaints

Any complaints relating to this policy – poor practice or non-enforcement should be raised informally with the line manager or formally with the Chair of the Management Committee. Paid staff, trustees and other volunteers are encouraged to draw to the Chair's attention any improvements that could be made to how this policy is being implemented.

Any user of our services wishing to make a complaint should raise it with the Chair .

## 10. Procedures for dealing with breaches of this policy

- **Paid Staff:** A serious breach of this policy may be grounds for disciplinary action.
- **Management Committee members (including trustees):** A serious breach of this policy may result in removal from the Management Committee/board of trustees.
- **Other Volunteers:** A serious breach of this policy may result in a volunteer being asked to leave.
- **Service Users:** A serious breach of this policy may result in a service user being barred from using our services. This will only happen after discussions, support and all other reasonable steps have been taken to stop the service user from being discriminatory.

## 11. Freedom from Victimisation

As far as is reasonably possible, St Mary Bourne Village Centre will ensure that staff (paid and unpaid) or service users who make a complaint under these procedures are free from victimisation.

**Policy and Procedure adopted on:** 8<sup>th</sup> November 2016 and reviewed 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017

**Policy and Procedure review date:** October 2018

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Name Karen Crofts

Position Chair

Date 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017

If you would like any further information about our Equal Opportunities Policy or there is anything you do not understand, or you want a copy or need it in a different format please contact:

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