



CITY PARENT CARER FORUM

EQUALITIES POLICY

Equal Opportunities Policy Statement

City Parent Carer Forum recognises that all parents and carers of a child or young person with Special Educational Needs and/or a Disability (SEND) living in or receiving services in the area have an equal right of access to become a member of the forum.

The Forum will adhere to the legislative framework complying with:

- the Equality Act 2010 (See Annex 1.1 and 1.2)
- the Human Rights Act 1998 and Equality
- Equality and Human Rights Commission Codes of Practice (See Annex 1.3).

And:

Ensure our practices adhere to the principles of all relevant equality legislation and pay due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty actively working to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different groups of people and the communities we work with

The way we work is not only governed by the legislation that outlaws discrimination and promotes equality but also wholly encompasses the core values of the forum. City Parent Carer Forum (CPCF) works in a way that recognises the importance of inclusion, bringing opportunities and access to all individuals.

We are committed to promoting equality, valuing diversity, ensuring accessibility, and respecting human rights. Our mission is To influence social change to create a fairer, safer society.

The Forum will:

1. Take proactive steps to address discrimination, harassment, bullying, and victimisation in all its forms in membership management, volunteer management, employment practices, and all areas of our work.

2. Ensure that everyone directly associated with our organisation – members, volunteers, staff, contractors, local strategic partners, associates and visitors are aware of our commitment in these areas and how this policy affects them.
3. Identify and take positive and practical steps to remove any barriers to the participation of people who are currently underrepresented as members, volunteers, staff, local service users or associates.
4. Seek to develop and maintain a (voluntary and or paid) workforce that reflects the community within which we serve.
5. Ensure there are clear procedures to ensure compliance with relevant legal requirements (e.g., recruitment) and that members, volunteers, staff and associates are offered training to put these procedures into practice.
6. Ensure that the accessibility of our buildings (if applicable), events and information is routinely reviewed and improved, where possible.
7. Ensure that volunteers and staff receive appropriate support, training, and advice to assist them in dealing sensitively with challenging equality issues.
8. Develop internal working arrangements and structures that will assist in promoting anti-discriminatory practices and sharing effective practices to this end.
9. Enable volunteers, staff, associates and parent carer members to have equal access to relevant training and opportunities for development and ensure that terms, conditions, and volunteer and employment practices do not discriminate against any group.
10. Ensure that forum leaders (committee/steering group/officers/trustees/directors) and or managers establish and maintain suitable systems to ensure that City Parent Carer Forum (CPCF) can effectively monitor and evaluate compliance and progress in relation to promoting equality of opportunity.

Equal Opportunities and Discrimination

City Parent Carer Forum (CPCF) is committed to equal opportunities. We recognise and embrace our responsibility to promote equality of opportunity for our members, staff, service users and others associated with the organisation. This means that the City Parent Carer Forum (CPCF) steering group/committee/trustees will ensure that none of our members, volunteers, paid employees, contractors, strategic partners or organisations with whom we work is unfairly discriminated against on the grounds of their 'protected characteristic' including:

- Age
- Disability (including mental health and those with hidden disabilities)
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin)
- Religion or belief (including political belief and those with no religion or belief)
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

In addition, we will not discriminate on the grounds of social standing, status, responsibility for dependents, social class, employment status or unrelated criminal convictions.

City Parent Carer Forum (CPCF) is an anti-discriminatory organisation committed to influencing social change, promotion of equal opportunity and elimination of all forms of discrimination and harassment covered by the Equality Act 2010 (See Annex 1.1 and 1.2), including

- Direct Discrimination
- Indirect Discrimination
- Discrimination by Perception
- Discrimination by Association
- Victimisation
- Harassment

We recognise the various types of discrimination related to protected characteristics and what prevents individuals and groups from gaining equal access to society's resources and services. We are committed to taking practical steps to address inequality and discrimination by complying with relevant legislation and developing best practices.

It is our policy to redress the balance, as far as is lawful, in favour of all underrepresented and disadvantaged groups. We recognise that "positive action" to meet the needs of specific groups facing discrimination can practically contribute to addressing discrimination and inequalities.

We define "positive action" within the context of the Equality Act 2010: Positive action enables an employer or an organisation to increase participation from a wider section of society through opportunities such as training and mentoring schemes. Examples of positive action could include training and mentoring schemes for under-represented groups.

City Parent Carer Forum (CPCF) commits itself to taking positive action to ensure that its activities and provision of services, its recruitment procedures for volunteers, staff and its recruitment of committee/steering group members are within the spirit and letter of current legislation and our Equalities Policy.

ACCESS TO AND PARTICIPATION IN SERVICES

City Parent Carer Forum (CPCF) recognizes the need to ensure that all parents and carers with a child or young person aged 0 to 25 with SEND who live, work or receive services from the City of London can be members and contribute to the development of the forum.

We primarily aim to increase our membership amongst all SEND parent/carers but more specifically to extend our reach amongst under-represented and disadvantaged groups who face discrimination and inequalities to ensure a representative voice in the City of London area.

To achieve this, CPCF will:

- Develop and implement anti-discriminatory strategies and positive action programmes as part of its work and promote these throughout all the spheres of influence available.
- Ensure it represents a broad and balanced range of views which consider the varying needs of different individuals and groups.

- Identify the needs of underrepresented people in our work and will strive to represent their views to the service providers who meet those needs.
- Ensure all members, volunteers, staff, contractors, associates, committee/steering group/officers/trustees/directors are aware of our commitment to equal opportunities and familiar with the contents of this policy document.
- Provide support for disabled groups and individuals through the provision of 'reasonable adjustments' (See Annex 1.4) to ensure that our services are accessible to people with disabilities by proactively ensuring accessible venues for our events, ensuring that our training events are adjusted where necessary to meet the needs of disabled participants.

THE FORUM ENVIRONMENT

We aim to ensure that all people will receive a positive welcome from their first point of contact with the Forum.

We aim to create and sustain a working environment free from oppressive attitudes and surroundings in which people working with us, members, volunteers, staff, contractors, associates and local strategic partners feel comfortable and are not exposed to any form of harassment (including racial or sexual harassment) or stereotyped attitudes and beliefs.

BREACHES OF POLICY

All members, volunteers, staff, associates and partners have a right to make a complaint if they consider this policy has been breached. Complaints should be made under the procedures set out in our complaints policy.

PUBLICITY AND PUBLIC LIAISON

We will provide information and resource materials which are free from images, language or attitudes, which are ageist, disabled, heterosexist, racist, sexist or Transphobic.

All external communications, including social media posts and comments, publicity materials, press releases and advertisements, will reflect a commitment to equal opportunities and will promote equality of access to the forum's membership.

Composition of the Parent carer Forum, Recruitment, promotion, and development

The composition of the steering group, parent representatives, staff and volunteers should reflect the diversity and needs of our parent carer communities, including those who are underrepresented and those who experience discrimination and inequality.

To achieve this, we will:

- Conduct a regular review of the composition of the forum to identify which communities are underrepresented.

- Steering group/committee members will endeavour to take appropriate action to recruit new members to ensure equal representation in the forum's decision-making processes.

City Parent Carer Forum (CPCF) will ensure all its recruitment and selection practices are in accordance with principles of fairness and equality of opportunity and entirely in compliance with all relevant legislation.

We will seek to remedy any significant underrepresentation and eliminate direct and indirect discrimination.

Where appropriate, decisions taken throughout the recruitment process will be recorded in a standard format and used to evaluate the effectiveness of the process in ensuring equality of opportunity.

We will ensure that training, promotion and development opportunities are offered on a basis that can be shown to be non-discriminatory.

We appreciate the skills and value that volunteers and staff with caring responsibilities and dependents bring to the forum. We are committed to enabling those volunteers and staff to work within the forum.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The steering group will be responsible for implementing and monitoring this policy and for developing any further equal opportunities initiatives.

We will seek equality and diversity information from volunteer and paid staff and candidates for monitoring and reporting purposes. This will be requested voluntarily via a data monitoring form. These will be reviewed by the steering group/committee every 12 months.

We will take corrective action where any issues are identified. Equality and diversity information gathered may also support the tendering process for new business/funding.

Responsibility and Communication

The steering group/committee:

- Is responsible for ensuring that City Parent Carer Forum (CPCF) meets its responsibilities and legal obligations in relation to equality legislation, ensuring the forum works in line with the policy and communicating the policy to staff, volunteers, parent representatives and members.
- When aware of harassment, bullying or discrimination, we will take appropriate action, regardless of whether the alleged victim has raised an official complaint.

Policy Adopted by the steering group on:

Date:

Responsible Officer:

Review Date:

Annexe 1.1 – The Equality Act 2010, Protected Characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 brought together all existing equality legislation and offers protection from discrimination to people with “protected characteristics”. The protected characteristics are:

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

Annex 1.2 – Discrimination

To understand current equality legislation, the following is an explanation of the types of unfair treatment that can occur:

Direct discrimination - occurs when someone treats another person less favourably because of a protected characteristic or an assumption about one of the above, e.g., a Black candidate being refused a job, even though they are the best candidate, purely because of the perception that they may not fit in with the rest of the team.

Discrimination by association – discrimination against someone because they are associated with a person who has a protected characteristic. For example, an employee who is unfairly treated because they have a disabled child - can claim discrimination.

Discrimination by perception – is discrimination against an individual because other people think they possess a protected characteristic, e.g., a heterosexual employee being unfairly treated on the basis that others believe they are gay can claim discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation.

Indirect discrimination – when a condition, rule, policy, or practice disadvantages people with a protected characteristic, e.g., a manager asking that employees work on Friday evenings to meet the demands of a high workload may discriminate against Jewish people who wish to commence the Sabbath at sunset. However, indirect discrimination can be objectively justified, e.g., if there is an absolute organisational necessity for staff to be available to work at a particular time.

Harassment is unwanted conduct relating to a protected characteristic intended to violate another’s dignity or create an offensive, hostile, humiliating, or degrading environment for that individual. For example, an employee is continually teased by colleagues about their gender reassignment. This is a subjective test, which means that it is not what you consider offensive but what the person to whom you say or do something considers offensive. If you feel that you are being harassed, you should raise the issue via the Bullying and Harassment Policy.

Victimisation - it is a discriminatory act to treat anyone less favourably if they have made (or are suspected of having made) a complaint, or raised a grievance under the Equality Act, about discrimination during either present or previous employment, or they intend to make a complaint, or they have assisted someone else's complaint by giving evidence or corroborating a story.

Annex 1.3 Equality and Human Rights Commission

For more information on the Equality and Human Rights Commission - Equality Act Code of Practice, please visit their website: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-codes-practice>

Annex 1.4 'Reasonable Adjustments'

A reasonable adjustment is defined by the UK Government here:

<https://www.gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers>

For more information on reasonable adjustments, visit the EHRC website:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/what-are-reasonable-adjustments>