Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

1. Introduction

The Rivers Trust is committed to providing an inclusive working environment in which people are treated with dignity, fairness and respect, and have equitable opportunities to contribute and develop.

This policy sets out our commitments and the standards expected of everyone working with or on behalf of The Rivers Trust. It supports our EDI Strategy, which explains our longer-term priorities and approach to improving inclusion.

2. Scope

This policy applies to employees, workers, agency staff, consultants, contractors, volunteers, trustees, job applicants and anyone acting for or on behalf of The Rivers Trust. We expect everyone within its scope to treat others with dignity, respect and fairness.

3. Our Commitments

We will:

- promote an inclusive, respectful and supportive working environment;
- provide equitable opportunities in recruitment, employment, development and progression;
- identify and remove unnecessary barriers within our policies, practices and decisions;
- make employment-related decisions fairly, transparently and without unlawful discrimination; and
- take concerns about discrimination, harassment, bullying, victimisation and exclusionary behaviour seriously.

We recognise that achieving equality does not always mean treating everyone exactly the same. Sometimes people may need additional support, flexibility or adjustments to ensure they have equitable opportunities to participate and succeed.

4. Key Definitions

Equality

Equality is about consciously removing barriers so that every individual has equal opportunity at work to make the most of their strengths and fulfil their potential.

Diversity

Diversity is recognising that everyone is different in a variety of visible and non-visible ways, and that those differences enrich our organisation and are to be embraced, respected and valued.

Inclusion

Inclusion is actively creating a working, learning and social environment that is welcoming where everyone is treated with respect, feels safe, and has a role to play in shaping the organisation and delivery of our work. This is what creates a genuine sense of belonging.

Equity

Equity is about recognising that we do not live in an equal society. It means acknowledging that people may require additional support or adjustments to overcome disadvantages, so that everyone can thrive and contribute fully, creating a balanced and fair environment where all can succeed.

Belonging

Belonging is the experience of feeling accepted, connected and valued for who you are, without having to hide aspects of your identity or experiences.

5. EDI Strategy

Our EDI Strategy and supporting action plans set out how we will develop inclusive behaviours, understanding, leadership, systems, tools and resources across the organisation.

6. Recruitment and Employment

We will seek to ensure that recruitment, employment, development, progression, reward and other people practices are fair, inclusive and based on relevant, objective criteria. We will review and seek to remove unnecessary barriers to all candidates, including requirements that may disproportionately disadvantage people from underrepresented or economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Further expectations are set out in our Recruitment and Selection Policy and other relevant people policies.

7. Reasonable Adjustments

We will consider reasonable adjustments to remove or reduce barriers in recruitment, employment and work-related participation. Further information is available in the Reasonable Adjustments Policy.

8. Expected standards

Everyone is expected to:

- treat others with dignity, fairness and respect;
- act inclusively and consider the effect of their behaviour and decisions on others;
- listen to different perspectives and engage constructively;
- be open to feedback and learning;
- raise concerns or challenge inappropriate behaviour where it is safe and appropriate to do so; and
- cooperate with reasonable steps taken to support inclusion and remove barriers.

9. Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying

Discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, victimisation and hate speech are not tolerated. This applies to conduct by anyone connected with work, including colleagues, managers, trustees, volunteers, contractors, suppliers, partners, visitors and members of the public.

Concerns will be taken seriously and considered fairly, promptly and sensitively. No one will be victimised for raising a concern in good faith, supporting another person or participating in an investigation.

Concerns may be raised with a manager, HR or through the routes described in the Respect at Work, Grievance or Whistleblowing policies. No one needs to decide which procedure applies before seeking advice.

10. Equality and Non-Discrimination

We will comply with applicable equality and employment legislation in each jurisdiction in which we operate. Employment-related decisions will be made fairly, objectively and without unlawful discrimination.

We will not tolerate discrimination because of any characteristic or status protected by applicable law. We also recognise that disadvantage may arise from factors including socio-economic background, caring responsibilities and educational opportunity, and will seek to reduce unnecessary barriers wherever reasonably possible.

We expect contractors, suppliers, volunteers, partners and others working with or on behalf of The Rivers Trust to uphold these standards.

11. Responsibilities

Everyone is responsible for following this policy, treating others with dignity and respect, contributing to an inclusive working environment and raising concerns where appropriate.

Managers are responsible for modelling inclusive behaviour, making fair and objective decisions, supporting reasonable adjustments and responding appropriately to concerns.

The Executive Team is accountable for providing leadership, appropriate resources and oversight of the EDI Strategy and associated actions.

HR is responsible for providing guidance, supporting the application of this policy, reviewing people practices and coordinating appropriate monitoring and improvement activity.

The Board of Trustees provides oversight of the organisation’s EDI commitments and progress.

12. Monitoring and Review

We will use proportionate quantitative and qualitative evidence to understand how the policy is operating and where improvement is needed. This may include:

- the Your Voice survey and other employee feedback;
- the Race Report Self-Perception Survey and Transparency Review;
- workforce, recruitment, progression and retention data, where lawful and appropriate;
- policy and process reviews;
- relevant external benchmarking; and
- feedback on learning, resources and inclusive practice.

Findings will inform the EDI Strategy, annual priorities and any action needed. Data will be considered carefully, particularly where small groups could be identifiable.

13. Jurisdiction and Legal Rights

The Rivers Trust operates across the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. This policy provides a consistent organisational framework, but your contractual terms and applicable local legislation will apply.

Where there is any inconsistency between this policy, your contract or local law, contractual terms and local law will take precedence.

Nothing in this policy affects your statutory employment rights.

14. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Respect at Work Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- Reasonable Adjustments Policy
- Family Friendly Policies
- Whistleblowing Policy