

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

ARKWRIGHT MEADOWS COMMUNITY GARDENS



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Approved AMC Gardens Committee Meeting

Equality and Diversity Policy

This policy applies to all trustees, staff, volunteers, service users and the general public.

The Equality and Diversity Action Plan, included as Appendix I, sets out how this policy is implemented.

Key procedures relating to equality and diversity are set out in Appendix II.

Policy statement

Arkwright Meadows Community Gardens (AMCG) aims to create a safe and welcoming atmosphere for everyone. AMCG fully supports the principles of equality and diversity throughout its activities, service delivery and employment practices. We aim to design our activities, services and decision-making processes specifically to encourage and support participation from people who face disadvantage in society, including women, BME people, disabled people, LGBTQ+ people, people on low incomes and refugees and asylum seekers .

AMCG aims to:

1. Provide services that are accessible to all
2. Promote equality of opportunity and diversity in volunteering, employment and activities
3. Create effective partnerships with all parts of our community

We will do this by:

1. Continually improving our services to ensure equality and diversity and best practice are embedded.
2. Working together with the community to provide accessible and relevant service provision that responds to users' needs
3. Striving to create an organization where staff, volunteers and trustees are representative of the community served
4. Ensuring that our recruitment and employment policies are fair and robust
5. Being aware of volunteers and employees needs to encourage their own personal development
6. Recognising the individual contribution everyone makes to AMCG
7. Challenging discrimination
8. Whistleblowing where necessary
9. Providing fair resource allocation

Definitions of discrimination and harassment

Discrimination is the unequal treatment of an individual because of their membership of a particular class or group, such as sex, race or trade union (as above). It includes exclusion, verbal comment, denigration, harassment (including disability, sexual or racial harassment), victimisation, a failure to appreciate needs, or the assumption of such needs without consultation.

AMCG recognises that many people may experience discrimination. We will work within the framework of the law at all times, aiming to ensure that all people are treated fairly and equally. The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination in the workplace and lists the following nine 'protected characteristics':

- age
- disability

- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity (which includes breastfeeding)
- race
- religion and belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

AMC Gardens also aim to ensure that no individual or groups of people are discriminated against on grounds of ethnic origin, nationality (subject to work permissions), marital status, care responsibilities, class, employment status, trade union membership or asylum status.

The Equality Act 2010 defines several types of discrimination.

Discrimination may be **direct**, whereby a person is treated less favorably than others would be treated in the same circumstances, or **indirect**, whereby a requirement or condition is applied equally to everyone, but can only be met by a considerably smaller proportion of people from a particular group (eg requiring a post to be full time without proper justification may discriminate against people with care responsibilities).

Discrimination can also take the form of treating a person or persons **unfavourably** because of something arising from their disability. This is called **discriminating arising from disability**. People should not be treated worse than someone else because they are **associated with** a person who has a protected characteristic, and someone should not be treated worse than someone else because they are incorrectly thought to have a protected characteristic (**perception**).

People should not be treated badly or be **victimised** because they have complained about discrimination or helped someone else complain or done anything to uphold their own or someone else's equality law rights.

Harassment is also classed as discrimination, including third party harassment, e.g., by a customer.

AMCG considers all forms of discrimination to be unacceptable, regardless of whether there was any intention to discriminate or not.

Implementation

We value and encourage diversity and aim to create a culture that respects and values each others' differences, that promotes dignity, equality and diversity, and that encourages individuals to develop and maximise their true potential.

AMC Gardens recognises its **duty to make reasonable adjustments** to bring about equality for disabled people. We aim to anticipate the reasonable adjustments necessary to provide equal services. These reasonable adjustments may involve altering our **provisions and practices**, the site and building **physical features**, or creating **auxiliary aids or services**. We aim to ensure that our publications, services and The Gardens are fully accessible to all. We will seek advice on this area as necessary and will make any reasonable adaptations and improvements, within reasonable budgetary constraints.

All aspects of AMCG's work will be regularly reviewed to ensure that they comply with equal opportunities best practice, including recruitment and employment procedures, membership services, general public contact, volunteers, decision making processes, policy development, education and training provision, communications and publications.

An action plan (Appendix I) sets out AMCG's strategy for implementing equal opportunities. In addition, key procedures are set out for activities such as recruitment and communications (Appendix II).

Appropriate training and guidance will be provided to develop equality and diversity. AMCG will ensure that all new workers, volunteers and management committee members receive induction on the policy.

Key responsibilities

All AMCG workers, whether paid or voluntary, will be expected to operate in a non-discriminatory way at all times, and are responsible for their own compliance with this policy. Any discriminatory behavior will be dealt with through AMCG's complaint procedure at the first opportunity and may result in disciplinary action.

Workers should draw the attention of their colleagues and if appropriate the management committee to suspected discriminatory acts or practices, cases of bullying or harassment.

The Management Committee is responsible for managing and monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of this policy through the action plan (Appendix I) and reporting on this to the AGM.

Complaints

A complaint of discrimination or harassment should be discussed with a staff member in the first instance (or supervisor in the case of employees or volunteers). In many cases, discriminatory action is unwitting, and can be resolved informally once the problem has been clearly identified.

Where a complaint of discrimination or harassment by AMCG's staff or volunteers cannot be resolved informally, AMCG's formal complaints procedure (or grievance procedure in the case of employees or volunteers) will be invoked. A full enquiry will be conducted into the complaint and if it is considered that the behavior of an individual is unlawful, unfair or unacceptable, disciplinary action will be taken against them in line with AMCG's Disciplinary and Grievance Policy.

All staff and volunteers are subject to our disciplinary rules and should remember that an unfounded allegation of unfair treatment may be distressing to the recipient of the complaint, and may in itself lead to disciplinary proceedings.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every year by the AMCG Trustees to reflect changes in legal policy, changes in the demographics of people using the AMCG and the wider Meadows community, evaluation of activities and service provision and any complaints that have arisen.

Appendix I: Key processes and procedures

Resources events and activities

AMCG will aim to ensure that the use of The Gardens, membership and management activity reflects the diversity of The Meadows community. It seeks to ensure that the produce grown on The Gardens, its events, activities and publications take in to account, reflect and celebrate the diversity of the community surrounding The Gardens.

AMCG will aim to ensure that use of The Gardens and membership is accessible to all of The Meadows community. It seeks to ensure that the layout of the Gardens and all its events, and activities and publications take account of the differences between people and the impact of our services upon people.

We aim to take these things into account but will seek clarification from other organisations or individuals if we need assistance in this area.

Employment

The principles of equal opportunities are included in all areas of staff recruitment, supervision, review and development.

Applicants for posts will be given as much clear and accurate information as possible regarding such posts through advertisements, job descriptions and interviews in order to enable them to assess their own suitability for the post. Information about posts will also be placed and prominently displayed where it may reach individuals of both sexes.

AMCG will encourage persons of minority ethnic origin, disabled people, or a particular sex, to apply for any vacancies, whether paid or unpaid if they are under-represented in the workforce. However, after encouraging such applications each candidate will be considered on his/her individual suitability for the post, and the fact that they belong to an under-represented group shall not be taken into consideration when appointed.

All vacancies will be advertised as widely as possible according to our budgets to enable suitably qualified and experienced people to apply. To aid the promotion of staff development all staff, volunteers and members will be individually notified of vacancies prior to advertising. All applicants, both internal and external, will be considered on their merits.

Recruitment information shall not imply that there is a preference for one group of applicants (e.g. use of gender specific terms) unless there is a genuine occupational qualification which limits a post to a particular group, in which case the reasons will be clearly stated.

All applicants will be informed of AMCG's Equal Opportunities Policy. This information will be conveyed through advertisements, job descriptions, application forms and interview questioning.

Personnel specifications for all posts will only include requirements that are necessary and justifiable for the effective performance of the job.

Short listing for jobs will be carried out with no reference to the applicant's name, age, address, nationality, ethnic origin or criminal record. Applications will be scored in a consistent manner against the person specification for the post. Shortlist scoring will be kept for 6 months following interviews.

Interviews for job vacancies will be conducted on an objective basis and shall deal only with an applicant's suitability for the job and ability to fulfill the requirements for that job. Where it is

necessary to assess whether personal circumstances will affect performance of the job (for example unsocial hours) this should be discussed objectively without detailed questions based on assumptions about marital status, and/or caring responsibilities. Information required for personnel records will be collected after a job offer has been made. Interview scoring will be kept for 6 months following interviews.

Training & personal development

All staff, regardless of employment status (e.g. part-time, voluntary), are encouraged to discuss their career prospects and training needs with their supervisor. AMCG will not discriminate in the provision of training to any staff or regular volunteer.

All staff, regardless of employment status, will be provided with appropriate training to enable them to effectively fulfill the requirements of their post. In addition, all staff will, subject to funds, be provided with opportunities to enhance their professional skills in support of their personal development.

References

Equality and Human Rights Commission: 'Equality Act 2010: Summary guidance on services, public functions and associations', available at: www.equalityhumanrights.com, accessed 10.1.12

Equality and Human Rights Commission: 'Equality Act 2010: Summary guidance employment', available at:

www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/EqualityAct/ea_employment_summary_guidance.pdf, accessed 13.1.12