

1. Introduction

Wycombe Mind is fully committed to the National Mind Statement which is adopted in our policy and procedures portfolio.

We believe that equality and diversity are essential to Wycombe Mind's mission. We are committed to promoting equality of opportunity and equal access in our Day Services, Projects, employment, volunteering and membership regardless of individual differences or protected characteristics.

2. Equal opportunities and the law

Equal Opportunities legislation provides a definition of what constitutes discrimination in law and we will be bound by the relevant legislation. Discrimination against mental health service users will be challenged and combated in the public domain by the organisation. The organisation will adhere to the Equality Act, 2010.

Definitions from the Equality Act 2010:

- Direct discrimination

A person (A) discriminates against another (B) if, because of a protected characteristic, A treats B less favourably than A treats or would treat others.

Combined discrimination: dual characteristics

A person (A) discriminates against another (B) if, because of a combination of two relevant protected characteristics, A treats B less favourably than A treats or would treat a person who does not share either of those characteristics.

- Indirect discrimination

Indirect discrimination

A person (A) discriminates against another (B) if A applies to B a provision, criterion or practice which is discriminatory in relation to a relevant protected characteristic of B's.

For the definitions of harassment and victimisation this policy should be read in conjunction with the Wycombe Mind Diversity, Sexual or Racial harassment policy.

What is positive action under the Equality Act?

Positive action is lawful if it is taken to: enable or encourage people who share a protected characteristic to overcome a disadvantage connected to the characteristic; enable or encourage people who share a protected characteristic to participate in an activity in which their participation is disproportionately low.

Source: <https://www.xperthr.co.uk/faq/what-positive-action-is-permitted-under-discrimination-legislation/103008/>

As such Wycombe Mind is committed to making adjustments which are reasonable within the parameters set out in the Equality Act 2010.

The protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010 are:

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

3. Recruitment of staff and Volunteers

Wycombe Mind is committed to being a fair employer and will challenge and discourage unfair discrimination. We are committed to developing personnel policies which:

- Design job descriptions and person specifications relevant to the task that needs to be done
- Ensure that interviews focus on the persons abilities and skills in line with the persons specification
- Advertise permanent vacancies internally and externally and within Minds network
- Use relevant legislation to enable positive action

- Ensure that sickness, holiday and maternity leave will at least meet minimum statutory requirements
- Training opportunities will be available on the basis of appraisal
- The following statement is included on the staff recruitment page of the website and in job advertisements: Wycombe Mind is seeking to implement equal opportunities policies and welcomes applications from all sections of the community particularly people with lived experience of mental health challenges. We value the lived experience amongst our staff and volunteer team and as such are proactive in our recruitment practice. We take account of the vast knowledge and experience that someone who has experienced mental health challenges or certain life experiences can offer to our equality orientated services and support and we include lived experience in our person specifications for all the job roles we advertise. Wycombe Mind is committed to inclusive practice which supports equal opportunities.
- The following statement is included on the volunteering page of our website: The following statement: Wycombe Mind is seeking to implement equal opportunities policies and welcomes applications from all sections of the community particularly people with lived experience of mental health challenges. We value the lived experience amongst our staff and volunteer team and as such are proactive in our recruitment practice. We take account of the vast knowledge and experience that someone who has experienced mental health challenges or certain life experiences can offer to our equality orientated services and support. Wycombe Mind is committed to inclusive practice which supports equal opportunities.

The recruitment section of this policy should be read in conjunction with the Recruitment Policy, Volunteer Recruitment policy and Trustee Recruitment policy and the staff and volunteer code of conduct.

4. Equal opportunity for Service Users

We are committed to opening up opportunities for our service users. These opportunities for volunteering, training, public speaking and employment will be advertised within our centre.

All service users whether or not funded by the Local Authority will be assessed and supported in their need for services.

We respect the diversity and life experience of mental health service users. We are committed to working alongside service users in the spirit of equality. We are committed to empowerment of service users and the equality of experience of those who have one or more protected

characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 as listed above. In addition, we are committed to equality for service users irrespective of immigration status, social class, educational qualifications, income, or any record of offences.

Responsibility for developing and implementing equal opportunities is with the Services and Projects Manager of Wycombe Mind in collaboration with Trustees, staff, service users and volunteers.

5. Service delivery

- **Marketing**
Equality and diversity will be considered in all aspects of marketing to ensure Wycombe Mind actively engages with under-represented communities. Marketing will be made available in other formats and languages as required.
- **Public commitment to Equality and Diversity**
Wycombe Mind is wholly committed to equality and diversity and as such will state this across communication channels. Wycombe Mind will accept opportunities to be represented at community specific events such as Wycombe Pride.
- **Service access**

Staff and volunteers are expected to adhere to the code of conduct and as such there will be zero tolerance for discrimination. Instances of alleged direct or indirect discrimination will be investigated and may be treated as a disciplinary issue. Proven instances of direct or indirect discrimination may result in the termination of employment or volunteering opportunity. Wycombe Mind expects staff and volunteers to understand that microaggressions in service delivery is not acceptable and that any learning needs in relation to equality and diversity should be addressed with the line manager.

Reasonable adjustments will always be considered in order to improve access to services.

6. Individual rights

Wycombe Mind appreciates staff and volunteers have the right to express themselves (freedom of speech) and as such a proportionate approach will be taken in the event alleged discrimination needs to be investigated.

Breaches of policy (in conjunction with the compliments, comments and complaints policy):

The procedure for responding to a breach of policy by a staff member or volunteer:

- The line manager will talk to the staff member or volunteer in order to determine what is proportionate, e.g. no action, training or disciplinary action.
- The line manager will report to the CEO and Equality and Diversity Lead and they will have the final decision about the course of action to be taken.

If a service user has been observed to be directly or indirectly discriminatory this needs to be respectfully challenged. If challenging the service user to consider their attitude is to no effect the discrimination should be reported to the line manager, CEO or Lead for Equality and Diversity. In instances of discrimination which constitutes a risk of harm to others e.g. discriminatory verbal abuse, the service user should be asked to leave the session. In this event a written report of the incident is required by the CEO and Lead for Equality and Diversity.

Anyone aware of discrimination may refer to the Compliments, Comments and Complaints policy, the Diversity, Sexual or Racial Harassment policy and the Grievance policy.

7. Monitoring and review

- The diversity of the Trustee Board, Staff Team and Volunteer Team will be regularly reviewed in order to address under representation within the organisation with a view to genuinely representing the diverse community we serve.

The diversity of the service user group will be regularly reviewed in order to identify and address issues of under representation or unmet need.

- Equality Impact Assessment – This will be undertaken annually by the Lead for Equality and Diversity.
- Equality and Diversity Implementation Plan – This will reflect the outcomes of the Equality Impact Assessment.

- Exit interviews – Equality and Diversity will be discussed with staff or volunteers leaving their role.
- Reviewing complaints – A review of all complaints will be undertaken by the Equality and Diversity Lead in order to determine trends and identify concerns which need to be addressed in relation to Equality and Diversity.

Related policies

- **Compliments, comments, and complaints**
- **Confidentiality**
- **Data Protection**
- **DBS checking procedure**
- **Health and Safety**
- **Home working**
- **Influence and Participation**
- **Lone working**
- **Safeguarding (adults at risk and CYP)**
- **Staff code of conduct**
- **Trustee recruitment and induction**
- **Volunteering**
- **Wellbeing at work**
- **Whistleblowing**

8. Mind Equality and Human Rights

The Mind website includes information about the central equality work:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/about-us/our-policy-work/equality-and-human-rights/>

In line with Mind's strategic development priorities we are committed to:

Becoming an anti-racist organisation

We will be an unflinching advocate for racial justice and mental health.

Our support will be engaging and effective for people from minoritised communities. We will invest in building an inclusive organisational culture with diverse leaders.

Supporting young people

Our ambition is to become an influential advocate for young people's rights.

We will fight to ensure that all young people learn about mental health and can easily access trauma-informed mental health support.

We will create more opportunities for young people to lead our work.

Fighting for people in poverty

We want to stop people with mental health problems getting trapped in poverty. We will campaign for a robust welfare safety net. We will become a leading provider of mental health financial inclusion advice and support.

And we will build strong partnerships to tackle the complex relationship between mental health and poverty.

Responsibilities

- The Equality and Diversity lead for the organisation is Chris Harben, Vice Chair of Trustees.
- The Board will have oversight of the Equality and diversity implementation plan.
- All staff are required to complete Equality and Diversity training when they join the organisation and this is renewed every 3 years.