

Equality and Diversity Policy

Principles

Hackney Play Association supports the principle of equality and diversity in employment and in access to play provision. We aim to encourage, value and manage diversity and we recognise that talent and potential are distributed across the population. Not only are there moral and social reasons for promoting equality of opportunity, it is in the best interest of this organisation to recruit and develop the best people for our jobs from as wide and diverse a pool of talent as possible.

The Association recognises that many people in our society experience discrimination. Discrimination is acting unfairly against a group or individual through for example exclusion, verbal comment, denigration, harassment, victimisation, a failure to appreciate needs or the assumption of such needs without consultation.

Discrimination can be direct or indirect (where there is a condition, rule, policy or practice that applies to everyone but which particularly disadvantages people with a protected characteristic and cannot be justified).

All forms of discrimination are unacceptable, regardless of whether there was any intention to discriminate or not. Employees and volunteers have a duty to co-operate with the Association to ensure that this policy is effective in ensuring equal opportunities and in preventing discrimination. Employees should draw the attention of their line manager to suspected discriminatory acts or practices or cases of bullying or harassment.

Statement of Intent

The Association aims 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.

We aim to ensure that our commitment to equality of opportunity and inclusion is maintained in practice and thus underpins everything we do.

We aim to remove any barriers, bias or discrimination that prevent individuals or groups from realising their potential and contributing fully to our organisation's performance and to develop an organisational culture that positively values diversity.

We are committed wherever practicable, to achieving and maintaining a workforce that broadly reflects the local community in which we operate.

Every possible step will be taken to ensure that individuals are treated fairly in all aspects of their employment, engagement or whilst volunteering at the Association.

Our aim is that the workforce will be truly representative of all sections of society. Selection for employment or promotion or any other benefit will be on the basis of merit and ability only. Selection for training will be on the basis of job requirement only. Intimidation, harassment and bullying will not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action.

The Association will challenge discrimination in its own policies. It aims to provide equality and fairness for all job applicants or employees whether part-time, full-time, fixed term or temporary. It aims to ensure that no job applicant or worker receives less favourable treatment because of a protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation).

What we mean by this Statement

1. Our first commitment is to help resource the play needs of all Hackney's children. We recognise that children do not have direct political or other formal representation, and this can lead to their play needs being given a low priority in the institutions with responsibility for these needs. We further recognise that children from ethnic communities, and children with disabilities suffer from this discrimination in multiple and acute forms. We will work to ensure that children's play needs are given due consideration in policy and practice.
2. We recognise that women are the primary carers of children, and that this can lead to direct and indirect discrimination in employment, management and access to resources and support. We will aim to ensure that women are treated equally in recruitment of staff and management; use our co-option powers to ensure a gender balance on the committee; and assist with childcare and safe travel arrangement for women committee members as necessary.
3. We recognise and celebrate the diversity of cultures in Hackney. We recognise that ethnic and cultural minority communities can face particular difficulties in that play policy and practice is defined by the dominant culture. This can lead to direct, indirect and institutional discrimination in the provision of resources and support. We will aim to ensure that all ethnic and cultural communities are treated equally in provision of services; that ethnic origin will not be a barrier to staff or management recruitment; and we will use our co-option powers to ensure as far as possible that ethnic minority communities are fairly represented on the management committee.
4. We recognise that people with disabilities are discriminated against directly and indirectly in access to employment, management and access to resources and support. Our premises are accessible however, we will make alternative arrangements where possible for users, staff or management committee members who are unable to use our premises or resources because of a disability.

5. We recognise that people with ill health can face acute discrimination because of their status. Through training and awareness programmes, we will work to ensure that HPA staff and management committee members do not discriminate against people because of their health status.

6. We recognise that discrimination on the basis of age, health, educational attainment and economic status also exists. We recognise that housing conditions and availability of employment are specific factors which reduce opportunities for both adults and children in Hackney. We will work to ensure that our policies and practice do not contribute to these types of discrimination.

Implementation and Action Plan

Equality of opportunity means more than a publicly-stated commitment to non-discriminatory practices. It also implies a positive commitment to inclusion, a detailed action plan for how the commitment will be carried out in practice, and regular reviews of policy and practice.

The Director is responsible for the policy's day-to-day implementation. Consultation will take place with staff working on the implementation and development of this policy.

It is the responsibility of the Management Committee to monitor effectiveness, and to review and develop the policy where necessary. Monitoring and review will take place annually.

Each employee, volunteer, consultant, trainer, facilitator or Management Committee member is responsible for their own compliance with this policy. Breaches of the Equal Opportunities Policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary action against employees, appropriate action against a member of the Management Committee, termination of contracts for services of consultants or trainers, or withdrawal of volunteer agreements.

Employees who feel they have been discriminated against should raise the matter with their line manager. Initially the employee and manager should aim to resolve the matter informally. It may be that discriminatory action is unwitting and easily resolved once the problem is clear.

If they are dissatisfied with the outcome, the complaint is very serious, or their line manager is the cause of the complaint, the employee should raise the matter, in writing, as a formal grievance under the Association's Grievance Procedure.

The Association will ensure that all new employees, volunteers, and Management Committee members will receive induction on the policy and that consultants, trainers and facilitators will be fully informed.

Appropriate training and guidance will be provided to develop equality and diversity. All staff are encouraged to undertake training in inclusion, equalities and diversity.

We will honestly examine all aspects of our provision for overt and covert barriers to inclusion, mainly by collecting statistics and other information through:

- Equal opportunities data collection and monitoring of staff, volunteer and service user profiles, collected using registration forms
- training course and other attendance records
- evaluation forms and other staff, management and user feedback
- records of complaints and suggestions

- records of telephone contact support work
- AGM attendance and management committee election/co-option records
- staff, volunteer, external trainer and consultant records to establish actual patterns of use of our services, the recruitment and management of staff and the make-up of the management committee.

We will collate and evaluate the information collected, and use it to:

- review our policy and practice regularly as part of our Quality Assurance programme
- monitor our service in staff team and management committee meetings
- monitor the effectiveness and impact of staff and management training in achieving results in our delivery of services
- report on equal opportunities issues annually to the AGM

We provide quarterly information on composition of our management committee, staff, volunteers and users as part of our regular monitoring of services and provision.