

# Noa's Place - Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

## 1. Our Commitment

Noa's Place is founded on the fundamental principle of inclusion. We are committed to encouraging equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) among our workforce, volunteers, and service users, and to eliminating unlawful discrimination in all its forms.

Our objective is to ensure that every individual is treated with respect and dignity, creating an environment where everyone, regardless of neurotype or ability feels welcome, valued, and safe to be their authentic selves. We celebrate the diversity of our community and recognise that no individual should feel the need to "mask" or conform to neurotypical standards to access support or community.

This policy applies to all aspects of our operations, including service delivery at our Halifax hub, employment practices, volunteering, governance, and our digital support tools.

## 2. Policy Aims

Noa's Place aims to be an organisation where:

- **Equality, fairness, and respect** are central to our organisational culture and service design.
- **Barriers to participation** are actively identified and removed for neurodivergent individuals, people with disabilities, and their families.
- **Intersectionality** is recognised and addressed. We acknowledge that individuals may experience overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage (e.g., the intersection of disability with race, gender, or socioeconomic status) and we are committed to recognising and supporting these unique intersectional experiences.
- **Employment and volunteering opportunities** are accessible, with all appointments made solely based on merit and potential, with equitable adjustments to ensure fair access to opportunities.
- **Unlawful discrimination** is strictly prohibited. We do not discriminate against any person based on the protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

## 3. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

- **Equality:** Ensuring no one is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic.
- **Equity:** Providing tailored resources and support so that people can access

services and opportunities fairly and achieve equal outcomes, recognising different circumstances and barriers.

- **Diversity:** Valuing differences in people's backgrounds, identities, lived experiences, and ways of being.
- **Inclusion:** Creating a culture, environment, and ways of working where everyone feels they belong, are respected, and can participate meaningfully.
- **Intersectionality:** How overlapping identities (e.g., disability and race) can create unique experiences of disadvantage or discrimination.
- **Reasonable Adjustments:** Changes to remove or reduce barriers for disabled and neurodivergent people, so they can access services, volunteering, or work on an equal basis.
- **Neuro affirmative Practice:** Supporting neurodivergence as a natural variation in human experience, focusing on understanding and support rather than viewing differences as deficits to be fixed.

#### 4. Our Responsibilities

- **The Board of Trustees:** Holds ultimate responsibility for ensuring this policy is implemented, monitored, and reviewed. The Board is accountable for ensuring Noa's Place remains compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and best practices.
- **The Centre Manager:** Responsible for the day to day application of this policy, fostering a neuro affirmative culture, and addressing any concerns or breaches immediately.
- **Staff and Volunteers:** Responsible for upholding these principles in all interactions. Staff are expected to act as inclusive role models and are empowered to challenge discriminatory behaviour.

#### 5. Legal Frameworks

This policy aligns with the Equality Act 2010, the Human Rights Act 1998, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

#### 6. Inclusive Practice and Co-Production

##### 6.1 Service Delivery and Accessibility

We strive to make our premises, activities, and communications accessible through:

- **Enabling Environment:** Maintaining a holistic, sensory-aware and accessible environment, including quiet zones, adjustable lighting, low-arousal spaces, and other practical features that reduce barriers.
- **Strengths-based Communication:** Using strengths-based language and

respecting individual preferences for identity-first or person-first language, alongside inclusive imagery, in all physical and digital communications.

- **Digital Inclusion:** Ensuring our website and digital tools (support guides, coping strategies) strive for WCAG accessibility standards to remain usable for those with diverse processing or physical differences.

## 6.2 Co-Production and Lived Experience

We are committed to "nothing about us without us." We will actively listen to and amplify the voices of our service users to shape our hub's evolution through:

- **Regular Consultation:** Ongoing feedback loops with families and neurodivergent individuals.
- **Advisory Panels:** Establishing panels comprised of individuals with lived experience of SEND and neurodivergence to lead on service design and policy review.
- **Co-Production:** Directly involving service users in the creation of our interactive digital tools and community programmes.

## 7. Employment and Volunteering

Noa's Place is an equal opportunities employer. We will:

- **Inclusive Recruitment:** Ensure recruitment, promotion, and training opportunities are transparent and accessible, including accessible job adverts (including plain language), offering interviews in preferred formats (e.g., written prompts, quiet spaces, or trials), and applying disclosure-free principles (no formal diagnosis required to request adjustments).
- **Interview Questions in Advance:** Provide interview questions to candidates in advance.
- **Reasonable Adjustments:** Proactively provide reasonable adjustments during the recruitment process and throughout employment/volunteering for neurodivergent individuals or those with disabilities.
- **Tailored Training:** Provide mandatory EDI training to all staff and volunteers. This training will be delivered by qualified professionals, including those with lived experience, and will be specifically tailored to be appropriate for the individual's role within the hub (e.g., café staff, advocates, or trustees).

## 8. Monitoring and Data Privacy

To understand the effectiveness of our inclusion goals, we will monitor the diversity of our

staff, volunteers, and service users.

- **Voluntary Participation:** All monitoring will be conducted through voluntary and optional surveys.
- **Anonymity and GDPR:** Data collected for monitoring purposes will be anonymised and processed in strict accordance with current Data Protection legislation and our Privacy Policy. Individuals have the right to withhold this information without any prejudice to their service or employment.

## 9. Complaints and Remediation

Noa's Place takes all claims of discrimination, harassment, or bullying with the utmost seriousness. All responses involving children or vulnerable adults will be managed in line with Noa's Place's Safeguarding Policy and statutory safeguarding guidance.

- **Reporting:** Any individual who feels they have been treated unfairly should report the matter to the Centre Manager. If the concern involves the Centre Manager, it should be escalated to the Co-Chairs of Trustees.
- **Investigation:** All complaints will be investigated promptly, thoroughly, and confidentially.
- **Non retaliation:** No person will be penalised or victimised for raising a genuine concern or highlighting a breach of this policy.
- **Discrimination from service users or partners:** Where discrimination, harassment, or bullying is experienced from service users, visitors, contractors, or partner organisations, Noa's Place will take appropriate action which may include setting clear behavioural expectations, agreeing boundaries, modifying arrangements, ending a session/interaction, or (where necessary) restricting access to services or ending a partnership.
- **Support for affected staff and volunteers:** We will support staff and volunteers who experience discrimination, including wellbeing support, practical adjustments (e.g., changes to duties or rota where possible), and clear reporting routes, and we will not expect anyone to tolerate abusive or discriminatory behaviour as "part of the role".
- **Peer-to-peer discrimination (service user to service user):** Where discrimination occurs between service users (including children, young people, and adults), staff will respond in a safeguarding-informed and proportionate way, provide support to those affected, and take steps to prevent recurrence (including mediation or behavioural agreements where appropriate).
- **Online discrimination:** Discrimination, harassment, or hate incidents occurring via Noa's Place online spaces (including social media channels, online events, or digital tools) will be addressed promptly, including moderation actions such as removing content, blocking/reporting accounts, and escalating to relevant authorities where appropriate.

## **10. Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees, in consultation with our Advisory Panels, to ensure it reflects current legislation, evolving community needs, and organisational growth.

Date of Policy Adoption: [19/11/2025]

Date for Next Review: [19/11/2026]