

## EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

Forest Pulse recognises the inequalities that can exist within our society and the imbalance of opportunities that result from this. By promoting the principle of equality and diversity for all who are engaged in the delivery of our services, and for all who benefit from them, we will endeavour to redress the balance. We aim to remove any barriers, bias or discrimination that prevent individuals or groups from realising their potential and to develop a culture within the charity that positively values diversity.

This policy aims to outline our commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity and equal treatment for all its members, staff, volunteers, activity providers, visitors and trustees; and to provide guidance on anti-discriminatory practice. This policy is non-contractual.

This policy should be read in conjunction with all other Forest Pulse policies, in particular Safeguarding and Whistleblowing policies.

Forest Pulse is committed to opposing all forms of discrimination, including that based on the 'protected characteristics' as defined in the Equalities Act 2010:-

- Age.
- Disability
- Race, including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- Sex
- Religion or cultural beliefs
- Gender reassignment
- Marital status and civil partnership
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy and maternity.

The policy applies across the range of employment policies and practice, including those relating to Discipline, Grievance and Complaints.

Forest Pulse values its members, staff, volunteers, contracted personnel, visiting professionals and others involved with the charity, and expects them to be treated respectfully. Accordingly all the above have a responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect. The Charity Director is responsible for providing advice and guidance on equality and diversity issues, and the Trustees are responsible for ensuring this policy (alongside all others) is kept up to date.

One of the core values of Forest Pulse is "Ethical Behaviour", and the charity aims to:-

- Promote equality of opportunity
- Celebrate and value diversity
- Eliminate unlawful direct and indirect discrimination

Forest Pulse will provide equality of opportunity and equal treatment as an integral part of good practice. The charity is committed to a working environment in which the contribution and needs of everyone are fully valued and recognised. We will support our members, staff, volunteers, contracted personnel, and all others involved with the charity in not tolerating inappropriate, inconsiderate, violent or abusive behaviour.

Forest Pulse's practices will ensure that members, staff, volunteers, contracted personnel, visiting professionals and others involved with the organisation will not be discriminated against on any grounds

including age, disability, race, sex, religion or cultural beliefs, gender reassignment, marital status and civil partnership, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity. (This list is not exhaustive).

Forest Pulse is committed to anti-discriminatory practice in relation to all kinds of discrimination:-

- Direct Discrimination – where someone is treated less favourably than another because they have a protected characteristic.
- Indirect Discrimination – when a requirement or a condition is applied which has a detrimental effect on a particular group or individual. This applies even if there was not a deliberate intention to discriminate.
- Associative Discrimination – direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who has a protected characteristic.
- Perceptive Discrimination – direct discrimination against someone because others think they have a protected characteristic even if they do not possess that characteristic.
- Harassment (including by third parties) – unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic which violates a person’s dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. This applies even if the conduct is not directed at the individual or if they do not have the protected characteristic.
- Victimisation – when someone is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint under the Equalities Act or is it thought that they have done so.

Forest Pulse aims to promote equality and diversity as an employer and to ensure that no job applicant, employee or volunteer receives less favourable treatment or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable in the context of the policy. Training opportunities will be made available (as far as funding allows) to all appropriate staff and volunteers and not in such a way as to exclude particular groups. Forest Pulse regards discrimination, abuse, harassment, victimisation or bullying of members, staff, volunteers or others in the course of work as disciplinary offences that could be regarded as gross misconduct.

In developing its services, Forest Pulse will seek to ensure access to all its members and this will include:

- Creating physical access for everyone to all activities whenever possible
- Providing staff and volunteers experienced and trained working with people with learning and physical disabilities and challenging behaviour.
- Providing specialist equipment
- Training staff and volunteers in communication in all its forms, including signing, symbols, specialist and electronic communication equipment
- Training staff in specialist procedures as required, e.g. moving and handling, gastrostomy feeding, administration of emergency and other medications, TeamTeach positive intervention techniques, oxygen administration (this is not an exhaustive list)
- Providing staff and volunteers with awareness training in specific areas, e.g. autism, epilepsy etc.

Forest Pulse will aim to ensure that none of its policies discriminate directly or indirectly against any group or individual. We will comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that we and our staff/volunteers/members do not unlawfully discriminate under the Acts listed in Appendix 1.

Forest Pulse recognises that the promotion of equal opportunities and the valuing of diversity requires more than passive opposition to discrimination. We are therefore committed to taking positive action towards equality of opportunity whenever possible and practical. All forms of discrimination are unacceptable, regardless of whether there was any intention to discriminate or not.

- We will encourage and develop a positive self image for all our members, staff and volunteers.
- We will seek to empower children and young people with disabilities and their families to make and achieve choices about their care and well being that suit them best as a family.

- We will respect individual differences and encourage others to do the same.
- We aim to promote an understanding of disability on all its levels within our local communities and to improve access and communication where possible.

Staff and volunteers, and all others involved in the services provided by the charity, have a duty to co-operate with Forest Pulse 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 any suspected discriminatory acts or practices or cases of bullying or harassment.

**Reviewed by Trustees 14<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

Signed on Behalf of Charity ..... Name/Role .....

**APPENDIX 1**

Forest Pulse will take all reasonable steps to ensure that we and our staff/volunteers/members do not unlawfully discriminate under:

- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000
- Fixed Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002
- Civil Partnership Act 2004
- Work and Families Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Disability Equality Duty
- Gender Equality Duty
- Racial Equality Code of Practice for Employment
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Equal Pay Act 1970