

## **Parents and Carers Together Stockport**

### **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy**

#### **1. Introduction**

Parents and Carers Together Stockport (PACTS) parent carer forum recognises that people with different backgrounds, skills, attitudes and experiences bring fresh ideas and perceptions. This policy seeks to value and harness these differences and to ensure that the forum is relevant and approachable for everyone. Our aim is to draw upon the widest possible range of views and experiences in order to meet the changing needs of our members, volunteers, partners and supporters.

PACTS believe in equality of opportunity and values all individuals regardless of any collective identity. However, we recognise that individual and institutional discriminatory practice has meant that some groups may have not had equal access to services, fair employment practices and opportunities in participating and volunteering.

#### **2. Equality diversity and inclusion statement**

PACTS has adopted equality, diversity and inclusion as core values and places all its policy development in the context of the objectives of:

- Ensuring that all individuals who are in contact with PACTS, are treated with dignity and respect
- Ensuring that the opportunities PACTS provides for learning and personal development are made available on a non-discriminatory basis
- Providing a safe, supportive and welcoming environment for all who are involved with PACTS parent carer forum.
- All individuals and groups will be treated with respect and valued equally.
- We will make ourselves accessible to everyone.
- We will plan our meetings and events so that they are accessible to everyone.
- We will regularly review all our policies and procedures to ensure that they comply with legislation and good equalities practice.

PACTS seek through all its policies and actions to be a genuinely inclusive organisation. The objective is to integrate the principles of equal treatment and promotion of diversity into all aspects of the organisation's activity.

#### **3. Scope**

The PACTS Steering Group is made up of elected representatives. In addition, there are a range of parent representatives and volunteers. We expect all PACTS Steering Group, parent representatives and volunteers to behave in accordance with this policy and to have regard for the PACTS values. The principles of equality, diversity and inclusion apply to

the way in which representatives should treat each other, and others they meet when undertaking their role.

PACTS recognise that there are inequalities and discrimination that members may experience due to their life experiences as parent carers of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, and there are many members who may have or will also face dual discrimination. Dual discrimination, where an individual who believes that he or she has been treated less favourably because of a combination of two protected characteristics can bring a combined claim.

PACTS may need to work in a range of different or more flexible ways, in order to ensure genuine equality of access or opportunity for groups and individuals who come from a position of persistent and longstanding disadvantage.

#### **4. Legal framework**

PACTS endorse wholeheartedly the principles of the Equality Act 2010 and is committed to the positive promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion amongst all members and to achieve this we will:

- strive to ensure that no unlawful discrimination occurs in the conduct of PACTS work
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share the 'protected characteristics' that are listed below, and all other members of PACTS
- foster positive relations between people who share the 'protected characteristics' and those who do not

PACTS recognise that individuals often face discrimination due to:

- Age
- Disability
- Ethnicity (including race, colour, caste and nationality)
- Gender
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Religion, belief
- Sexual orientation.
- Political affiliation
- Social class
- Employment or financial status
- Non relevant criminal conviction.
- Caring responsibilities

See appendix 1 for more detail, for definitions of terms in relation to discrimination and harassment see appendix 2.

PACTS is committed to providing an environment free of stereotyped and oppressive beliefs, attitudes and practices. We seek to promote diversity and to respond to the needs of all individuals in a fair and equitable manner. We work to reduce unfair discrimination in society and seek to eliminate any such practices within the organisation.

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## **5. Defining equality, diversity and inclusion**

Equal treatment involves much more than simply treating everyone alike. It requires a recognition that some groups and individuals have particular/specific needs that need to be met if they are to enjoy equal access to participation opportunities and experience gained by being part of/or working with PACTS. We recognise that the Steering Group may need to work in a range of different or more flexible ways, in order to ensure genuine equality of access or opportunity for groups and individuals who come from a position of persistent and longstanding disadvantage.

Valuing diversity involves an acknowledgement of the benefits and intrinsic worth derived from the range of difference within our community and fostering it as a strength. We aim to celebrate and to value the differences between individuals' cultural, social and intellectual contribution to the PACTS and will seek to promote greater mutual understanding between groups/individuals who reflect these differences, and will seek to utilise the talents and experiences that everyone can bring to the organisation

## **6. Roles and Responsibilities**

All members of the PACTS Steering Group, parent representatives and volunteers will:

- Ensure understanding of this policy and seek guidance if there are any questions promote equality, diversity and inclusion for others and strive to create a safe supportive and welcoming working environment
- Ensure their own behaviour and language does not discriminate or oppress
- Ensure diversity and equal opportunities will be considered in all aspects of the work of PACTS
- challenge inappropriate behaviour or discrimination
- Report unacceptable behaviour in accordance with PACTS policies and procedures

## **7. Expectations of PACTS representatives and working practice.**

If language or behaviour from people participating in PACTS is offensive to any of the groups outlined in our statement they will be challenged and addressed, to enable them to explore their attitudes and value base. Any necessary support, training or skills will be offered to assist in addressing this with those involved in proportion to the contact and involvement had with those individuals. Support will also be offered to any individual who has been exposed to such offensive behaviour or language,

Language or behaviour from PACTS representatives and volunteers which is offensive to any of the groups outlined in our statement is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in any aspect of our work. Work practices which are discriminatory will be challenged and hanged.

Where contracts, job descriptions or codes of conduct are published these should explicitly state that any individual working with, or on behalf of PACTS must comply with this Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

Publicity produced by PACTS will be in accordance with our commitment to diversity and equal opportunities, promoting positive images of those groups in the community who experience discrimination.

Training and development opportunities will be given equally to any parent carer representatives or volunteers with the same level of responsibility and any parent representative has the right to discuss development and training with the PACTS steering group.

## **8. Decision Making Process**

We aim to reflect the diversity of the membership in the decision-making processes of PACTS work and will actively encourage participants, particularly those parent carers who may face discrimination, to be involved in the processes. Consideration will be taken when arranging any meeting to ensure that it is as accessible as possible.

We aim to represent the needs of our membership in our decision making processes, the steering group may from time to time co-opt observers onto the committee and in an advisory capacity to give some additional insight into how to reach those parent carers or other communities who might be deemed to be under-represented. Diversity and Equal Opportunities training for the steering group will be reviewed and arranged as required, and in line with national recommendations.

## **9. Recruitment of parent carer representatives**

Equal opportunities are vital in parent carer representative recruitment. It is essential that opportunities to volunteer are openly publicised. We adhere to this policy in the approval of parent carer representative application forms. The steering group must ensure equality of opportunity.

## **10. Conditions of Service**

Any premises PACTS utilise should all strive to promote equality of opportunity and should ensure that certain groups are not discriminated against. All efforts will be made to ensure they are accessible to disabled individuals and those with additional requirements. Working patterns and arrangements will be considered to determine which are essential and which could be flexible.

## **11. Implementation and redress**

The Steering Group will be responsible for implementing the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy if appropriate this may be delegated to a task and finish group.

Any complaint or grievance in relation to the policy, or breach of policy should be made to the Chairs of PACTS steering group. If the complaint is about a Chair the matter will be referred to the Data Protection officer.

All aspects of the policy should be monitored as an ongoing practice, this should be built into all procedures, for example as part of the recruitment process, publication process and activity programmes.

## **12. Review and Update Arrangements**

The policy will be reviewed every 3 years and may also be amended from time to time to reflect changes in legislation and best practice.

**Date this policy adopted by the Steering Group: January 2020**

**Date for review: January 2023**

**Attached: Appendix 1 & 2**

### **APPENDIX 1: Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics (taken from Equality Act 2010)**

Age:

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person because of their age, whether young or old unless it can be objectively justified.

Disability

The Act continues to make it unlawful to discriminate against an individual on the grounds of their disability which amounts to a physical or mental impairment. It is also unlawful to treat a disabled person unfavourably because of something connected with their disability. Organisations are expected to make any reasonable adjustments to the workplace and to systems of work in order to accommodate an individual's disability. The Act now makes it unlawful for an organisation to ask a candidate about their health before offering work. Such questions may only be lawful if an organisation is considering whether any reasonable adjustments need to be made to accommodate an applicant throughout the interview selection process, to decide whether an applicant can carry out a function that is essential to the job or to monitor diversity among people applying for jobs.

Gender Reassignment

It is unlawful to discriminate against a transsexual person who proposes to, starts or has completed a process to change their gender. In addition, it is unlawful to treat an individual less favourably

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because they are absent from work as they propose to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment than they would be treated if they were absent because they are ill or injured.

#### Marriage and civil partnership

The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person because of marital status or civil partnership.

#### Pregnancy and maternity

A woman is protected against discrimination during the period of her pregnancy and any statutory maternity leave to which she is entitled. During this period, pregnancy and maternity discrimination cannot be treated as sex discrimination.

#### Race

It is unlawful to treat an individual less favourably because of their colour, race, nationality (including citizenship) or ethnic or national origin, or apply requirements or conditions which have a disproportionate effect on people of a particular racial group, and which cannot be justified on non-racial grounds.

#### Religion or Belief

The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate because of an individual's religion or lack of religion or philosophical belief. To be protected, a belief must satisfy various criteria, including that the belief is a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour.

#### Sex

It is unlawful to treat an individual less favourably because of an individual's sex or to apply selection criteria, policies, employment rules or any other practices which have a disproportionate effect on people of a particular sex unless they can be objectively justified.

#### Sexual Orientation

The Act makes it unlawful to harass, victimise or otherwise discriminate against a person because of her/his sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation. The Act protects bisexual, gay, heterosexual and lesbian people.

#### Equal Pay

Organisations need to ensure that a consistent approach is applied to remuneration and benefits for men and women and will make recommendations for amendments where any inequalities may be found.

## **Appendix 2: Definition of Terms**

*Direct Discrimination* occurs when an individual is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic.

*Indirect Discrimination* can occur when there is a condition, rule, policy or practice that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic.

*Associative Discrimination* occurs when someone is directly discriminated against because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic (except in marital/civil partnership status).

*Perceptive Discrimination* occurs when someone is directly discriminated against because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic (other than marriage or civil partnership) even if they do not actually possess it.

*Harassment* is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. Harassment applies to all protected characteristics except for pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnership. Employees need not possess the relevant characteristic themselves and may be protected because of perception or association.

*Victimisation* occurs when an employee suffers a detriment because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act or because they are suspected of doing so. An employee is not protected from victimisation if they have maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint.

*Sexual Harassment* occurs when an individual is subject to abuse, physical, verbal or hostile behaviour because of his/her sex which might threaten the individual's job security or create an intimidating environment.