

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Policy

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1. Policy

1.1 Our Values

People with MND, their families and carers are at the heart of everything we do.

We collaborate, and value everyone's contribution

We achieve excellence through personal commitment and ongoing improvement

We respect and respond to people's diverse needs, backgrounds and views

We achieve our aims through building open and transparent relationships

1.2 Diversity Statement

The MND Association is committed to treating people fairly and without discrimination. It seeks to be a diverse and inclusive organisation, valuing and celebrating individual differences. This will be evident in our values, mission and goals, and demonstrated through our policies, plans, communications, strategy and actions.

The Association is committed to ensuring that people with MND, people affected by MND and health and social care professionals are able to access our services as and when they need to and in the way(s) that meet their needs. The Association is also committed to identifying and doing whatever it can to drive out inequity and discrimination within statutory and other services.

The Association will continually improve its position in respect of DEI through the creation and implementation of action plans and strategies.

1.3 Aims and Commitment

The aim of the policy is to help the Association:

- Challenge & eliminate discrimination where it occurs.;
- create a positive culture throughout the Association, where diversity, inclusion, equity and respect are core values and demonstrated by our volunteers, trustees and staff;
- ensure staff, volunteers and trustees are engaged with the development and implementation of our diversity, equity and inclusion work;
- encourage positive action to overcome disadvantage, promote equity and foster inclusion;
- ensure diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are promoted through our work internally and externally.

The MND Association is committed to:

- actively striving to make sure that the Association reaches out to all people living with MND, their families and carers and responds to and anticipates individuals' needs positively and proactively;

- creating an inclusive environment in which individual differences and the contributions of our volunteers, fundraisers, donors, partners, trustees and employees are recognised and valued;
- promoting dignity and respect for all;
- ensuring appropriate opportunities for development and progression opportunities are available to all;
- using inclusive recruitment practices;
- providing information and learning to trustees, volunteers and employees so that all are aware of diversity, equity and inclusion issues;
- ensuring that staff and volunteers have equitable access and support with regards promotion, personal development, or management of performance;
- monitoring data about those we support to enable us to address gaps and improve services to people affected by MND;
- promoting the benefits of embracing diversity, equity and inclusion to our volunteers, trustees and employees;
- embedding diversity, equity and inclusion into our policies, procedures and everyday practice;
- giving people the opportunity to complain if they believe they have been unjustly treated in their dealings with the Association, and responding to complaints without prejudice;
- helping its volunteers and staff to reach their full potential;
- working with our partner agencies and suppliers to ensure their services also comply with our expectations of diversity, equity and inclusion.
- taking measures to audit our projects and services to ensure they are meeting our diversity, equity and inclusion aspirations.

The Motor Neurone Disease Association is committed to developing and maintaining a culture of inclusivity and respect. Any discriminatory behaviour demonstrated will be appropriately challenged in a polite and constructive manner and where necessary action will be taken, including possible disciplinary action.

1.4 Equitable Opportunities.

We are committed to equity of opportunity in employment, volunteering and in the services we deliver. We will take reasonable steps to ensure that no person working for the organisation or seeking employment or a volunteering position with us, or anyone using our services will receive less favourable treatment or will be disadvantaged by requirements or conditions that cannot be shown to be justifiable on the grounds of their age, disability (including mental health), gender, sex, gender identity, race, religion / belief, sexual orientation, marital/civil partnership, pregnancy / maternity, or socio-economic status.

We recognise that individuals have different needs in order to partake in the same opportunities. As such we will seek to flex our approaches to recruitment and development to ensure equity of opportunity.

Selection criteria and procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are selected and treated on the basis of their relevant merits, abilities and potential contribution to the Association.

1.5 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and our people

Everyone should feel respected, valued and able to achieve their full potential.

The support of the protected characteristics below will be reflected in our staff and volunteer teams:

Gender / Sex

Women and men and those who identify as non-binary or in other ways should be fully and properly represented and rewarded for their contribution at all levels of the Association for example through:

- challenging gender stereotypes;
- supporting employees in balancing their life at work and at home;
- ensuring equal pay, and equitable opportunity for progression and support.

Gender transition

We will take positive steps to support individuals who are considering or are transitioning or who have completed their transition and ensure they are treated with dignity and respect. Transgender employees or volunteers including those who plan to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone gender transition are protected against all forms of discrimination and harassment.

Marital/civil partnership status

Volunteers and employees are treated fairly and equitably irrespective of their marital/civil partnership or family status.

Ethnicity

The ethnic and cultural diversity of our communities should be represented throughout the Association for example through;

- challenging racial/ethnic stereotypes;
- understanding, respecting and valuing racial/ethnic and cultural differences and perspectives and amending our activities accordingly to be more inclusive;
- our services are to be shaped appropriately to meet the needs of people of all ethnicities.
- encouraging and enabling members of minority ethnic groups to volunteer or work for us at all levels.

Disability

The abilities of disabled people should be recognised and valued at all levels in the Association for example through:

- focusing on what volunteers and employees can do rather than what they cannot do;
- challenging stereotypes about disabled people and in particular, not making assumptions about an individual's ability;
- making appropriate adjustments so that all employees and volunteers can reach their full potential regardless of any disability.

Age

Age diversity within the Association is promoted and valued for example through:

- Challenging age stereotyping, recognising that new ideas and fresh approaches can come from anyone irrespective of their age;
- recognising the benefits of a mixed-age team;
- adapting services and opportunities to be more inclusive to their preferred ways of contributing.

Religion, faith or belief

Volunteers and employees are treated fairly, irrespective of their faith, religion or belief. Our people are also expected to recognise the individual's freedom of belief and right to protection from intolerance and persecution by other individuals and groups. Reasonable measures will be taken to enable staff to practice their religion during working hours and environments.

Note: The expression of beliefs and opinions should not contravene the Association's values or its capability to carry out its work.

Sexual orientation

People are treated fairly irrespective of their sexual orientation for example through:

- respecting the rights of everyone irrespective of whether or not they are open about their sexual orientation;
- respecting different life choices even if they conflict with one's own religious or cultural beliefs;
- challenging negative stereotypical views.

Pregnancy, maternity, paternity & adoption

People should be treated fairly throughout their maternity / paternity period and supported appropriately through pregnancy. Staff will not be discriminated against for taking maternity, paternity, parental or adoption leave.

1.6 Legal requirements

In valuing diversity, equity and inclusion, we are committed to go beyond the legal minimum. However, current equality legislation and associated codes of practice are taken into account, including, but not limited to the:

- Equality Act 2010
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Part-time working regulations 2000
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act
- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Employment Equal Treatment Framework Directive 2000 (as amended)
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006
- Employment Equality (Repeal of Retirement Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004
- Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 (as amended)
- Equal Pay Act (Northern Ireland) 1970
- Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999
- Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997
- Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003
- Section 75 of the NI Act 1998

1.7 Breach of policy

All complaints of discrimination will be sensitively investigated and, if proven, will result in appropriate action. A complaint about an employee will be managed under the Association's disciplinary procedures. The procedure for handling concerns about a volunteer may be used in the case of volunteers.

1.8 Responsibilities

All staff, volunteers and trustees must adhere to this policy. The Directors' Team and the Board of Trustees are accountable for ensuring the policy is implemented.

Role of managers of staff or volunteers.

The manager's responsibility is to:

- Set a positive example in everything they do by ensuring at all times that their actions and behaviors promote diversity, equity and inclusion;
- stop inappropriate behavior immediately;
- regularly consider the activities of their teams to ensure they are inclusive;
- ensure diversity equity and inclusion impact audits are undertaken for projects, and diversity, equity and inclusion are regularly discussed in planning meetings.
- encourage employees to maximise their contribution to the work of the MND Association and support them to reach their full potential;
- provide appropriate learning opportunities to volunteers and staff;
- ensure all staff are aware of and carry out their responsibilities under the law and this policy.
- ensure that the services under their jurisdiction are tailored to meet the needs of the people the Association supports.

Role of volunteers and employees

Every volunteer or employee should:

- act in ways that respect and value the diversity of others;
- take on appropriate learning regarding diversity, equity and inclusion issues;
- set a positive example in everything they do;
- not discriminate against people affected by MND when giving help and support, or against other members of the Association;
- challenge any behaviour that could be interpreted as unfair discrimination;
- regularly consider the diversity, equity and inclusion of volunteer activities.

Role of Trustees

Every trustee should:

- Act in ways that respects and values the diversity of others;
- undertake appropriate learning regarding diversity, equity and inclusion issues;
- challenge any behaviour that could be interpreted as unfair discrimination.
- positively promote and act as a role model for the Association's approach to diversity, equity and inclusion.
- monitor diversity, equity and inclusion strategy in the Association.

1.9 Definitions

Protected characteristics

Protected characteristics refer to groups that are protected under the Equality Act. These are best described as certain attributes that people possess, which the law considers should be safeguarded. There are nine protected characteristics upon which discrimination is unlawful. The protected characteristics are: gender, age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion and faith, marriage/civil partnership and gender identity.

Positive Action

Positive action means the steps that an employer can take to encourage people from groups with different needs or with a past track record of disadvantage or low participation to apply for jobs.

An employer can use positive action where they reasonably think (on the basis of some evidence) that:

- people who share a protected characteristic are subject to a disadvantage connected to that characteristic;
- people who share a protected characteristic have needs that are different from the needs of people who do not share it;
- participation in an activity by people who share a protected characteristic is disproportionately low.

Equity

While often used interchangeably, equity and equality mean different things and lead to different results. When we treat everyone equally, we treat everyone the same, but when we treat everyone equitably, we recognise that individuals have different needs if they are to have the same access to a service or an opportunity to develop. In a diverse organisation, differences exist, and people require support in different ways to achieve equity.

Diversity

Diversity is about valuing all visible and non-visible differences and recognising and accepting that harnessing these differences creates an environment where everyone feels valued. A diverse approach aims to recognise value and manage differences to enable all employees to contribute and realize their full potential.

Inclusion

Inclusion is about more than having a diverse range of people participate in activities or being employed. It is about ensuring people with diverse backgrounds, experiences, aspirations and needs feel welcome, heard and able to fully contribute to the organisation. An analogy often used is that diversity is about being invited to the party, but inclusion is being asked to dance.

2. Status of Policy

This policy is not a contractual term of employment. It is intended to act as a general framework only. It may be varied in any way and at any time where the MND Association reasonably deems this to be necessary.

The policy will be reviewed in November 2022, if not before.