

Reading Community Learning Centre (RCLC) Equal Opportunities/Diversity Policy

1. General statement of the policy

RCLC believes that an equal opportunities approach which values diversity must be embedded in the culture of the organisation. It is what we do and how we do it - our practice - that defines where we stand in relation to equal opportunities. There are always new perspectives on discrimination to be explored, new forms of oppression to be challenged and new ways of challenging them. We aim to encourage an openness in our organisation such that people feel free to raise issues of equality, training and learning from each other are highly valued, monitoring and evaluation are prized tools and freedom to admit mistakes and celebrate successes are of central importance.

It is important to note that, as a specialist organisation, the majority of RCLC's services are specifically provided for women, in order to address the particular disadvantages they face. The exclusion of men from some classes or services will therefore not be regarded as contravening this policy.

Unfair discrimination in our society takes many forms. It may be direct and based on overt prejudice. It may be indirect and based on lack of awareness and understanding. It may be ingrained in the operational culture of organisations, in the sense that the McPherson Report defined institutional racism.

RCLC is fundamentally opposed to all these types of unfair discrimination and seeks to ensure that in all its activities it does not take place against individuals or groups for any of the following reasons:

- gender
- age
- social and economic class
- employment status
- HIV status
- physical or mental disability
- political belief
- religion or belief
- gender reassignment
- race, colour, nationality or national origin
- marital or parental status
- sexual orientation
- unrelated criminal conviction
- position as a carer
- status as a refugee/asylum seeker

- pregnancy and maternity

RCLC also recognises and seeks to ensure that employees, volunteers and service users are not unfairly discriminated against or suffer harassment because of an association with another individual who has a protected characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010 or because they are perceived to have a protected characteristic.

Political beliefs which, in themselves, promote prejudice and discrimination (eg neo Nazism) are not tolerated by RCLC. The relevance of unspent criminal convictions is determined at the discretion of the Board of Trustees.

RCLC's commitment to oppose discrimination and promote equality of access to services places an obligation on everyone: paid staff, volunteers, trustees, committee members and learners. It is the aim of RCLC to create a welcoming and safe working environment for paid staff, volunteers, trustees, committee members and learners from diverse communities and to acknowledge the benefits of diversity.

Members of RCLC are expected to support RCLC's anti-discrimination values, and users of RCLC's services are expected to respect the values contained in this statement. It is understood that people have different levels of awareness with regard to equal opportunities and need opportunities to learn. Nevertheless, any behaviour that is seen as oppressive or discriminatory by trustees or management will be considered a serious breach of this policy.

RCLC will take positive action to challenge disadvantage and discrimination and to promote diversity and full access to opportunity in all areas of its work and structures. By 'positive action' we mean measures undertaken with the purpose of achieving full access to opportunity for people and groups that face the consequences of past or present discrimination or disadvantage.

2. Areas covered by this policy

This policy will underpin all policies and practices carried out by RCLC, namely:

- strategic planning and tactical decision-making
- delivery of service to users/learners
- the use and choice of buildings and venues
- recruitment, selection and career development of RCLC staff and volunteers*
- use of clear language and communication channels and vehicles
- protection from harassment of all personnel
- monitoring and evaluation of RCLC's effectiveness in all its forms.

(* RCLC has a Recruitment & Selection Procedure for engaging paid staff. It is designed to ensure an effective but fair recruitment process which follows equal opportunities principles.)

3. Good practice service delivery

The service users of RCLC include all members of the public and learners who access our services, our partners and colleagues from the voluntary and the public sector, our volunteers and trustees. In order to ensure that discrimination in delivery of services does not take place, RCLC will:

- treat everyone who has contact with the organisation for whatever reason with dignity and respect.
- plan the delivery of services in a way that will not negatively affect how someone accesses our services because of a protected characteristic.
- take steps to establish what services are required by different sections of the community.
- seek to target services and support to individuals based in communities which experience discrimination and social exclusion
- seek to ensure that RCLC's meetings, literature, website, publicity, training events and all other forms of communication are accessible to the widest possible range of individuals and communities
- publicise its Complaints Procedure which is available for use by any service user who believes he/she has experienced adverse discrimination on the part of the organisation.

RCLC's commitment to oppose discrimination and promote equality of access to services places an obligation on all personnel: paid staff, volunteers, trustees and committee members. It is the aim of RCLC to create a welcoming and safe environment for the Centre's users, staff, volunteers, trustees and committee members from diverse communities and to acknowledge the benefits of diversity.

Members and users of RCLC's services are expected to respect the values contained in this statement. It is understood that people have different levels of awareness with regard to equal opportunities and need opportunities to learn. Nevertheless, any behaviour that is seen as oppressive or discriminatory by trustees or management will be considered a serious breach of this policy.

In this policy we follow the requirements of the Equality Act 2010

The Board will regularly review and update this policy document.

Date Approved by Board
Review Date
Signed on behalf of the
Board of Trustees

Sep 2014
Mar 2017

Dated
