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| Author/Nominated Lead  Title plus contact details | Karen Millard  Clinical Manager  Karen.millard@derbyshire.org.uk |
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**Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy**

**Introduction**

At SAIL we are committed to achieving equal opportunities in employment and in the services that we provide. We aspire to having a diverse

team at all levels that is representative of the community that we serve.

We want all our colleagues and the people we support to feel included and able to access all the opportunities that we provide.

We are also committed to extending our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) journey out into our community, building relationships to better understand the communities we live alongside and finding ways to break down barriers that may be limiting access to our services.

**Purpose**

This policy will provide guidance on how we will provide equality, fairness and respect for all and will set out to remove discrimination and to promote inclusion and diversity.

SAIL will comply with and adhere to the Equality Act 2010 which provides a single framework to tackle disadvantage and discrimination of people with protected characteristics, as well as following NHS England Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework (PCREF) 2024 which sets out the legislative and regulatory context for advancing mental health equalities and assisting mental health trusts and other mental health providers to comply with their obligations. Where possible, SAIL will tackle disadvantage and discrimination of all people, even if their characteristic is not a ‘protected one’ under the Equality Act. We will consult with best practice and continually review how we can improve our equality and inclusion, treating this area as one for constant tending and discussion as the world evolves.

**Definitions**

**Understanding Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Equity**

Equality is not about 'treating everyone the same' but recognising that everyone is different, and that people's needs are met in different ways. Equality is essentially being about fairness and ensuring that we all have the best possible chance to succeed in life whatever our background or identity.

This is closely related to Equity which is about ensuring that we provide resources to enable all people to be equal based on their need. Equity tries to address the different opportunities needed for people to be equal.

Diversity is about understanding that everyone is unique, recognising, respecting and celebrating the added value that differences bring.

Inclusion is where difference is seen as a benefit and where perspectives and differences are shared, leading to better decisions.

An inclusive working environment is one in which everyone feels valued, that their contribution matters, and they can perform to their full potential, regardless of background, identity or circumstances. An inclusive workplace enables a diverse range of people to work together effectively.

**Understanding Protected Characteristics**

Under the Equality Act 2010 we must not unlawfully discriminate because of the following 9 protected characteristics

Age

Disability

Gender reassignment

Marital or civil partnership status

Pregnancy and maternity

Race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin)

Religion or belief

Sex

Sexual orientation

Other characteristics (e.g. gender identity, mental health, housing status, occupation, social class) may also be covered in the scope of our EDI work but these are different from the from the above protected characteristics and are not covered by law.

As an organisation we will work towards true inclusivity and a policy of non-discrimination for any reason.

**Understanding Key Terms**

Direct discrimination - treating someone with a protected characteristic less favourably than others

Indirect discrimination - putting rules or arrangements in place that apply to everyone, but that put someone with a protected characteristic at an unfair disadvantage

Harassment - unwanted behaviour linked to a protected characteristic that violates

someone’s dignity or creates an offensive environment for them

Victimisation - treating someone unfairly because they’ve complained about discrimination

or harassment

Positive action - taking specific steps to improve equality in your workplace.

**PCREF**

This document implements NHS England [PCREF](https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/patient-and-carer-race-equality-framework/) which is split into three components:

* **Part 1** – **Legislative and regulatory obligations** (**Leadership and governance)**: Legislation has been identified that applies to all NHS mental health trusts and mental health providers in fulfilling their statutory duties, and leaders of the Trusts and mental health providers will need to ensure these core pieces of legislation are complied with across their organisation.
* **Part 2** – **National organisational competencies:** aligns with the vision in the Independent Review of the Mental Health Act 2018 (MHA). Through a co-production process, six organisational competencies have been identified working with racialised communities, patients and carers. Trusts and mental health providers should work with their communities and patients and carers to assess how they fair against the six organisational competencies (and any more identified as local priorities) and co-develop a plan of action to improve them.
* **Part 3**– **The patient and carers feedback mechanism:**which seeks to embed patient and carer voice at the heart of the planning, implementation and learning cycles.

The six most consistent focus areas identified as national organisational competencies to improve the experience of racialised and ethnically and culturally diverse communities were:

1. Cultural awareness
2. Staff knowledge and awareness
3. Partnership working
4. Co-production
5. Workforce
6. Co-learning

**Roles and Responsibilities**

The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.

The Senior Management Team work together to ensure the policy is adhered to operationally across SAIL.

There will be a culture of open dialogue and feedback with everyone involved with SAIL to ensure the policy remains accurate and relevant.

Whilst overall responsibility sits with the Board of Trustees and Senior Management Team, every person associated with SAIL has a personal responsibility for implementing and promoting these principles in their day-to-day dealings with everyone including people we support, staff, volunteers, sessional workers and trustees.

**Expectations**

We expect all our people will use appropriately inclusive language and behave in a way that will uphold the dignity of colleagues, people who use our services, volunteers, sessional workers and trustees. Our goal is to ensure that these commitments, reinforced by our values, are embedded in our day-to-day working practices.

**Our Commitment**

We will demonstrate our commitment in the following areas:

**Communities**

As well as promoting good practice within SAIL’s, our EDI aims extend out into the community we work in in the following ways:

* Promoting equality of opportunity and diversity within the communities in which we work and with all our workforce.
* Aiming to build a workforce which reflects our service user base within the diverse communities in which we work, with the aim of having parity of representation across the workforce.
* Actively seeking connections with marginalised groups within SAIL to understand more about their position and potential barriers to engagement with any of our services.
* Seeking to break down barriers through partnerships.
* Inviting discussion and visibility between us and community groups to facilitate mutual understanding and co-production of support that is relevant and inclusive.

**People We Support**

SAIL’s ensures equality and promotes diversity through service delivery by:

* Treating the people we support and our colleagues fairly and with respect.
* Promoting an environment free from discrimination, bullying and harassment, and tackling behaviour which breaches this.
* Building in legislative requirements and best practice to all our service delivery and employee policies and procedures, and supporting these with appropriate training and guidance.
* Encouraging access and applications from under-represented groups.
* Responding swiftly to allegations of discrimination.
* Actively engaging with under-represented communities
* Purposefully engage with those with Lived Experience of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), Sexual Violence (SV) and Incest to inform our work.

**Volunteers and Sessional Workers**

SAIL’s will ensure equality and promote diversity in all volunteer engagement

Recruitment – e.g. anonymised shortlisting, reasonable adjustments, encouraging applications from specific groups, clear skills-based selection criteria.

Regular training – e.g. for all volunteers, volunteer coordinators, sessional workers recruitment-specific training.

The recruitment of a diverse trustee board that is representative of the communities we support.

**Recruitment and selection**

SAIL’s will ensure equality and promote diversity through its recruitment and employment practices by:

* Advertising job vacancies internally to encourage service users and volunteers to apply.
* Ensuring that recruitment, selection and promotion will be transparent, merit-based and fair.
* Making reasonable adjustments wherever possible to enable participation in the process.
* Encouraging recruitment from groups currently under represented within SAIL.
* Ensuring that job descriptions, person specifications and application forms reflect only the requirements of the job and do not imply any stereotyping.
* Stating in adverts that we are seeking to be an effective equal opportunities employer, including lived experience of CSA, SV and Incest.
* Considering a variety of advertising mediums to provide us with a wide pool of candidates.
* Carrying out appropriate demographic monitoring during the recruitment process. All such information will be treated as confidential and will be clearly separated from all processes concerned with the selection of staff or volunteers.
* The EDI strategy will be reviewed annually by trustees and will establish key targets to ensure our workforce is diverse and representative of the communities we support.

**Colleagues**

* Recognising and valuing the differences and individual contribution that people make.
* Providing support and encouragement to staff to develop their careers and increase their contributions to the organisation through the enhancement of their skills and abilities.
* Recognising and developing potential which has not been used before because of past discrimination and disadvantage.
* Being a healthy place to work with a strong culture of inclusivity and support.
* Our inclusion group which seeks input and ideas on how to make our organisation more inclusive.
* Giving the opportunity to give feedback on how to make the organisation more inclusive via surveys

**Leadership**

Ensuring that the leadership of SAIL at Board level and within the senior management team is diverse and representative of the community we serve and has undergone Equality & Diversity training.

**Continual learning**

We will create a culture of openness, curiosity and non judgment to help us learn and grow as an organisation. We will develop and refine our EDI action plan to ensure we stay current and relevant.

Learning opportunities will include:

* Mandatory training on Equality & Diversity.
* Mandatory reading and understanding of this policy.
* Invited speakers to talk at Counsellor Meetings.

**Specific Types of Support**

**Disability**

The Equality Act 2010 defines disability as a mental or physical impairment that has a substantial long term adverse effect on someone's ability to carry out normal daily activities. This may include physical disabilities, mental disabilities and neurodiversity. SAIL’s recognises that many disabilities are ‘invisible’.

**The Act makes it unlawful to:**

* Discriminate directly against someone because of their condition or impairment i.e. provide a service or employment on less favourable terms than those offered to people who do not have a disability.
* Discriminate against someone indirectly because of their condition or impairment i.e. by failing to make reasonable adjustments to the environment, policies or practices that impact on disabled people specifically.
* Refuse to offer services or goods to someone because of their condition or impairment.
* Victimise someone because they have made or intend to make a complaint or have supported a disabled person to make a complaint.
* Discriminate against a disabled person in education or training.
* Harass or discriminate against somebody for a condition or impairment they either do or do not personally have or due to being incorrectly perceived as disabled.
* Treat someone less favourably because of their association with a disabled person.

During their employment or engagement, an employee or volunteer may be or become disabled as defined by the Equality Act 2010. Their line manager will discuss with individuals to understand what their specific needs may be and consider and implement all reasonable adjustment to support them.

**Ways we support those with a disability:**

**Paid time off for medical appointments**

We will provide a reasonable amount of paid time off work for a disabled person to attend rehabilitation, assessment or treatment in relation to their disability. Employees should discuss details with their line manager as early as practicable to agree and manage appropriate time off work.

**Medical Advice**

It may be useful to seek medical advice from GP's, Occupational Health advisers or other specialists. If this is the case, we will discuss this with the individual and obtain appropriate written authorisation before proceeding.

**Access to Work Scheme**

If appropriate, we would also consider using the Government's "Access to Work" Scheme which can provide further advice and support. Individuals can also seek advice from this scheme.

**Accessible Buildings**

We will endeavour to ensure, as far as is practicable, that all premises are fully accessible.

**Ways of working**

Flexibility can be given as to how a person might want to work to be their best self – e.g. being able to walk around during meetings or being given additional information before a meeting.

**Pregnancy**

We recognise that pregnant women may need changes to their work conditions and will consider any requests for such changes.

A pregnant woman will not be treated unfavourably because of the pregnancy, or because of illness suffered by her as a result of it.

**Ways we support those who are pregnant:**

**Antenatal Care**

Time off with pay will be given to both full and part-time pregnant employees to attend antenatal classes, including medical checks and relaxation/childbirth classes. Similar provision will be made for partners sharing responsibility for childcare to attend antenatal classes where necessary. We recognise that pregnancy and maternity is a protected characteristic. Requests for leave should be discussed with line managers to agree reasonable and appropriate time off.

**Breastfeeding**

We will aim to provide a private, hygienic and safe environment where milk can be expressed and stored. Employees should discuss requirements and preferences with their line manager for suitable arrangements to be made.

**Sexual Orientation**

We regularly review our EDI statistics and data to ensure that there is no discrimination against anyone whatever their sexual orientation. There are regular opportunities for people to recommend ways we can be more inclusive (a quarterly survey) and we review these suggestions and implement them if we are able. Training is provided on inclusivity regarding sexual orientation and what sexual orientation means.

**Gender Identity Communications**

We are careful to remove bias by keeping communications gender neutral as far as possible. No assumptions or stereotypes are made as to who may do which role within SAIL or as to who may access which types of support.

**Facilities**

Where possible we will provide a gender neutral toilet and/or changing facilities or have separate cubicle facilities within male/female toilet areas. If the need arises in our premises that don’t have separate cubicle facilities we will work together to find a solution that allows all colleagues / people we support to feel comfortable.

**Pronouns**

Pronouns are optional in email signatures and in any surveys or questionnaires that we produce.

**Training**

Training is provided on inclusivity regarding identified gender.

**Allyship**

Allyship (active support for the rights of a minority or marginalised group without being a member of it) is promoted through learning opportunities and internal communications.

**Transitioning at work**

SAIL’s is working on a ‘transitioning at work’ policy for anyone transitioning between genders. SAIL’s will support anyone doing this and ensure that they are not discriminated against and are treated inclusively.

**Marriage/Civil Partnership**

No roles are dependent on being married or being in a civil partnership and all benefits and opportunities are equally open to all regardless of relationship status. We will only enquire as to relationship status if this is essential for pension or tax purposes or a similar reason.

**Caring responsibilities**

Whilst this is not a legally protected characteristic, SAIL will not discriminate against anyone with caring responsibilities. SAIL’s has a flexible working policy which fully explores how we will support those with caring responsibilities.

**Race, religion and belief**

We will continually monitor our demographics around race and set targets to ensure that our make-up reflects that of the communities we work in. SAIL’s will use fair recruitment practices to ensure there is no discrimination in selection and promote a culture of learning to enable all staff, volunteers and people we support to inform themselves in a confident way about all races and religions in our community.

**Menopause**

Whilst not a protected characteristic in its own right, people going through menopause and perimenopause experience a range of symptoms that may affect them in the workplace. SAIL’s commits to open dialogue with colleagues, sessional workers and volunteers around the impact of perimenopause and menopause and to providing adaptations to enable people to carry out their roles to the best of their ability. We are also developing a separate menopause policy.

**General types of support and inclusivity**

**Use of Language**

Colleagues, sessional workers, volunteers and people we support will avoid and challenge the use of language which, in any way, belittles any protected characteristic.

Where the language used has a personal impact on others, and it has been made clear to the person concerned that their use of such language is unwelcome and/or offensive, disciplinary action may be taken if they persist with it. We will promote a culture of curiosity and openness whereby colleagues and volunteers feel confident to ask if they aren’t sure.

**Communications and Content**

All materials used or developed will be judged in the light of the promotion of equal opportunities, and those considered to be discriminatory or non-inclusive will not be used.

**Job design**

Consideration will be given to job design to enable each person to carry out any particular role.

**Use of IT**

Consideration will be given to IT software or adjustments to enable someone to use the IT. For example, adjusting the colour or font, or enabling voice recognition.

**Adjustments to equipment or space**

Reasonable adjustments may be made to equipment – e.g. desk height, blue tooth equipment, use of braille, lighting, noise reduction etc.

**Medical issues**

Reasonable adjustments will be made to enable a colleague or a user of a service to manage a medical issue. This might mean having a private space at work, access to particular facilities, frequent breaks to administer medication etc.

**Work patterns**

Work patterns may be adjusted if possible.

**Training**

Where possible the format of training will be flexible and varied to allow people to access the training.

**Use of online**

Online meetings will be an option to enable Colleagues to work remotely when needed or users of services to access our services.

**Digital and print**

Information and services will be available in both digital format and print wherever possible.

**Translating**

Where possible, translation will be made into other languages.

**Cultural understanding**

Research will be carried out and learning shared to enable understanding of other cultures and to ensure that all have access to services without barriers.

**Celebration of difference**

Special days celebrating difference will be communicated and celebrated where possible, e.g. international women’s day, LGBT and Black history month, Mental Health awareness day and carers week.

**Religion and beliefs**

Where possible consideration will be given to supporting a colleague or user of a service’s religion or belief – e.g. providing a prayer space, allowing annual leave to celebrate religious festivals, non-judgmentalism, tolerance and the right to freedom of religion and belief.

**Breaches of policy**

**Dealing with Complaints or incidents**

If any service user, sessional worker, volunteer or employee feels that they have been, or are being discriminated against, in any way, they are entitled to pursue the matter. The following policies should be referred to, as appropriate:

Dignity and Respect at work Policy

Complaints policy

Grievance policy

Disciplinary policy

All instances or complaints of discriminatory behaviour will be treated seriously.

Complaints or allegations of an unfounded or malicious nature will also be treated as seriously, and may involve use of the above policies.

Details of the organisation's policies and procedures can be found in their Handbook.

**Individual Rights**

SAIL’s will aim to create the required balance between people’s freedom of speech and anti-discrimination of all groups.

**Monitoring and Review**

* The effective of our EDI practices will be monitored by:
* Reviewing (and addressing where necessary) the diversity of the workforce, applicants, and people who use services
* Reviewing complaints
* Equality Impact Assessments
* Equality Action Plan
* Exit interviews
* Annual EDI surveys
* Feedback from Inclusion group