

## A3.1, D4.1, F3.2: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

### 1. Policy Statement

Hodan Somali Community is committed to being an equal opportunities employer and an equal opportunities service provider, to achieving equality of opportunity in every aspect of its own work, and to promoting and campaigning for its realisation elsewhere.

We welcome the benefits that diversity brings, and are committed to creating a supportive and inclusive culture among the whole workforce. As a result:

- We will make reasonable adjustments to what we do and how we do it, where appropriate, to remove barriers that might prevent people from working for us effectively or using services.
- Where appropriate, we use voluntary positive action to meet people's needs.
- We are open to flexible working in relation to all positions, subject to the needs of the organisation.

In the provision of employment, placements and services, we will treat everyone fairly and with respect, including with regard to quality and availability of our services and resources. Every volunteer, employee, applicant, consultant, Management Committee member and service user will be respected and valued.

### 2. Protected Characteristics

Hodan Somali Community actively conforms to the Equality Act 2010, which identifies the following protected characteristics:

- age
- disability, including HIV, cancer or multiple sclerosis from time of diagnosis
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion or belief or the lack of it
- sex
- sexual orientation
- gender reassignment (being transgender)
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or on maternity leave

We note that the Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination on the basis of (a) *having* a protected characteristic; (b) *being perceived to have* a protected characteristic, even if they do not in fact have it; and (c) *being associated with* someone who has a protected characteristic, e.g. having a disabled child.

Thus, in this policy, where we use the term 'protected characteristics', it includes those who are perceived as having such characteristics or associated with someone who has them.



In its own organisational and service delivery work, this means that Hodan Somali Community:

- Avoids and actively opposes acts of **direct discrimination** (treating one person less favourably than another on the basis of protected characteristics) in relation to staff, volunteers, consultants and service users.
- Avoids and actively opposes **indirect discrimination** (creating rules or arrangements that apply to everyone, but might place people with protected characteristics at an unfair disadvantage) in relation to staff, volunteers, consultants and service users
- Avoids and actively opposes, **harassment** (unwanted behaviour linked to a protected characteristic that violates someone's dignity or creates an offensive environment for them) in relation to staff, volunteers, consultants and service users
- Avoids and actively opposes **victimisation** (treating people unfairly because they've complained about discrimination or harassment) in relation to staff, volunteers, consultants and service users
- Will resist and challenge acts of discrimination, harassment and victimisation and support its staff, volunteers, consultants and service users if they are confronted with any of these acts at Hodan.
- Will take disciplinary action against any staff member, volunteer or consultant who behaves in a manner contrary to this equal opportunities statement, in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy, which may include termination of employment or denial of services in the case of severe or persistent breaches.

When Hodan Somali Community selects candidates for employment, promotion, training, or any other benefit, it will be on the basis of aptitude and ability, and the decisions will not be affected by prejudice or discrimination against people with any protected characteristic.

We may, at times, encourage people with a particular protected characteristic to apply for positions – e.g., by paying close attention to the types of platforms where we advertise job opportunities, the diversity of users for those platforms, and the wording of advertisements - in the interest of ensuring that Hodan continues to be representative of the population that it serves. However, all recruitment will continue to be conducted in accordance with the Recruitment Policy and the Competencies Framework.

### *2.1. Characteristics that are not legally protected*

The Equality Act does not explicitly prohibit discrimination on other grounds, such as language or accent, refugee or asylum-seeker status, social class, income poverty, area of residence, or non-conformity to cultural norms. Nonetheless, at Hodan our aim is to go above and beyond the Equality Act to provide a high-quality service to everyone, without prejudice or discrimination on the basis of *any* characteristic – whether legally protected or not.

### *2.2. Multiple disadvantage*

We note that many of our service users have more than one protected characteristic and that these characteristics interact with each other to create situations of multiple disadvantage that are 'more than the sum of the parts'. For example, older Black women may have a more severe experience of social isolation than either young Black women, older White women, or

older men of any ethnicity – and this may be further increased if they also have a disability. Another example is menopause, which is at the intersection of sex, age, and disability.

In applying this policy, Hodan staff, volunteers and consultants should be sensitive to multiple disadvantage - especially where it is likely to increase a service user's risk of abuse, marginalisation, isolation, or other unfair treatment. They should, where necessary, invest additional time in listening to service users who may be experiencing multiple disadvantage and in taking appropriate action to mitigate any adverse impacts.

### 2.3. Accessibility

Hodan will work to ensure that its services are accessible to all, including people with disabilities, which may sometimes require reasonable adjustments. These may include, for example, offering text-based services for people with a hearing impairment, or providing an alternative ground-floor room or a home-based appointment to an individual with mobility difficulties.

### 2.4. Neurodiversity

Hodan takes a positive approach to neurodiversity and recognises that some people who are neurodiverse (e.g., people diagnosed or self-diagnosed with autism / autistic spectrum conditions, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, etc.) may prefer not to be labelled as 'disabled'. In our interactions with staff, volunteers, trustees, consultants, and/or service users who are neurodiverse, we will recognise the strengths associated with their neurotype as well as providing reasonable adjustments where necessary.

## 3. Exceptions

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, exceptions to the non-discrimination principle may be made only when they can be objectively justified because of the nature of the organisation's work.

### 3.1. Ethnicity clause

According to its constitution, one of the charitable objects of Hodan Somali Community is to "provide information and advice service in and from specified premises open to those who live, work or travel to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and surrounding boroughs **and in particular those who are Somali or of Somali origin.**"

This clause **should not be interpreted as justifying the automatic exclusion of service users on the grounds that they are not Somali** (or of Somali origin). In principle, the information and advice service should be **offered equally to all adults aged 18 or above** who meet the criteria of either (a) living in, (b) working in, or (c) travelling to Kensington and Chelsea or 'surrounding boroughs' (*such as* Hammersmith & Fulham, Brent, Westminster, Ealing or Hounslow), regardless of ethnicity, nationality or ethnic origin.

It is acceptable to give priority to service users who are Somali or of Somali origin **only** in the event that demand for services exceeds the availability of suitably trained and experienced advisers. In this instance, to remain faithful to the constitution, non-Somali service users who may experience a delay in service provision should immediately be signposted to another AQS-accredited advice provider, in order to ensure that they are not placed at an unfair

disadvantage. There is no need to consult the Management Committee in this instance, but the Director should be advised and full records kept in accordance with the Signposting Policy.

### *3.2. Other exceptions*

Other circumstances when exceptions to the above principles are permitted, without recourse to the Management Committee, are:

- employing only women in a health project for female service users, where there is reason to believe that service users might be less able or less willing to access the service if it was provided by men;
- requiring applicants for advice and advocacy positions, including volunteer placements, to be fluent in the Somali language (in order to communicate effectively with Somali service users who are unable to speak English, in furthering the organisation's charitable objects).

It should be noted that that gender reassignment is also a protected characteristic under the Equality Act and that, accordingly, transgender women should not be treated differently from cisgender (non-trans) women when applying for positions that are advertised as being for women only.

Requests for other exceptions, or for clarification about the interpretation of the above exceptions, should be referred to the Management Committee. If they are unable to reach a decision, or require further guidance, the matter should be referred to a second-tier organisation such as Advice UK.

## **4. Managerial Responsibility**

The responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation and operation of this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy will rest with the Management Committee. They shall ensure that their staff and volunteers operate within the policy, and that all reasonable and practical steps are taken to avoid discrimination.

### *4.1. Responsibilities of staff*

Whilst the responsibility for ensuring that there is no unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation rests with the Management Committee, the attitudes of staff and volunteers are crucial to the successful operation of this equal opportunity policy.

All members of staff, volunteers and consultants should:

- Comply with the policy and arrangements
- Complete the **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Checklist (Section 9)** when developing a new activity or program, or if there are significant changes to an existing activity that may have an unfair impact on groups with protected characteristics
- Not discriminate in their day-to-day activities or induce others to do so.
- Ensure that proposed new rules and arrangements do not place persons with protected characteristics at an unfair disadvantage (indirect discrimination)

- Not victimise, harass or intimidate any person on the grounds specified in the policy statement.
- Inform their line manager or the Chair of the Management Committee if they become aware of any discriminatory practice
- Inform new employees, volunteers, consultants, Management Committee members and service users of their rights under this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and encourage them to speak to the Director if they feel that they have been subjected to direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or victimisation because of a protected characteristic while using Hodan's services. If their complaint is against the Director, they should speak to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.
- Provide or arrange for the provision of confidential support to any employees, volunteers, consultants, trustees or service users who feel they have been subjected to discrimination, harassment and/or victimisation because of a protected characteristic, which may include signposting them to police or other agencies who can help them to take appropriate action against the perpetrators.
- Ensure that Hodan creates a welcoming and inclusive culture for all, e.g., by promoting understanding and positive working relationships between people with a particular protected characteristic and those without it.

## 5. Training

The organisation is committed to staff training and personal development. This will encourage high standards and enable staff to reach their full potential. Please refer to the separate Training Policy for further guidance in this matter.

In relation to ED&I, specific requirements apply in order to ensure that all staff, volunteers, consultants and Management Committee members are made aware of the implications of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy implementation and the 2010 Equality Act.

- The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Checklist must be included in all induction programmes for new staff members, volunteers, consultants and Management Committee members. Participants will be required to tick a box on the checklist to indicate that they have read and understood the policy.
- Frontline advice staff should undergo refresher training in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training as necessary, not less than once every three years, and sooner if there is a change in relevant legislation.
- Training should be provided by an accredited provider with expertise in the advice and information sector, such as Advice UK, NCVO or the Kensington and Chelsea Social Council, or where necessary by a specialist provider of ED&I training.

## 6. Monitoring

Hodan will monitor our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion practice annually and measure the effectiveness of the policy and arrangements across the organisation as a whole.

- The system will involve the routine collection and analysis of information on service users, staff and volunteers.

- The information collected for monitoring purposes will be treated as confidential and it will not be used for any other purpose.

## 7. Related Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Recruitment and Selection Policy, Conflict of Interest Policy, Induction Policy, Competencies Policy and Framework, Digital Literacy Skills Framework, Training and Personnel Development Policy, Supervision Policy, Performance Appraisal Policy, and Monitoring and Evaluation Policy.

## 8. Policy Review

The policy and arrangements will be reviewed at least annually, or earlier if necessary, in the light of experience, changing circumstances, changes in legislation or non-statutory guidelines, and/or trends in best practice within the voluntary sector. The responsibility for monitoring and review rests with the Director, as the organisation's Quality Representative, but assistance may be sought from an appropriate external consultant or from a second-tier organisation such as Advice UK if necessary.

<b>Policy name</b>	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
<b>Last reviewed</b>	8 September 2023
<b>Reviewed by</b>	Mohamed Farah and Ashley Brockwell
<b>Any significant changes from previous version</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Add menopause to multiple disadvantage section in line with July 2022 Government policy paper</li> <li>- Add section 2.4 on 'Neurodiversity'</li> <li>- Separate out neurodiversity and SpLD categories (autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dyspraxia) in ED&amp;I Checklist as they are associated with different needs and different reasonable adjustments</li> </ul>
<b>Next review due</b>	September 2024

## 9. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Checklist

Activity Name:

Date Completed:

Completed By:

	Specific sub-groups	Activity is free from direct discrimination	Activity is free from unfair disadvantage	Reasonable adjustments or positive action that may be needed, in order to remove barriers
Age	Children and young people			
	Elderly people			
	Other			
Gender reassignment	Currently transitioning			
	Previously transitioned			
Marital status	Single, widowed, or divorced			
	Married or in civil partnership			
Pregnancy/Maternity	Pregnant			
	On maternity leave			
Disability	Visual impairment			
	Hearing impairment			
	Mobility/physical impairment			
	Mental health condition			
	Cognitive impairment			
	Autism / ASC			
	ADHD / ADD			
	Dyslexia			
	Dyscalculia			
	Dyspraxia			
Other (please specify):				
Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic origin)	Specific groups...			
	Black and Minority Ethnic			

Religion, belief, or lack of it	Specific religion / belief:			
	Lack of religion or belief			
Sex	Female			
	Male			
	Intersex			
Sexual orientation	Gay or lesbian			
	Bisexual or queer			
	Other (please specify)			