RIVERWAY CARE

Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy

This policy explains how Riverway Care promotes equality, prevents discrimination and builds inclusive homes and workplaces. It applies to decisions about care, recruitment, employment, communication, access and partnership working.

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Approved by	Riverway Care Directors
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Applies to	Young people, applicants, employees, workers, volunteers, contractors, visitors and professional partners

1 Purpose

Riverway Care is committed to treating people fairly and with dignity. Equality and inclusion are part of safe, child-centred care and responsible employment practice. We will identify barriers, make reasonable adjustments and respond to discrimination, harassment, victimisation and bullying.

This policy supports compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the standards expected of children's homes in England. It should be read with safeguarding, complaints, recruitment, whistleblowing, behaviour support and data protection arrangements.

2 Principles

- Every person has equal worth and should be treated with dignity and respect.
- Decisions must be based on relevant needs, abilities, risks and evidence rather than assumptions or stereotypes.

- Young people's identity, culture, faith, language, disability, neurodiversity, sex, sexual orientation and gender identity should be understood in the context of their individual care plan.
- Equal treatment does not always mean identical treatment. Fair outcomes may require different support or reasonable adjustments.
- People should be able to raise concerns without fear of retaliation or disadvantage.

3 Protected characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from unlawful discrimination connected with age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Riverway will also consider socio-economic disadvantage, care experience, language, immigration history and other circumstances that may create barriers or exclusion.

4 Young people and care practice

- Care planning will reflect the young person's identity, communication needs, important relationships, heritage, faith and personal preferences.
- Young people will be supported to express their views and take part in decisions in ways they can understand.
- Activities, food, clothing, personal care, education and celebrations will be considered without stereotyping.
- Staff will challenge discriminatory language and behaviour while helping young people understand its impact and repair relationships.
- Young people will have access to information, advocacy and complaints routes in an accessible form.
- Placement decisions will be made against the home's Statement of Purpose, the needs of the young person and the safety and compatibility of the group, not unlawful criteria.

5 Recruitment and employment

Riverway will use fair, safer recruitment processes. Job requirements and selection criteria must be relevant to the role. Reasonable adjustments will be considered throughout recruitment and employment. Employment decisions, access to learning, supervision, progression, pay, allocation of work and disciplinary action must be free from unlawful discrimination.

- Vacancies will use inclusive language and be advertised through appropriate channels.
- Selection decisions will be recorded against consistent criteria, alongside safeguarding and suitability requirements.
- Health or disability information will only be requested or used where lawful and relevant, including to arrange adjustments.
- Equality monitoring information will be separated from selection decisions wherever practicable and used only for legitimate monitoring purposes.
- Harassment, sexual harassment, victimisation and discriminatory conduct may be managed under disciplinary procedures.

6 Reasonable adjustments and accessibility

Riverway will consider reasonable adjustments for disabled people and others who face access barriers. Adjustments may involve communication formats, recruitment arrangements, equipment, working practices, physical access, routines or additional support. Decisions will be discussed with the person, recorded appropriately and reviewed when needs or circumstances change.

7 Culture faith and identity

Teams should seek reliable information rather than expect a person to educate others about their identity. Important cultural and religious practices will be supported where reasonably practicable and consistent with safeguarding, individual plans and the rights of others. Personal information about identity must be handled respectfully and in line with data protection requirements.

8 Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Directors and senior leaders	Set expectations, approve the policy, provide resources, review themes and ensure concerns are acted upon.
Managers	Apply the policy consistently, arrange adjustments, challenge discrimination, support staff and keep appropriate records.
All workers	Treat people respectfully, follow care plans and policies, complete learning and report discriminatory conduct or barriers.
Partners and contractors	Meet Riverway's equality expectations when working on its behalf and raise any access or inclusion issues.

9 Concerns complaints and protection from retaliation

A young person, family member, worker or other person may raise a concern with a manager or through Riverway's complaints, grievance or whistleblowing arrangements as appropriate. Concerns will be considered fairly and sensitively. No person should be disadvantaged for raising a genuine concern or supporting an investigation.

External routes, including advocacy, the placing authority, Ofsted, Acas, the Equality Advisory and Support Service or an employment tribunal, may be available depending on the issue. Internal processes do not remove those rights.

10 Monitoring and review

Riverway will review feedback, complaints, recruitment and workforce information, incidents and care-planning themes to identify barriers or patterns. Monitoring data will be proportionate, protected and not used to identify individuals unnecessarily. This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner when law, guidance or Riverway's services change.

References and guidance

This document was developed for Riverway Care using the following legislation and official guidance. The sources should be checked when the document is reviewed.

- Equality Act 2010: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents
- Acas guidance on preventing discrimination: https://www.acas.org.uk/what-an-employer-can-do-to-prevent-discrimination
- Children's Homes Regulations and Quality Standards: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-homes-regulations-including-quality-standards-guide