

Written :1994

Most recently updated: 2014

Ratified by Executive Committee June 2014

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# Equality and Diversity Policy and Procedures

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**Registered Charity No: 289904**

**Limited Company No: 1693876**

# Equality and Diversity Policy Statement

Markfield is committed to striving for equality of opportunity for everyone. Our local community is diverse and has a wide range of talent, potential and needs. We are proud of this diversity and we wish to attain a workforce that is representative of our community to secure the widest pool of talent possible.

We recognise that there is also much disadvantage and discrimination. We recognise that disabled people and their families often face extra disadvantage and discrimination.

We will always take a clear stand against prejudice and discrimination, and will counter any discrimination based on: disability, gender (including sex, marriage, pregnancy, gender re-assignment), race (including ethnic origin, colour, nationality and national origin), sexual orientation and civil partnership, religion or belief, or age.

Our Equality and Diversity policy reflects Markfield's commitment to equal opportunities. It is our aim to treat all service users, potential service users, employees, and potential employees, fairly and considerately.

Every worker, volunteer, and person on placement at Markfield must work within this policy. We will also make sure service users and visitors know about the policies and we expect service users to respect them while here. If anyone involved with Markfield does not keep to this policy, action will be taken using the appropriate policies and procedures.

We will review these policies and procedures regularly. We will update them if the law changes. We will check regularly to make sure Markfield's practices promote equal opportunity and diversity.

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## **1. Legal framework**

We will review our policy every year to make sure it keeps up to date with legal changes. We take into account the following current legislation and guidance within our Equality and Diversity Policy:

### **Equality Act 2010**

The Equality Act harmonises and replaces previous legislation, such as the Race Relations Act 197 and Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The Equality Act covers the same categories that were protected by the previous equality legislation:

- age
- disability
- gender
- gender reassignment
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity.

These are termed ‘protected characteristics’. The Act extends protection against indirect discrimination and discrimination by association, harassment and third party harassment to cover all the groups with ‘protected characteristics’. The Act includes a provision which makes it unlawful, except in certain circumstances, for employers to ask about a candidate’s health before offering them work.

For details of the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 see:  
[www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=3017](http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=3017)

## **2. Access and Communication**

Markfield works with people with a wide range of needs. We work within the ‘Social Model’ of disability. This means we recognise that it is society that puts up barriers which prevent disabled people participating and restrict their opportunities. In order to challenge this, we try to make our services accessible to anyone who is finding it difficult to take part in mainstream activities because of physical or social barriers.

These are the ways we will publicise our services, and how we will aim to meet the needs of disabled people and their families in the local community.

### **Internal communications**

Through our Child Information Forms and Adult Service User Plans as well as communicating with service users, their family and others in their circle of support, we will identify which communication system people prefer to use. We will take this information into account in the way we work with each individual. We can identify any staff training needs arising from this during audits of services. We will make all important health and safety information around the building, for example the fire

action and first aid points, accessible using words and symbols.

### **Translation**

For Deaf service users or those with English as a second language we will do our best to make sure that translators/interpreters are available for sessions and meetings with us if needed, in order that people can participate fully and make informed choices. Service Managers are responsible for booking translators for service users. For staff that require interpretation or translation services (for example, to participate fully in team meetings) these are to be jointly booked and managed by the staff member and their supervising line manager. Information about Markfield services and the Parent Partnership Service are translated into the most appropriate community languages in Haringey and are distributed to libraries, health centres and other community centres on a regular basis as part of our overall publicity plan that is regularly reviewed, taking into account the changing needs of the local community.

### **Publicity**

Markfield will ensure that all our publicity materials, flyers, leaflets and posters promote a positive message on diversity and inclusion. We will produce information and publications that are clear, 'jargon' free and easily understood, and wherever appropriate will support this with symbols and picture based communication. Clear communication in this form will be used on our website, in all our leaflets and advertising and in information on all our services.

All our internal and external working and publicity documents use FS Mencap Font which is, designed by MENCAP to be accessible for people with a learning disability.

### **Referrals and waiting list**

Service Managers will audit the services they run annually to assess whether particular groups or individuals are having difficulty accessing services e.g. on the grounds of ethnicity, language, particular need, access needs such as childcare or translation, physical access etc. Audits are used to identify any action needed to improve access to services.

Each service manager is responsible for keeping up to date the record of current service users on the user database, and identifying any spaces to be filled on clubs, and any patterns of groups not accessing services. The Family Support Manager co-ordinates an annual review of waiting lists and current users. From this review, the Family Support Manager will feed information to relevant service managers to influence service development, and feed into the fundraising strategy. (See appendix for procedures and guidelines on referrals and allocating club spaces).

Markfield will endeavour to offer free or subsidised places, where funding has been secured from trust and charities. These will be offered to those families who may not have a budget to cover the costs.

We can also support parent, carers and service users to make applications and appeals against decisions which may exclude the service user from services.

### **Transport**

Markfield is committed to promoting the independence of disabled people, and we

therefore encourage the independence of our service users in their transport as far as possible. However, Markfield acknowledges that for some people a lack of access to adequate transport provision, financial deprivation, isolation, or a need for a higher level of support to travel can make it difficult to use our services. While we encourage parents and carers to bring their children and young people to Markfield themselves, and we encourage adult service users to travel independently, we will try to provide transport for service users for whom this is difficult or impossible. Markfield's Transport policy sets out how we can provide this.

### **Resources**

At Markfield we aim to create an atmosphere that is friendly, caring and accepting. We aim to provide in a sensitive way for the needs of people who come here. It is important that people who use Markfield are encouraged to have a positive self image and find it to be a place where they can grow in confidence and ability. Therefore the resources we have at Markfield need to be accessible, to be supportive in learning and development and to meet the needs of a diverse and changing user group.

The Service Managers' Team will co-ordinate:

- An annual review of toys and sessions equipment we currently have and update a plan for what is needed currently to meet user needs, and longer term.
- A termly review of art resources and regularly plan for ordering these, taking into account user views on sessions. The Art cupboard is re-filled at beginning of term and is reviewed again prior to summer play scheme.
- A plan for efficient food shopping for all services, which promotes healthy eating, is culturally aware and takes into account food intolerance and allergies.
- An annual review of our care equipment and needs identified in user plans, and continue to develop partnerships with local Occupational Therapists and physiotherapy teams to ensure appropriate equipment is available that best meets user needs.

### **3. Consultation and participation**

Markfield works to change negative attitudes to disability and ensure that disabled people and their families are able to take an active part in their local communities. We actively encourage the involvement of service users in designing, running, monitoring and reviewing our services and activities.

The ways service users will be involved will include the following:

- We aim to have at least a quarter of seats on our Executive Committee filled by current or former service users, or people with personal experience of disability through themselves or their family.
- Direct involvement through participation groups which determine and run their own projects (e.g. MPower youth participation group).
- Through seeking regular feedback from service users (see below).

### **Support for service users**

In order to assist service users to participate actively in the above forums, we will endeavour to provide support to enable them to do this, where it is needed. This support can include the following:

- Payment of travel and childcare expenses to enable Executive Committee members to attend meetings.
- Support for service users with literacy difficulties. We will provide individual support to enable them to access written documentation such as Executive Committee papers.

### **Feedback from service users**

We will actively seek feedback from service users about the quality of each of our services, and their suggestions for how they would like them to be improved. The ways in which we will seek service user feedback will vary according to each individual service; the methods used will include:

- Asking for feedback informally in the course of interacting with service users, parents and carers during sessions.
- Surveys and questionnaires, including symbol-based questionnaires for young and non-verbal service users.
- Games which are designed to give child service users a way to express what they like and don't like about the services they use.
- An annual open day, advertised to all current service users and the local community, in which we will invite people to give their views about the services, how easy (or not) they find them to access, and if they do not currently use our services, why not.
- We will invite service user feedback via the Markfield website.

Service Managers are responsible for making sure that users are regularly given the opportunity to give feedback, and for designing the specific tools to be used to do this (such as surveys).

Each Service Manager must write a report once a year summarising the key points from the feedback that has been gathered about the services they are responsible for. The reports will include action points – specific things that either have been done or are planned to be done to change or develop services in direct response to user feedback. These will be incorporated into Service Delivery Plans, where applicable.

The Service Manager responsible for Quality Assurance will collate together the service user feedback reports compiled by each Service Manager. This will be reported to the Senior Management Committee.

### **Complaints**

Complaints from service users should be viewed as a form of feedback, and should be responded to by staff in a constructive way – i.e. complaints should be used as a spur to change and improve our services where applicable. Complaints will be dealt

with promptly, and in an open, honest and accountable way under the procedures set out in the separate Complaints Policy. (See Disciplinary and Grievance Policy March 13)

#### **4. Recruitment, selection, monitoring and development of staff**

Markfield aims to be an Equal Opportunities Employer. We value diversity and aspire as an employer to have a team of staff that is representative of our local community. Markfield has a separate policy on Recruitment & Selection which is reviewed bi-annually.

##### **Staff development & working practices**

Markfield will take all reasonable steps to meet any necessary special requirements to enable candidates with disabilities to apply for and carry out jobs.

‘Reasonable adjustments’ may be made to the working environment to give job applicants or employees with disabilities equal opportunities. The Office and Finance Manager is responsible for regularly auditing the safety and accessibility of office furniture. Staff are responsible for discussing with their line manager any changes that might help them (e.g. provision of special equipment, or changing hours to ease travel to and from work.) Reasonable adjustments may also include re-deploying an employee to a different type of work if necessary.

All staff should be given equal access to training – regardless of whether they are part-time or full-time, and line managers need to give thought to providing flexible training opportunities for staff.

#### **5. Community cohesion and external influence**

Markfield recognises we have a key role to play in supporting local disabled people outside of the organisation in promoting community cohesion, tackling social exclusion, supporting neighbourhood renewal plans and having external influence. Ways in which we will work towards this are:

- Staff attendance at a number of relevant Haringey forums in order to: increase opportunities for service users; raise awareness of Markfield so people know about our services; help co-ordinate services across the borough; build up contacts; advocate for the rights of disabled people and their families and alter negative attitudes toward disability and inclusion.
- Support service users to speak for and represent themselves in local and national arenas. This includes accompanying service users to forums and assisting with transport.

Staff attending forums are expected to complete feedback forms. Relevant information is shared at monthly team meetings and the forums attended monitored to ensure that Markfield is supporting local disabled people and their families to contribute toward decision making, and influence local policy in the



forums where they will be most effective.

## **6. Bullying, victimisation and harassment**

Harassment occurs when someone engages in unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating someone else's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment may include offensive jokes, personal insults, persistent criticism, unwanted physical contact or 'freezing' someone out. Harassment and bullying can cause fear, stress, anxiety and physical sickness. It is not only the intention of the perpetrator which defines a particular type of harassment but also the effect it has on the recipient.

Markfield has a commitment to prevent unacceptable behaviour, and will take action if staff, volunteers or service users are behaving in a discriminatory or bullying manner. For staff, Markfield may take disciplinary action within disciplinary procedures. For a volunteer or person on placement we may end the placement if necessary. For a service user we will take action to improve their understanding of our policies and make sure they are supported to respect them.

If service users, visitors, or candidates for jobs feel Markfield has not worked within this policy, they can use our complaints procedures to raise concerns. Workers, people on placement, or volunteers can use the grievance procedure to raise concerns.

For further details see also the separate Anti-Bullying, Disciplinary & Grievance Policy, and Complaints Policy.