



Equal Opportunities Policy

Preamble

Nayland Village is managed by the Nayland Village Hall Management Committee (NVHMC) acknowledges that the United Kingdom is diverse in culture race beliefs and religion and believes that no individual or group of people should receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, age, colour, race, nationality, racial or national origins, cultural heritage, disability, marital status social background, sexual orientation or geographical location.

NVHMC acknowledges that members of these groups are often under-represented, exposed to prejudice and stereotyping, and suffer various disadvantages with our society.

The purpose of this Policy Statement is to set out clearly and fully the positive action that NVHMC intends to take to combat direct and indirect discrimination in the management of the NVHMC, relationships with other bodies, and the services it provides to the community, community NVHMCs and individuals.

NVHMC is committed to providing equality of opportunity in all areas of its work. It aims to overcome discrimination on the grounds mentioned above.

NVHMC recognizes that positive steps need to be taken to ensure equality of provision in areas of representation, service provision, membership and access and will take action to make this policy effective.

The Aims of NVHMC

Our aim is to ensure that we become aware of discrimination and the problem is causes and will:

- challenge practices, legislation and institutions which seek to discriminate against or deny the rights of individuals or groups in any form.
- The NVHMC will seek to take positive action to address the inequalities in our society.

- The NVHMC is committed to the equal opportunities policy set out in this document and will work to develop, improve, and monitor it.
- The NVHMC will ensure all staff, hirers and NVHMC members are aware of the Hall's policy on equal opportunities.

Policy Statement

Legislation

The NVHMC acknowledges the definition of various groups of people who are vulnerable to discrimination as set out in the relevant legislation. NVHMC will support and implement the legislation and will work to ensure that no person protected by the legislation is discriminated against unlawfully, and that any positive obligations and duties are performed.

The NVHMC gives the following specific commitments:

- **Disabled** – NVHMC recognizes that the legislation applies to persons who are not disabled or ill. Where practical, NVHMC will aim to widen accessibility by removing barriers which make it difficult for people with disabilities to use the hall and provide facilities for people with disabilities to enable them to participate in activities, e.g. the installation of an induction hoop.
- **Age** – NVHMC believes that people of all ages have skills, experiences, and ideas, which are equally valid, and have valid needs, expectations, and aspirations.
- **Ethnic Minorities** – NVHMC will be alert to any implications of its services and actions for potential unlawful discrimination. NVHMC will challenge racism in any form and will encourage its users to do the same.
- **Gender and Sexual Orientation** – Sexist policies, practices, and attitudes (including policies, practices and attitudes which may relate to sexual orientation and gender re-assignment) will be challenged, and users will be encouraged to do the same.
- **Religion and Belief** – NVHMC endorses the right of everyone to his or her own religious beliefs or the absence of a belief.

Definitions

Equal Opportunities – THE NVHMC aims to ensure that policies, procedures, and practices do not unfairly discriminate against our employees, volunteers, stakeholders, and service users.

The NVHMC aims to treat people fairly and equitably regardless of who they are, their background or their lifestyle.

Diversity – THE NVHMC aims to ensure that all people are valued as individuals and are able to maximise their potential and contribution. It recognises that people from diverse backgrounds can bring fresh ideas and a different approach that can make the way we work and learn more fun, more creative, more efficient, and more innovative.

Inclusion – THE NVHMC aims to value everyone's differences and use them to enable everyone to thrive at work. An inclusive working environment is one in which everyone feels that they belong without having to conform, that their contribution matters and they are able to perform to their full potential, no matter their background, identity, or circumstances. The NVHMC aims to have an inclusive workplace that has fair policies and practices in place and enables a diverse range of people to work together effectively.

Direct Discrimination - as defined in law, occurs when a person is dealt with less favourably than other people because of a 'protected characteristic.' These are defined in the Equality Act 2010 as being:

- **Age** – a person of a particular age group but does not apply to those under the age of eighteen.
- **Disability** – a person who has a physical or mental impairment, where the impairment has a substantial and long-term effect on the person's ability to conduct day-to-day activities.
- **Gender Reassignment** – a person who is proposing to undergo, is undergoing, or has undergone a process, or part of a process, for the purpose of reassigning the person's gender by changing physiological or other attributes of gender.
- **Marriage or Civil Partnership** – Marriage is defined as a 'union between a man and a woman or between same-sex couples'. Same-sex couples can have their relationships legally recognised as civil partnerships. Civil partners must be treated the same as married couples.
- **Pregnancy and Maternity** – a woman who is pregnant has a protected characteristic for the whole pregnancy and for a period of 26 weeks from the day she gives birth (the NVHMC of a still born child the 26 week period exists if the birth takes place after the 24th week of pregnancy). A woman who has given birth and is breast-feeding has a protective characteristic when accessing premises, services, and public functions.
- **Race** – a person or group of people defined by their race, colour, nationality, including citizenship, and ethnic or national origins. A racial group can include more than two distinct racial groups, e.g. Black Britons would comprise of those people who are both Black and who are British citizens.
- **Religion or Belief** - a person's religion, religious or philosophical belief, lack of religion or lack of religious or philosophical belief. A belief will affect a person's choices or the way they live for it to be considered a protected characteristic.

- **Sex** – a person who is a man or a woman.
- **Sexual Orientation** – a person's sexual attraction towards a person of the same sex, another sex, or people of both sexes.

This Policy uses a wider definition of characteristics and includes, caring responsibility, mental health, class, HIV status, employment status, unrelated criminal convictions, and union activities.

Associated Discrimination is discrimination against a person because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic, e.g. a person is refused entry to a venue because the person they are with has limited mobility and uses crutches to help them move around.

Discrimination by Perception is discrimination against a person because it is perceived that they possess a particular protective characteristic, e.g. a man who is perceived to be a woman because they have a high voice on the phone is refused access to a men-only service. This would be sex discrimination because the man has wrongly been perceived to be a woman.

Indirect Discrimination occurs when an apparently neutral practice, provision or criterion puts people with a particular protected characteristic at a disadvantage compared with others who do not share that characteristic, and when applying the practice, provision or criterion cannot be objectively justified, e.g. an NVHMC has a policy of reminding people of forthcoming appointments by phone. This would indirectly discriminate against deaf people as they would not receive a reminder of their appointment.

Victimisation means subjecting a person to detrimental treatment because they are or are believed to be bringing proceedings under the Equality Act; giving evidence or information in connection with proceedings under the Equality Act; doing any other thing for the purposes or in connection with the Equality Act or making an allegation that a person has contravened the Equality Act.

A person must be able to act against unlawful discrimination without fear of reprisals or being subjected to a detrimental effect, e.g. a patient makes a complaint to a service provider where they were obtaining treatment because they felt they were discriminated against for being gay. The complaint is resolved, but if the person who provides the treatment refuses to treat the gay client, this would be victimisation.

Harassment means unwanted behaviour that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creates a degrading, humiliating, hostile, intimidating, or offensive environment.

Sexual harassment is any conduct of a sexual nature that is unwanted by the recipient, including verbal, non-verbal and physical behaviours, and which violates the victim's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, or offensive environment for them. Harassment can be sexual, racial, ageist, directed against people with disabilities or indeed related to any protected or other characteristic exhibited by the individual, e.g. a male employee is disabled and is claiming harassment against his line manager after she frequently teased and humiliated him about his disability. A female employee shares an office with the male employee, and she too is claiming harassment, even though she is not disabled, as the manager's behaviour has also created an offensive environment for her.

Harassment by a third party means unwanted, repeated conduct by a third party based on a protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for a person and where the employer does nothing to prevent it from reoccurring. A third party is defined in law as not being the employer or employees of the employer, such as customers or clients, e.g. a manager hears from one of his staff, who is gay, that he is feeling unhappy after a client made homophobic remarks in his hearing. The manager is concerned and monitors the situation. Within a few days the client makes further offensive remarks.

The manager reacts by having a word with the client, pointing out that this behaviour is unacceptable. He considers following it up with a letter to him pointing out that he will ban him if this happens again. The manager keeps the gay employee in the picture with the actions he is taking and believes he is taking reasonable steps to protect the employee from third party harassment.

Positive Action can be taken when it is clear that a group of people who share a protected characteristic and who are, or could become, employees, volunteers or service users, suffer a disadvantage linked to that characteristic, have disproportionately low levels of participation, or have different needs from a service as compared to other groups.

The positive action must be proportionate and aim to increase participation, meet diverse needs, or overcome disadvantage. The positive action must be appropriate to its aim and other actions would be less effective in achieving this aim or likely to cause greater disadvantage to other groups.

The Code of Conduct

- People will be treated with dignity and respect regardless of the group to which they belong.
- People's feelings and views will be valued and respected. Language or humour that people find offensive will not be used or tolerated, e.g. racist jokes or derogatory terminology.
- No one will be harassed, abused, or intimidated on the ground that they belong to a vulnerable group. Incidents of harassment will be taken seriously, and the NVHMC will undertake investigations, or any complaints quickly, impartially, and thoroughly.

To be reviewed biennially.

Date presented to the Management Committee : *04 July 2023*