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| GROUNDWORK UK  Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Policy  ­­ | | | |
| Date of Last Review: | October 2023 |  |  |

1. **INTRODUCTION**

The success of our organisation depends on our people, our partners and our suppliers. The way we deliver our services is strengthened by capitalising on what is unique about individuals, drawing on their different perspectives and experiences, and by accessing the strengths and expertise of a diverse range of partners and suppliers.

Groundwork UK will constantly strive to create productive environments, representative of and responsive to different cultures and groups, where everyone has an equal chance to succeed. Our projects, programmes and services will be designed to ensure that everyone is equally able to access interventions and that diversity is encouraged and celebrated.

To achieve this, we need to make sure that Groundwork UK puts equity and diversity practices into effect in both employment and service delivery.

Groundwork UK’s commitment to equity and diversity is more than promoting equal opportunities and eradicating discrimination, bullying, victimisation and harassment. We are actively committed to implementing the Equality Act 2010, encouraging and promoting the positive contribution of our staff, partners and suppliers and helping to break down systemic barriers in society preventing people from fulfilling their potential as a result of their personal characteristics or circumstances.

This policy describes the role of Groundwork UK in promoting equity and diversity across its operations, programmes, and supply chains and building an inclusive culture. Commitment to this policy is required by all Groundwork UK employees, trustees and volunteers, subcontractors and delivery partners, customers and service beneficiaries, referred to collectively as our ‘stakeholders’.

1. **OUR COMMITMENT**

Groundwork UK leads and supports the Groundwork federation. Our Federation Board has agreed a high-level commitment on equity, diversity and inclusion, which is reflected in our federation strategy. This states that Groundwork is committed to being an inclusive organisation – operating transparently and with integrity and seeking out a diversity of viewpoints, both in the work we do and the people we employ.

We recognise the people we work with have different needs and starting points and will give them the support they need to overcome the barriers they face in improving their prospects. This brings with it a responsibility to listen to the voices of those who are marginalised and who have least power and to work to overcome injustice by removing structural barriers in our own organisation and in wider society.

1. **GROUNDWORK UK AS AN EMPLOYER**

At Groundwork UK we are committed to:

* welcoming and valuing diversity amongst our staff, trustees and partners for the range of skills, experience and perspectives it brings
* building our reputation as an ethical and truly inclusive organisation where people want to work
* providing an excellent service to all our stakeholders by working in partnership and understanding their needs
* meeting our organisational goals by encouraging and enabling everyone to fulfill their potential whatever their circumstances
* recognising we can always do more to become truly inclusive, and committing to regular self-assessment and improvement
* working towards the elimination of discrimination (whether direct, indirect, associative, perceptive or harassment)
* creating positive cultures throughout where equity, diversity and respect are core values and at the centre of all our activities
* encouraging positive action to overcome disadvantage and discrimination and to enable people to achieve their full potential
* enabling the highest possible standards to be achieved in the delivery of our services and employment practices and the promotion of equity and diversity through our work internally and externally.

Groundwork UK will ensure that it actively promotes equity among its stakeholders with respect to protected characteristics, geographic disparities and other disadvantaged groups not protected in law.

Groundwork UK seeks to ensure that no stakeholders experience discrimination or harassment due to a protected characteristic, other people’s perceptions in relation to protected characteristics, or due to their association with others possessing protected characteristics.

Groundwork UK will ensure that an individual will not be victimised if they carry out one of the following protected acts:

* bringing proceedings under the Equality Act 2010
* giving evidence or information in connection with such proceedings
* doing anything which is related to provisions of the Equality Act 2010
* alleging that someone else has done something in breach of the Equality Act 2010
* having a “relevant pay discussion” with a colleague or former colleague, i.e. to determine if there is pay discrimination

Other policies and decisions relating to Groundwork UK’s terms and conditions of work and employment policies are reviewed against this policy in order to ensure a consistent approach to promoting equality of opportunity and ensuring anti-discriminatory practice.

Groundwork UK will not unlawfully discriminate in the selection of employees for recruitment or promotion. However, Groundwork UK may use appropriate lawful methods, including lawful positive action, to address the under-representation of any group which Groundwork UK identifies as being underrepresented in particular types of job. This may mean making decisions based on protected characteristics when two candidates are of otherwise equal merit.

We want to ensure that the diversity of the communities we serve is reflected at all levels within our workforce through and will provide an inclusive environment for people with protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

**Sex**

People of both sexes will be fully and properly represented and rewarded for their contribution at all levels of the organisation. To ensure there are no barriers to progression we will

* challenge stereotypes
* support employees in balancing their life at work and at home
* provide flexible working arrangements.

**Gender reassignment**

Employees who plan to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone gender re-assignment will be protected against all forms of discrimination and harassment. Groundwork UK will take positive steps to support transgender people and ensure they are treated with dignity and respect.

**Marriage and Civil Partnership**

Employees will be treated fairly and equally in the workplace irrespective of their marital, civil partnership or family status.

**Race**

We will promote racial and cultural diversity within our workforce by:

* challenging stereotypes
* understanding, respecting and valuing racial and cultural difference and perspectives
* encouraging and enabling members of minority ethnic groups to volunteer or work for Groundwork at all levels.

**Disability**

The abilities of people with disabilities will be recognised and valued at all levels of our organisation by:

* focussing on what employees can do rather than on what they cannot
* challenging stereotypes and in particular, not making false assumptions that disabled people are unable to do certain things
* making appropriate adjustments in the workplace so that all employees can reach their full potential regardless of any disability.

**Age**

Age diversity within the workforce will be promoted and valued through:

* challenging stereotypes, recognising that new ideas and fresh approaches can come from anyone irrespective of their age and recognising the benefits of a mixed-age workforce
* providing accessible, entry-level routes into our organisation.

**Religion or belief**

Employees will be treated fairly in the workplace irrespective of their beliefs, religious convictions or faith. Employees will also be expected to recognise the individual freedom of belief and right to protection from intolerance and persecution of other individuals and groups.

*Note: the expression of beliefs and opinions should not contravene Groundwork UK’s values or its capability to carry out its work.*

**Sexual orientation**

We will ensure people are treated fairly in the workplace irrespective of their sexuality by:

* challenging stereotypes
* respecting the rights of everyone irrespective of whether or not they are open about their sexuality
* respecting different lifestyles even if someone’s lifestyle conflicts with one’s own beliefs.

**Pregnancy and Maternity**

Groundwork UK will never unfairly treat a pregnant woman in the workplace because they are pregnant, are breastfeeding or have recently had a baby and will ensure they do not suffer a disadvantage or are treated unfavourably.

1. **PARTNERS AND SUPPLIERS**

**Equity**

Groundwork UK is committed to ensuring that its delivery partners and suppliers, whether Groundwork Trusts or other organisations, promote equity within their own workforces and deliver services that are accessible and inclusive to people from all backgrounds, in particular those within the protected characteristics. Groundwork UK will therefore ensure that its subcontractors and delivery partners:

* have policies that reflect the same equity and diversity standards as Groundwork UK
* provide evidence of plans and processes for promoting equity
* capture data to ensure their services are equally accessible to groups with protected characteristics.

**Diversity**

Groundwork UK is committed to proactively encouraging diversity across all its key activities, including the sourcing and management of partners and subcontractor. This means Groundwork UK will actively encourage a diverse range of organisations to provide goods and services needed to run our organisation and deliver our services. We will seek positively to engage with partner organisations and subcontractors who are minority-led.

**Groundwork UK procurement processes**

Groundwork UK’s procurement processes will be transparent, objective and non-discriminatory. In addition, we will encourage our partners and subcontractors to use a diverse range of suppliers themselves.

1. **INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

We expect every employee, trustee, volunteer, partner and subcontractor to assist Groundwork UK in meeting its commitment to provide equal opportunities in employment, service provision and procurement and to avoid unlawful discrimination.

Groundwork UK’s management team will be responsible for ensuring that managers monitor the implementation of this policy by their staff, partners and subcontractors.

Employees should report any bullying or harassment, whether or not it is directed at them, to their manager who will take appropriate action and begin relevant investigations as detailed in our Grievance policy.

Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against employees, trustees, volunteers, partners or programme beneficiaries will be considered disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under Groundwork UK’s disciplinary procedure. Discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal, termination of contract or withdrawal of services.

Employees can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, Groundwork UK for any act of unlawful discrimination. Employees who commit acts of harassment are committing a criminal offence and will be reported to the Police for investigation.

1. **TRAINING AND DISSEMINATION**

Groundwork UK will provide mandatory training to all existing and new employees and others engaged to work at Groundwork UK to help them understand their rights and responsibilities under this policy and what they can do to help create an inclusive workplace culture free of discrimination, bullying or harassment.

Groundwork UK will publish this policy on its website and make it available when engaging with partners, commissioning subcontractors as well as inducting new employees and trustees.

1. **GRIEVANCES AND COMPLAINTS**

All complaints of discrimination will be sensitively investigated and, if proven, will result in appropriate action for the perpetrator. Any employees or other stakeholders that are found to breach this policy could be subject to disciplinary procedures as set out in their terms of employment, service contract or partnership agreement and/or their continued engagement with Groundwork should be considered.

**Employees**

Employees who consider that that they may have been unlawfully discriminated against, bullied or harassed can may use Groundwork UK’s Grievance policy to make a complaint. Groundwork UK will take any complaint seriously and will seek to resolve any grievance that it upholds. Employees will not be penalised for raising a grievance, even if the grievance is not upheld.

**Partners and Subcontractors**

Partners and subcontractors who consider that they may have been unlawfully discriminated against, bullied or harassed should use Groundwork UK’s complaints process to make a complaint.

**Beneficiaries and Customers**

Beneficiaries and customers who consider that they may have been unlawfully discriminated against, bullied or harassed may use Groundwork UK’s complaints process to make a complaint.

Use of Groundwork UK’s complaints policy does not affect any statutory rights.