



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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Policy Statement

Zest of Mind is committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion among our workforce, clients, and wider community, and eliminating unlawful discrimination in all its forms.

Our aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and our client base, and for each employee and client to feel respected, valued, and able to give their best. We recognise that diverse skills, experiences, and perspectives strengthen our learning environment, enhance our services, and drive innovation in our teaching, support services, research, consultancy, administration and management.

Zest of Mind seeks to become an institution that empowers the disadvantaged, promotes good relations between members of all groups, and is representative of its local, national, and global community.

Purpose and Scope

This policy's purpose is to:

1. **Provide equality, fairness and respect** for all in our employment and service delivery, whether staff are temporary, part-time, full-time, or on fixed-term contracts
2. **Prevent unlawful discrimination** because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics and other relevant distinctions
3. **Create an inclusive environment** where everyone can thrive and contribute their best
4. **Establish clear procedures** for addressing concerns and monitoring progress

This policy applies to:

- All employees, contractors, volunteers, and temporary staff
 - All clients, learners, and service users
 - All visitors, suppliers, and partners
 - All aspects of employment, service delivery, and organisational activities
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Definitions

Discrimination: Treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic.

Harassment: Unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that violates dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Victimisation: Treating someone badly because they have made or supported a complaint about discrimination or harassment.

Reasonable Adjustments: Changes made to remove or reduce barriers that prevent disabled people from fully participating.

Intersectionality: Recognition that people may experience multiple forms of discrimination based on overlapping identities.

Protected Characteristics and Commitments

We do not discriminate on the grounds of:

Equality Act 2010 Protected Characteristics:

- Age
- Disability (physical, mental, sensory, or learning disabilities)
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin)
- Religion or belief (including philosophical beliefs)
- Sex (gender)
- Sexual orientation

Additional Characteristics We Protect:

- Socio-economic background
- Neurodiversity and neurological differences
- Family circumstances and caring responsibilities
- Trade union membership
- Political beliefs
- Type of employment contract
- Working patterns (flexible, remote, hybrid working)

We oppose all forms of unlawful discrimination in:

- Recruitment and selection processes
- Pay, benefits, and terms and conditions of employment
- Promotion, training, and developmental opportunities
- Performance management and appraisals
- Disciplinary and grievance procedures
- Dismissal and redundancy processes
- Access to facilities and services
- Client service delivery and support

Our Commitments

1. Creating an Inclusive Environment

We commit to creating a working and learning environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all. We recognise and value individual differences and the contributions of all staff and clients.

2. Reasonable Adjustments

We will make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees and clients to ensure they can fully participate in all aspects of work and learning. This includes workplace modifications, assistive technology, flexible working arrangements, and alternative communication methods.

3. Training and Development

- All staff will receive mandatory equality, diversity and inclusion training within their first three months of employment
- Managers will receive enhanced training on their responsibilities under this policy
- Regular refresher training will be provided to all staff
- Training will be accessible in various formats to meet different needs

4. Fair Recruitment and Promotion

- All recruitment processes will be fair, transparent, and based on merit
- Job descriptions and person specifications will only include requirements that are essential for the role
- We will actively promote opportunities to underrepresented groups
- Interview panels will be diverse where possible
- We will monitor recruitment data to identify and address any barriers

5. Positive Action and Outreach

We will take positive action to:

- Encourage applications from underrepresented groups
- Provide mentoring and development opportunities
- Partner with community organisations and diversity networks
- Offer work experience and apprenticeships to disadvantaged groups
- Ensure our marketing and communications reflect diversity

6. Accessibility and Inclusion

- All policies and communications will be available in accessible formats
 - Our premises and digital platforms will meet accessibility standards
 - We will consult with disabled staff and clients on accessibility improvements
 - Clear signage and wayfinding will be provided throughout our facilities
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Responsibilities

Senior Management

- Provide visible leadership and commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion
- Ensure adequate resources are allocated to implement this policy
- Monitor progress and hold managers accountable
- Review and approve equality objectives and action plans

Managers and Supervisors

- Implement this policy in their day-to-day management
- Ensure fair treatment of all team members
- Address any instances of discrimination, harassment, or bullying promptly
- Support staff development and career progression
- Complete management training on equality and inclusion

All Staff and Clients

- Treat colleagues, clients, and visitors with dignity and respect
- Not discriminate against, harass, or bully others
- Report any concerns about discrimination or harassment
- Participate in training and development opportunities
- Support colleagues and clients from different backgrounds

HR Department

- Provide advice and guidance on equality and inclusion matters
 - Coordinate training and development programmes
 - Monitor equality data and produce regular reports
 - Handle complaints and investigations fairly and confidentially
 - Keep policies and procedures up to date
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Reporting and Complaints Procedures

Informal Resolution

Staff and clients are encouraged first to try to resolve concerns informally by:

- Speaking directly to the person causing concern
- Seeking support from a manager, HR representative, or designated equality champion
- Accessing confidential support through our Employee Assistance Programme

Formal Complaints

If informal resolution is not appropriate or successful, formal complaints can be made through:

- **For Staff:** Our grievance procedure
- **For Clients:** Our complaints procedure (details available on our website)
- **Contact:** admin@zestofmind.com or speak to any manager or HR representative

External Support

Individuals also have the right to:

- Contact ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) for free advice
- Make a claim to an Employment Tribunal (within three months of the incident)
- Report criminal matters to the police where appropriate

Protection from Retaliation

We will not tolerate any form of retaliation against individuals who raise concerns in good faith. Such behaviour will be treated as serious misconduct.

Monitoring and Review

Data Collection and Analysis

We will monitor equality data including:

- Workforce demographics (recruitment, promotion, retention, pay gaps)
- Client demographics and satisfaction levels
- Training participation and effectiveness
- Complaint and grievance data
- Exit interview feedback

Regular Review

This policy will be:

- Reviewed annually by the Senior Management Team
- Updated to reflect changes in legislation and best practice
- Subject to consultation with staff, clients, and trade union representatives
- Supported by an annual Equality Action Plan with specific objectives

Accountability

- Annual equality reports will be published on our website
- Progress against objectives will be reported to the Board
- Equality impact assessments will be conducted on all major policy changes
- Staff and client feedback will be actively sought and acted upon

Support and Resources

Internal Support

- Equality Champions network
- Staff support groups and networks
- Confidential Employee Assistance Programme
- Occupational health services
- Flexible working options

External Resources

- Equality and Human Rights Commission: www.equalityhumanrights.com
- ACAS: www.acas.org.uk
- Access to Work Scheme: www.gov.uk/access-to-work
- Relevant equality organisations and charities

Agreement and Implementation

This equality, diversity and inclusion policy is fully supported by senior management and has been agreed with staff representatives and trade union representatives.

All managers are responsible for ensuring this policy is communicated to their teams and implemented consistently. Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action.

This policy demonstrates our ongoing commitment to creating an inclusive environment where everyone can thrive. It will be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure it remains effective and relevant.