



Mindfulness Network (MN)

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy and Living Document

(Version Oct 2023)

Introduction

Our intention is to reduce human suffering and promote well-being. Around this shared intention we aim to bring together a network of highly trained mindfulness-based and compassion training supervisors, teachers and retreat leaders to offer empirically supported mindfulness-based and compassion training and ongoing professional development, so mindfulness-based and compassion courses delivered within recognised good practice guidelines, can be offered to all in society.

1.1 The principles of inclusiveness, tolerance and fairness are central to our mission. We recognise that the mindfulness world is not truly representative and diverse. We are committed to being part of the solution to this problem through increasing our understanding of and addressing inequities. We believe that embracing diversity and drawing on different perspectives will add value to the way we work and help to bring about the desired changes.

1.2 This policy exists to promote equal access to every dimension of our work, including the employment and associate opportunities, and the services delivered.

1.3 We will not accept unfair discrimination or less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief, disability, marriage and civil partnership, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity as an employer or in the running of our organisation. We will take action to address such conduct.



1.4 This policy is fully supported by MN Directors, Operational leads and the Charity Trust Board who have given clear direction and leadership that promoting equality and equity are priorities.

1.5 The commitments in this policy underpin all other MN policies.

2. Policy Aims

2.1 To build an organisational culture based upon values of dignity, courtesy, tolerance and respect, where people can feel safe, where differences are accepted, engagement is apparent and the contributions of all are encouraged and valued. All staff, trainers, supervisors and retreat leads are expected to adhere to it.

2.2 To attract and retain staff, board members, trainers, retreat leads and supervisors who are committed to our equality and equity principles and who actively promote the EDI agenda in the communities in which we operate.

2.3 To attract trainees, supervisees, retreatants and other service users that better reflect the diverse communities in which we operate and who are committed to our equality and equity principles and EDI agenda.

2.4 To address the root causes and impacts of stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination and harassment as well as the indirect discrimination that can unintentionally arise from our policies, practices and procedures.

2.5 To bring EDI into consciousness for all leaders, staff, trainers and supervisors and for their actions to be led by these learnings and insights when teaching MBI's and training others to teach MBI's.

2.6 To bring EDI into consciousness for all trainees, students and supervisees so they can in turn bring EDI into their delivery of MBI groups.

2.7 To investigate barriers to accessing mindfulness-based and compassion services and roles within the MN and find ways to overcome them in training, supervision, retreats, MBI groups that we run and MBI groups that others run.

3. Policy Implementation

To translate this policy into action we will:

3.1 Consult, engage with, and learn (from our staff, associates and others in the mindfulness and compassion field and EDI field) in the development and delivery of an equality and equity action plan and on our work more broadly.

3.2 Set up ongoing mechanisms/forums by which good practice and learning about EDI in the mindfulness and compassion field can be shared (including building partnerships with other mindfulness and compassion organisations in the UK and beyond).

3.4 Review all existing and future policies to ensure they support the aims of this policy.

3.5 Ensure appropriate systems are in place and publicised so that our staff, associates and service users are able to raise concerns and feedback their views.

3.6 Monitor and collect evidence on the impact of our policies, practices and procedures on equality and equity issues.

3.7 Implement tailored positive action measures where appropriate to respond to the evidence we collect.

3.8 Ensure reasonable adjustments are made for disabled individuals.

3.9 Train our staff and board members – who work with the MN for more than a month – to promote this policy and embed equality and equity principles into all relevant training including induction.

3.10 Offer and recommend training to our associates to enable them to embed equality and equity principles into their work in connection with the MN.

3.11 Communicate this policy to all our trainees, supervisees and retreatants so that they are aware of our commitment to treat them fairly and their obligation to operate in line with this policy.

3.12 Take appropriate action when incidents occur that breach this policy.

3.13 Regularly monitor and review the success of this policy in promoting equality and equity and evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of our action plan.

3.14 Introduce an agenda item into peer mentoring and/or reflective sessions on actions taken by teachers/supervisors that relate to the EDI agenda.

4. Our Legal Duties

In order to successfully implement this policy, it is important that staff, trainers etc. are equipped to recognise unlawful discrimination. Appendix 1 sets out our

legal duties under the Equality Act and lists the kinds of discriminatory behaviours that this policy aims to eradicate. We expect our directors, staff, board members, associates and service users to behave in accordance with the guidance provided in Appendix 1.

5 Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 MN Directors and Charity Board's responsibility is to:

- Own and monitor implementation of this policy.
- Take responsibility for delivery of this policy.
- Provide strong leadership on equality and equity.
- Drive delivery of the Equality Action Plan.

5.2 Our Operational Leads' responsibilities are to:

- Act as equality and equity champions, role-model behaviour that supports this policy and encourage those they manage to do the same.
- Implement this policy and integrate equality and equity into the work of the MN.
- Approve the Equality and Equity Action Plan and oversee its implementation.
- Ensure staff and associates are fully aware of their individual and collective responsibilities under this policy.
- Prioritise attendance at equality training for associates and service users so that they can develop the competences needed to comply with this policy and deliver the action plan.
- Respond to allegations of discrimination and harassment quickly, fairly and effectively.
- Investigate and deal promptly with any incidents or individual behaviours that contravene this policy, and maintain strict confidentiality as appropriate.

- Produce timely, accurate and appropriate equality management information to inform decision-making.
- Create and deliver initiatives that will translate this policy into positive action.
- Set up effective systems to ensure that positive action on equality and equity is continuously evaluated and improved.
- Communicate regularly with their teams about equality and equity issues in a way that keeps this policy and its action plan alive and central to our mission.

5.3 All staff and associates have a responsibility to:

- Treat others with dignity and respect.
- Report discrimination, bullying, unfair treatment, or harassment that they experience/witness to any Lead within the organisation.
- Help identify discriminatory practices or procedures and bring these to the attention of any of the Leads, in strict confidence.
- Contribute to creating an inclusive learning environment that values difference.
- Attend equality training and development events.
- Treat any sensitive information (e.g. any impairment related information) with strict confidence.
- Express opinions constructively and with sensitivity and respect.
- Support the work of the Equality and Diversity working group when required.
- Play an active part in delivering the Equality Action Plan.

6. Monitoring and Implementation

6.1 Ultimate responsibility for monitoring the implementation of this policy rests with the MN Directors. However, each individual involved in the MN needs to play his/her part in translating policy into practice.

6.2 If staff find examples of indirect discrimination in MN policies and procedures, they should bring this to the attention of the relevant Lead. They can then consider the issue and respond as appropriate.

6.3 Associates and service users should contact the relevant Lead if they find examples of discrimination and/or harrassment.

6.4 Where inequalities are highlighted in any area of our activity or structures and processes we will take action to address these.

6.5 A formal annual review of the policy and action plan will be led by the Director for reporting to the Board. The review will focus on: tracking progress; identifying challenges to delivery; devising ways to overcome these challenges; and checking that the policy aims and actions remain relevant.

7. Policies that Support Equality and Diversity

Although the principles set out in this policy underpin all our policies at the MN, these current policies, guidelines and agreements are particularly relevant:

a) Staff

- Grievance

b) Supervisors

- Supervisor and MN agreement

Communication

This policy is available electronically or in printed form on request. To request a copy contact: info@mindfulness-network.org.

Appendix 1

4.1 The Equality Act 2010 replaced a number of existing anti-discrimination laws to simplify and strengthen equality law, removing inconsistencies and making it easier for people to understand and comply.

4.2 This policy is the instrument through which we comply with our obligations as an employer and a service provider, as set out in the Act. As such, all our stakeholders need to understand the protections and obligations conferred on them by the Act.

4.3 The purpose of the Act is that everyone has the right to be treated fairly at work or when using services. It protects people from discrimination and harassment by employers and service providers on the basis of nine protected characteristics;

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

4.4 The Equality Act protects our directors, staff, board members, associates, volunteers, applicants, trainees, supervisees and retreatants against:

- **Direct discrimination:** Direct discrimination occurs when you treat a person (e.g., participant, worker, supervisor, etc.) less favorably than you treat (or would treat) another person because of a protected characteristic. So, a very basic example would be refusing to admit a participant because of their race, e.g., because they are Roma.

- **Discrimination by association:** Direct discrimination also occurs when you treat a person less favorably because of their association with another person who has a protected characteristic. This might occur when you treat a participant less favorably because their sibling, parent, carer or friend has a protected characteristic.
- **Perception discrimination:** Direct discrimination also occurs when you treat a person less favourably because you mistakenly think that they have a protected characteristic. For example, an employee is not offered the chance to represent her company at a major event because her line manager believes she has mental health issues.
- **Indirect discrimination:** This occurs when there is a policy or a practice that applies to everyone, but which particularly disadvantages people with a protected characteristic, compared with people who do not have that characteristic. Indirect discrimination is not unlawful if it can be objectively justified.
- **Harassment:** This is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual
- **Victimisation:** This occurs when a person is treated less favourably than someone else because they have complained about discrimination, are suspected of doing so, or have supported someone else who has.

4.5 Disabled people are specifically protected against discrimination 'arising from disability.' For example, they would be protected from an employer penalising them from taking regular comfort breaks to manage chronic pain when the employer would reasonably be expected to know that the employee has a disability. This type of discrimination is only justifiable if an employer can show that it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

4.6 Disabled people also have a legal right to reasonable adjustments from their service provider or employer, including: the provision of auxiliary aids; removing physical features; and/or adjusting provisions, criteria or practices where it is reasonable to do so.

4.7 A person is protected against discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity during the period of their pregnancy and any statutory maternity leave to which they are entitled.

4.8 Finally, it would be unlawful discrimination to treat someone less favourably for being absent from work in connection with gender reassignment, than they would be treated if they were absent because they were ill or injured.

4.9 We expect our directors, staff, board members, associates and service users to behave in accordance with the above provisions.