



## **MINISTRY OF STORIES**

### **Equal Opportunities and Valuing Diversity Policy**

Last Updated January 2026

## **MINISTRY OF STORIES EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND VALUING DIVERSITY POLICY**

Ministry of Stories is committed to promoting equality, tackling discrimination, fostering positive relationships between diverse groups of people and to ensuring fairness for all in service delivery as well as in both volunteering and employment. Ministry of Stories takes an intersectional approach to all aspects of its work and is committed to recognising and addressing overlapping and mutually reinforcing factors of power imbalance, disadvantage and inequality. Ministry of Stories aspires to promote equity, which goes beyond equality and involves taking into account structures which might put particular groups at a disadvantage.

This policy is intended to assist in putting these commitments into practice. We aim to create a working environment in which all people are able to give of their best; where there is no bullying and harassment or discrimination; and where staff, volunteers, service users and all involved in Ministry of Stories are treated fairly and with respect.

Ministry of Stories' Board of Trustees, Director and Deputy Director will assume primary responsibility for the implementation of this policy. All Ministry of Stories members, employees and volunteers will be expected to adhere to the organisation's equal opportunities policy in the course of their work with or on behalf of the organisation.

### **Statement of Intent**

This Equality and Diversity policy statement outlines Ministry of Stories' commitment to respond to existing legislation and guidance from government, and encouragement within wider society, to address equality and diversity issues in our recruitment and employment processes, volunteering, governance and management structures and our service activities.

This policy applies to every aspect of staff and volunteer employment, from recruitment, through pay, access to facilities and employment benefits, discipline and grievance procedures up to the end of the contractual relationship and beyond, for example, in the supply of references.

It also applies to our services, which will be developed and delivered in a fair, inclusive and non-discriminatory way; to our communications and campaigning work; outreach; development of partnership; and all other aspects of our work.

Ministry of Stories understands that an analysis of unequal power relations and a commitment to address these is critical to the delivery of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

This policy is supported by Ministry of Stories policies and procedures, including:

- Recruitment policy
- Employment terms and conditions
- Training and staff development
- Complaints policy
- Staff Handbook
- Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

## **1. The Law (see detailed definitions: Appendix 1)**

- It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of a 'protected characteristic'. The Equality Act defines the protected characteristics as being age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality, caste and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership.
- Discrimination after employment may also be unlawful, e.g. refusing to give a reference for a reason related to one of the protected characteristics.
- It is also unlawful to discriminate against or harass a member of the public or service user in the provision of services or goods or to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to using services caused by disability.
- The duty to make reasonable adjustments includes the removal, adaptation or alteration of physical features, if the physical features make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of services. In addition, service providers have an obligation to think ahead and address any barriers that may impede disabled people from accessing a service.

## **2. Our Commitment:**

- We will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline and selection for redundancy. Job descriptions will avoid any unnecessary requirements (those unrelated to effective performance) that may otherwise have deterred applicants. We will base decisions on objective criteria. We will consider making reasonable adjustments in recruitment as well as in day-to-day employment. All volunteers and employees, whether part-time, full-time or temporary, will be treated fairly and with respect. All volunteers and employees will be encouraged and supported to develop, and their talents will be utilised to maximise the efficiency of Ministry of Stories.
- We will provide training and information to staff and volunteers to ensure that all have a strong understanding of power, equality, diversity and inclusion and what they mean for our work, including a focus on unconscious bias and anti-discrimination practice.
- We will provide information and guidance to those involved in recruitment or other decision making where equal opportunities issues are likely to arise to help them understand their responsibilities and to avoid the risk of discrimination
- We will not discriminate unlawfully against service users using or seeking to use the services we provide.
- Ministry of Stories will seek to become more reflective of the community we serve, with regards to staff, freelance contractors, volunteers, trustees and service users.
- We will seek to identify and address barriers faced by underserved groups in accessing our services, and will take proactive steps to ensure that our services meet the needs of underserved groups.
- We will seek to create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all our staff/volunteers at Ministry of Stories are recognised and valued, and everyone who

has contact with Ministry of Stories experiences an environment that promotes dignity and respect for all

- We will make every effort so that training and development opportunities are available to all staff and as appropriate, to volunteers
- We will challenge discrimination in all its forms, in line with our organisational values

### **3. The role of staff, volunteers, trustees and freelance contractors**

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the implementation of the equality and diversity policy and will seek to provide resources for its implementation.

Ministry of Stories will strive to ensure that the Board of Trustees reflects the community, and will identify priority groups for recruitment in response to our annual board demographic mapping. Our current priority groups will be set out in our most current Diversity and Inclusion Action plan.

All staff, volunteers, trustees and freelance contractors have a responsibility to:

- Ensure that the policy is put into practice and will be expected to embed the policy as part of the organisation culture.
- Understand the value and benefits of equality and diversity
- Attend relevant training courses organised by Ministry of Stories to raise awareness and develop skills to implement/manage equality and diversity issues
- Draw to the attention of their line manager, a senior staff member or Chair of Trustees any instances of apparent discrimination or any perceived problem in relation to this policy
- Work in ways that demonstrate a commitment to diversity

#### **The Role of Director**

Ministry of Stories' Director and Deputy Director will:

- a. communicate the policy to all staff, volunteers and other members of Ministry of Stories through the use of contracts of employment, staff handbook and such other methods of communication as Ministry of Stories sees appropriate;
- b. ensure that disciplinary and grievance procedures incorporate principles of equal opportunity and non-discrimination;
- c. regularly examine existing procedures and criteria, including recruitment practices (please see our separate recruitment policy) and terms and conditions of employment and change them where they are actually or potentially discriminatory, ensuring the Organisation's position within the Law and reflecting best practice.
- d. provide training and guidance to enable staff to carry out the policy and provide specific training for relevant decision makers, including members of the Board of Trustees where appropriate; who regularly monitor the application of the policy;
- e. monitor and report on the Diversity and Inclusion Action plan annually (at a minimum) to the Board of Trustees and to the staff.

#### **4. Breaches of this policy**

Every person volunteering or working for Ministry of Stories has a personal responsibility for implementing and promoting our principles in their day-to-day dealings with everyone – including members of the public, other volunteers and staff. Breaches of our equality, diversity and inclusion policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings. Employees who commit serious acts of harassment may be guilty of a criminal offence.

Should any member of the organisation or a service user be concerned about a breach of this policy they should follow guidance as outlined in the Complaints Procedure and/or Grievance Policy as appropriate.

#### **5. Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be reviewed every two years to judge its effectiveness and will be updated in accordance with changes in the law. Any information provided by job applicants and employees for monitoring purposes will be used only for these purposes and will be dealt with in accordance with the Data Protection legislation.

The policy will be supported by a two-year rolling Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan which will include targets and KPIs relating to staff, volunteers and service users, and which will be monitored annually.

Ministry of Stories welcomes comments and feedback on its policies and procedures from staff, volunteers and service users. Feedback and comments should be directed towards the service manager in the first instance.

#### **6. Compliance with the policy**

Ministry of Stories will investigate and take appropriate action in all reported incidents of:

- Unlawful discrimination or unfair treatment
- Bullying or harassment
- Victimisation

Serious breach of the equality and diversity policy by a:

- Staff members will be dealt with under the Ministry of Stories disciplinary and grievance procedure
- Volunteers will be dealt with through a one-to-one meeting with the direct manager
- Trustees will be dealt with through a report to the Board by the Chair or the Director as appropriate

Service users and job applicants who feel they have been discriminated against or unfairly treated, will be made aware of the complaints policy and procedure.

The achievement of a genuine Equality and Diversity Policy requires commitment to a programme of action with which everyone involved can identify and through which those with special needs can be confident that they will be treated justly. This is a commitment, Ministry of Stories makes unreservedly

Updated policy approved by the Board and signed by:

To be reviewed every two years.

Date of next review: January 2028

## Appendix 1:

### Terminologies and descriptors

Disability under the Equality act 2010 is defined as:

‘a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. ‘Substantial’ means more than minor or trivial. ‘Impairment’ covers, for example, long-term medical conditions such as asthma and diabetes, and fluctuating or progressive conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis or motor neurone disease. A mental impairment includes mental health conditions (such as bipolar disorder or depression),

Learning difficulties (such as dyslexia) and learning disabilities (such as autism and Down’s syndrome). Some people, including those with cancer, multiple sclerosis and HIV/AIDS, are automatically protected as disabled people by the Act. People with severe disfigurement will be protected as disabled without needing to show that it has a substantial adverse effect on day-to-day activities.’

- **Direct discrimination** occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic. Direct discrimination also includes discrimination because a person is wrongly thought to have a particular protected characteristic or is treated as if they do
- **Indirect discrimination** occurs where the effect of certain requirements, provision or practices imposed by an organisation has an adverse impact disproportionately on one group or other. Indirect discrimination generally occurs when a rule or condition, which is applied equally to everyone, can be met by a considerably smaller proportion of people from a particular group; the rule is to their advantage, and it cannot be justified on other grounds.
- **Discrimination arising from disability** occurs when a disabled person is treated unfavourably because of something connected with their disability and this unfavourable treatment cannot be justified. Treatment can be justified if it can be shown that it is intended to meet a legitimate objective in a fair, balanced and reasonable way. If this can be shown, then the treatment will be lawful.  
This form of discrimination can occur only if the service provider knows or can reasonably be expected to know that the disabled person is disabled.
- **Positive discrimination** is illegal under UK anti-discrimination law and shouldn’t be confused with Positive Action. Positive discrimination generally means being favourable towards an individual or group for whatever reason outlined.
- **Positive action** is legal and describes measures targeted at a particular group that are underrepresented in a particular programme or aspect of a sport. These measures are intended to redress past discrimination or to offset the disadvantages arising from existing attitudes, behaviours and structures. The Government has issued guidance on this, which can be found [here](#).

Lawful positive action measures can include:

- Targeting job training at people of particular racial groups, or gender, which have been under-represented in certain occupations or grades during the previous 12 months or encouraging them to apply for such work.
  - Providing facilities to meet any specific educational, training or welfare needs identified for a specific racial group.
  - Special action being taken is the employment of a female coach to lead a session aimed at women, to specifically encourage uptake and participation by female players
- **Harassment** can be described as inappropriate actions, behaviour, comments or physical contact, which may cause offence i.e. mental or physical anxiety or hurt to an individual:
    - It may be related to gender, gender reassignment, race, disability, sexuality, age, religion, nationality or any personal characteristic of an individual.
    - Under the terms of the Criminal Justice Act 1994, harassment was made a criminal offence, punishable by a fine of up to £5,000 and/or a prison sentence of up to six months.
  - **Victimisation** occurs when a service provider treats someone badly because they have made or supported a complaint about discrimination or harassment, or because the service provider thinks that they are doing or may do these things. It will also be victimisation if a service provider treats someone badly because they support someone else who makes a claim of discrimination. A person is not protected from victimisation if they have maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint.
  - **Prejudice** is literally pre-judging someone. It is usually led by negative, irrational feelings, resulting from preconceived attitudes and opinions.
  - **Stereotyping** is grouping or labelling people because they are members of a particular 'visible' group, and assuming that they have particular traits that Ministry of Stories considered to be characteristics of that group.
  - **Dignity** is about respectful, responsible, fair and humane behaviour, something that is reflected in the constitution.
  - **Disadvantage** is where, as a result of discrimination, an individual or group is deprived of some or all resources and opportunities. This may affect people directly or indirectly.
  - **Social exclusion** is when people suffer from one or a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low income, high crime environments or lack of facilities.

## **Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010**

Each characteristic is addressed in the new Act in summary as follows:

### **Age**

The Act protects employees of all ages but remains the only protected characteristic that allows employers to justify direct discrimination, i.e. if an employer can demonstrate that to apply different treatment because of someone's age constitutes a proportionate means of meeting a legitimate aim, then no discrimination will have taken place. The Act continues to allow employers to have a default retirement age of 65, as long as the default retirement age remains.

### **Disability**

The Act includes a new protection arising from disability and now states that it is unfair to treat a disabled person unfavourably because of something connected with a disability. An example provided is the tendency to make spelling mistakes arising from dyslexia. Also, indirect discrimination now covers disabled people, which means that a job applicant could claim that a particular rule or requirement disadvantages people with that disability. The Act includes a new provision which makes it unlawful, with limited exceptions, for employers to ask about a candidate's health before offering them work.

### **Gender reassignment**

It is discriminatory to treat people who propose to start to or have completed a process to change their gender less favourably, for example, because they are absent from work for this reason.

### **Marriage and civil partnership**

The Act continues to protect employees who are married or in a civil partnership. Single people are however not protected by the legislation against discrimination.

### **Pregnancy and maternity**

The Act continues to protect women against discrimination because they are pregnant or have given birth.

### **Race**

The Act continues to protect people against discrimination on the grounds of their race, which includes colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin.

### **Religion or belief**

The Act continues to protect people against discrimination on the grounds of their religion or their belief, including a lack of any belief.

### **Sex**

The Act continues to protect both men and women against discrimination on the grounds of their sex.

### **Sexual orientation**

The Act continues to protect bisexual, gay, heterosexual and lesbian people from discrimination on the grounds of their sexual orientation.