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**Northfields & District Play Association**

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

Northfields and District Play Association

Version 1.0

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# Version Control

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# Introduction

Northfield and District Play Association ("The Playbarn") is a safe and engaging environment where young people from 6 - 15 years old can enjoy themselves. There is a focus on; socialising, informal education, fun and engaging physical activities, life skills and inclusivity.

Indoor activities include arts and crafts, a pool table, table tennis and football, cooking and a tuck shop. A separate youth club is on-site for young people aged 10-15 years, and The Playbarn also runs holiday playschemes throughout the year.

At The Playbarn, we are committed to preventing and eliminating inequality and discrimination in all areas of the organisation. For the communities we serve, our service users, staff, volunteers, and all stakeholders, this means not discriminating against anyone based on their protected characteristics and ensuring that individuals are treated fairly and supported equally.

Beyond equality and diversity, The Playbarn is committed to inclusivity and believes that every individual provides value. Inclusivity goes beyond the law and can only occur where individuals are empowered and we, as an organisation, break down barriers and value differences.

Encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace is not only good practice but makes good business sense and is a core value of The Playbarn.

This document provides a brief overview of the UK laws on Equality and Diversity and sets out how we, as an organisation, implement the Equality Act 2010 in practice.

# Our Commitment

This policy is intended to:

* Provide guidance as to how our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion is put into practice.
* Outline how we aim to ensure equality and fairness of service provision.
* Ensure that we do not unlawfully discriminate in employment or volunteering and promote equality of opportunity.
* Provide a framework where our team members and we oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination and promote inclusivity bother internally and with our service users.
* Provide guidance as to where individuals can seek help if they feel discriminated against.

# Scope

This policy applies to all staff, including but not limited to employees, volunteers, agency workers, self-employed contractors, consultants, and students on work experience placements.

This policy does not form any of the terms and conditions of employment and may be amended at any time. However, staff should note that failure to abide by this policy may lead to disciplinary or other sanctions.

# Definitions

**Equality** means ensuring everyone in your setting has equal opportunities, regardless of their abilities, background, or lifestyle.

**Diversity** means appreciating the differences between people and respecting people's values, beliefs, cultures, and lifestyles.

**Inclusivity** is the idea that all types of people must be included as much as possible in work and other institutions, regardless of differences.

**Protected Characteristics** – The Equality Act 2010 states that it is unlawful to discriminate due to any of the following: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

This does not mean that discrimination is not also happening based on other categories, such as:

* Socio-economic.
* Education level.
* Nationality (which differs from race).
* Regional or national accent.
* Appearance.
* Health conditions.

**Direct Discrimination**   
Excluding or treating an individual or group less favourably due to a protected characteristic, e.g., excluding a person from accessing a service unfairly and/or unlawfully excluding a person because of a disability.

**Indirect Discrimination**   
Excluding or treating an individual or group less favourably by putting those with a protected characteristic at a disadvantage, e.g., making a policy where a dress code negatively affects some staff who are unable or unwilling to adhere to the policy due to religious beliefs.

Indirect discrimination is less obvious than direct discrimination and may happen unintentionally.

Discrimination is not just treating one person less favourably than another. It can take place because:

* Someone associates with a person with a protected characteristic, which is known as discrimination by association.
* Someone is believed to possess a protected characteristic (even though they do not), which is known as discrimination by perception.

## Legal Framework

The Equality Act 2010 provides the legislative framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all, bringing into one act all existing discrimination laws, including:

* The Equal Pay Act 1970
* The Sex Discrimination Act 1975
* The Race Relations Act 1976
* The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
* The Equality Act 2006
* The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
* The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
* The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
* The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007

Acts of unlawful discrimination are contrary to the law. Therefore, any colleague or stakeholder who breaches this policy will be sanctioned as deemed appropriate.

# Roles and Responsibilities

The Management Committee will:

* Embed this policy into daily operations.
* Provide suitable training and supervision to staff on its application.
* Ensure the timely review and update of this policy as necessary.
* In a timely manner, appropriately investigate and manage discrimination-related complaints and incidents.
* Support individuals who have been discriminated against.
* Work with all staff members and stakeholders to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion through partnership and problem-solving.

Every Playbarn staff member will:

* Treat all individuals encountered during their work as an individual, fairly, with dignity and respect.
* Never take part in any form of discriminatory behaviour.
* Have a basic awareness of the equality legislation, types of discrimination, and the protected characteristics and undertake the required training on the subjects.
* Step in to stop and eliminate discriminatory behaviour when it occurs.
* Report any incidents where they feel that they have witnessed or have been a victim of discriminatory behaviour.
* Promote the values of equality and diversity amongst colleagues, service users, and other stakeholders.
* Undertake or cooperate with investigations into breaches of this policy.

The Playbarn expects that our service users and all stakeholders will:

* Treat others with dignity and respect.
* Never take part in any form of discriminatory behaviour.
* Report any breach of this policy.

# Policy – Equality in Employment and Volunteering

## Recruitment, Selection, and Promotion

To ensure that our values are upheld, we will ensure that:

* We will, at all times, aim to bring vacancies to the attention of potentially disadvantaged groups.
* Person specifications and job descriptions will be limited to those requirements that are reasonably required for the effective performance of the job.
* Every applicant is given equal opportunity, whatever their personal status, except in the matter of an offending background where the criminal record history relates to the requirements of the post.
* Interviews are well structured to minimise unconscious bias and ensure that questioning is fair and legal.
* Candidates for employment or promotion are assessed objectively against the requirements for the job, taking into account any reasonable adjustments that may be required.
* All recruitment decisions are open to peer review.

## Training

The Playbarn will ensure that:

* Appropriate training and supervision are provided to enable staff members to perform their roles effectively.
* Encouragement is given to all eligible staff members to take advantage of opportunities for training, advancement, and, where appropriate, a permanent employed position.
* Training opportunities are decided on individual merit alone, given budgetary constraints.
* Recruitment, selection, and people management staff will be suitably trained in equality, diversity, and employment law.

## Reasonable Adjustments

The Playbarn acknowledges that we have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled job applicants, employees, and self-employed contractors.

Beyond the law, we acknowledge that organisations failing to provide employment or volunteering opportunities to disabled individuals are losing out on qualified talent and unique skills.

It is estimated that 13% of the UK’s workforce have a disability, whether visible or invisible. Therefore, we strive to be an inclusive organisation that embraces the skills, talent, work ethic and individuality that this section of the workforce brings.

When we are made aware that an individual has a disability, we will, where practicable:

* Change our practices, policies, and procedures to accommodate their needs, such as altering a working pattern or providing additional support.
* Provide additional equipment or assisted technology to individuals or make minor adjustments to the workplace to reduce or remove the impact of their disability.
* Provide practical workarounds beyond reasonable adjustments to increase comfort and inclusivity.

We recognise that the costs of making reasonable adjustments to accommodate disabled staff and clients are often low and will consider all requests for reasonable adjustments. However, if we are not able to make such adjustments, we will:

* Inform the individual of why the reasonable adjustment is not practicable.
* Where possible, discuss alternative arrangements which could be offered.

## Flexible Working

The Playbarn will comply with its obligations regarding statutory requests for contract variations made as statutory flexible working requests, including the number of hours to be worked, the times at which these are to be worked, and the place at which work is to be done.

When considering requests for variations to these standard working practices, we will refuse such requests only if we consider them to be detrimental to the organisation and hinder our service provision.

## Employment Principles

The Playbarn will:

* Avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment, including benefits, discipline, and selection for redundancy.
* Ensure that employees are paid fairly and equally for the same job or jobs of equal value and ensure that part-time, disabled, and other workers with protected characteristics are not subject to discrimination regarding pay or other benefits. The pay/wage for a role will be determined prior to advertisement to avoid discrimination.
* Abide by the UK legislation regarding the Equality Act 2010 and other legislation such as pregnancy and maternity, adoption, paternity, and other family law and encourage employees to access their statutory family leave and pay benefits.

## Representing our Community and Promoting Diversity

At The Playbarn, we acknowledge that a varied staff composition enables us to learn, develop, and thrive through the valued differing opinions, skills, knowledge, and experiences of the individuals who work or volunteer for us and allows the people using our service to feel represented.

The Playbarn aims to, in the near future, monitor the composition of the existing workforce and applicants for roles (including promotion) and will take appropriate action to address any possible discrimination or unconscious bias that may be identified in the monitoring process.

# Policy - Fair Service Provision

To ensure that our service is truly non-discriminatory, The Playbarn will:

* **Never** unlawfully discriminate in the provision of service.
* Provide reasonable adjustments to service users.
* Proactively accept young people with a disability where the service can provide adequate 1:1 support.
* Learn how to improve by listening to our service users.
* Understand that language is not neutral, and continuously work with our stakeholders to question and develop the language we use.

# Promoting Inclusion

To promote and ensure inclusion amongst all stakeholders, The Playbarn will continue to:

* Promote flexible working amongst staff, which allows agility and inclusion for home/life balance.
* Host team-building activities for all staff members.
* Host community events.
* Actively seek feedback from staff members and stakeholders and use it constructively to improve.
* Respect individuals’ personal and professional choices.
* Acknowledge an individual staff member’s rights to be a trade union member.
* Strive for team working amongst all stakeholders, overcoming barriers together by understanding others’ needs, backgrounds, and preferences by implementing practical steps where necessary to include all individuals and ensure comfort and instil the feeling of value.
* Respect and honour religious beliefs and cultures, and, where possible, provide staff time off for religious celebrations and/or events.
* Host events with our service users and stakeholders, ensuring that cultural events from a variety of religions and beliefs are incorporated.
* Be aware of unconscious bias and overcome this by acknowledging that we all have it.
* Create behavioural standards beyond the law - treating everyone with dignity and respect and working to create a pleasant environment for all.

# Policy – Fair Partnership Opportunities

The Playbarn will not discriminate unlawfully against any person or organisation seeking to partner with, work with, or support us unless there is a lawful and legitimate reason.

Where we are made aware of any assistance a partner, supplier, or supporter requires, we will work with that party to make our organisation accessible to maximise our reach and promote equality, diversity and inclusion.

# Discrimination Complaints Procedure

## Reporting Discrimination, Bullying or Harassment Process

The Playbarn will not tolerate discrimination, bullying, or harassment and treats allegations of such behaviour seriously. The following process should be used to report any of these behaviours.

**Informal Discussion:** If you (an employee, volunteer, service user, or any stakeholder) feel subject to discrimination of any kind, you may, if you feel comfortable to do so, make clear to the individual concerned that you find it unacceptable.

A person-to-person discussion at an early stage may be enough to resolve your concern without involving anyone else. Alternatively, seek the help of a trusted friend or colleague and ask them to approach whoever has caused you offence.

You may find it necessary to inform either the manager or management committee of this conversation, even if you feel that the informal discussion has resolved the matter.

Where informed, The Playbarn will record the issue and, where appropriate, under the circumstances, may advise you to make a formal complaint.

**Formal Complaint:** If discrimination continues, or you consider an instance to be particularly serious, you should consider making a complaint to the manager, or if the complaint relates to the manager, to the management committee. If the complaint relates to the management committee, it may be raised with the playground monitoring inspector Anthony McGovern (Leicester City Council).

In the complaint, it will help us to investigate if you set out the grounds of the complaint; what happened, when, where, who, and how it impacted you and/or others.

All complaints received will be logged in a complaints form.

## Investigation and Forthcoming Actions

Most complaints will warrant an investigation, the size of which depends on the circumstances; however, all complaints will be taken seriously.

Serious complaints will usually be managed by the management committee at the next scheduled management meeting or emergency complaints sub-committee meeting.

The assigned complaints manager(s) will, during and after the investigation, consider the feelings of the complainant when determining the severity of the action and harm caused, not merely how they, as individuals, would feel in that situation.

All investigations will be documented, and any remedial action will be recorded and implemented within fourteen (14) days of receipt, wherever possible.

The result of the investigation and actions taken will be communicated to the complainant in writing.

Remedial actions could include:

* Individuals being warned about their conduct or being otherwise sanctioned.
* Staff being disciplined.
* If they have committed a crime, individuals are reported to the authorities.

Where a complaint is about serious or widespread improper conduct within The Playbarn, we may seek third-party assistance or self-refer to our governing body where appropriate.

## Appeal

If you feel dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation and you wish to appeal the decision, you should write to the Chair of the management committee and state that you wish to appeal the decision made regarding the complaint brought under this policy.

The Chair will usually respond to your appeal within ten working days of receiving the appeal.

The appeal decision is final; however, if you remain unsatisfied, you may wish to make a complaint to Leicester City Council.

## Victimisation and Cooperation

Any staff member who has acted in good faith regarding allegations of discrimination or harassment will not be victimised as a consequence of complaining or cooperating with an investigation.

All staff members are expected to cooperate in investigations and must not share confidential information without prior approval from Robert Wallis or the Board of Trustees.

Staff, service users, their families and carers, and all stakeholders will be supported in any complaint, and victimisation against any individual or group will not be tolerated.

## Malicious or Vexatious Complaints

Any malicious and/or vexatious complaints may lead to sanctions including but not limited to disciplinary action taken against staff members, partnerships or agreements being terminated, individuals being warned about their conduct, and/or, in the most serious cases, services being withdrawn from service users.

# Monitoring and Reviewing

Northfields Playbarn is committed to ensuring that our policies are effective and up-to-date. To do this, we have a process for regularly monitoring and reviewing them. The management committee is responsible for this process and will review the policies at least once a year or more frequently if needed due to changes in legislation, best practice, or organisational change.

Reviewing our policies includes identifying which ones need to be looked at, gathering input from employees and stakeholders, reviewing the policies, and communicating any updates.

As part of ongoing monitoring, The Playbarn may collect the following information to identify where our operations, culture, or policies may be seen as discriminatory:

* Staff grievances/complaints
* Exit interview information
* Service user complaints
* Grievance and disciplinary actions
* Application of other sanctions
* The make-up of staff and service users by the protected characteristics.