

## **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

Southend Care Ltd is committed to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion, across all services and employment practices.

This policy applies equally to the protection of:

- People who use our services
- Employees and workers
- Volunteers and contractors

It applies to people who use services, families and representatives, employees, agency staff, volunteers, and contractors.

Southend Care Ltd will ensure that no individual within its services is subjected to unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, or discriminatory abuse.

The terms equality, inclusion, diversity and equity are at the heart of this policy. “Equality” means ensuring everyone has the same opportunities to fulfil their potential free from discrimination. “Inclusion” means ensuring everyone feels comfortable to be themselves at work and feels the worth of their contribution. “Diversity” means the celebration of individual differences amongst the workforce, and users of our services. “Equity” means recognising barriers and that some groups are more advantaged than others and putting measures in place to eliminate these barriers ensures equal opportunities for all.

Southend Care will actively support diversity, equity and inclusion and ensure that our workforce, and user of our services are valued and treated with dignity and respect. We want to encourage everyone in our business to reach their potential.

We value people as individuals with diverse opinions, cultures, lifestyles and circumstances. This policy covers all employees, consultants, contractors, volunteers, casual workers and agency workers and it applies to all areas of employment including recruitment, selection, training, deployment, career development and promotion.

All our services will be delivered in a fair, inclusive, and person-centred manner, ensuring individuals human rights are upheld in all aspects of care delivery.

### **2. Legislative and Regulatory Framework**

Southend Care Ltd operates in accordance with:

- Equality Act 2010

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014
- Data Protection Act 2018
- UK General Data Protection Regulation

This policy supports compliance with the Fundamental Standards regulated by the Care Quality Commission, including:

- Regulation 9 – Person-centred Care
- Regulation 10 – Dignity and Respect
- Regulation 12 – Safe Care and Treatment
- Regulation 17 – Good Governance
- Regulation 18 – Staffing

#### **4. Commitment as an employer**

Southend Care is committed to:

- creating an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of our staff are recognised and valued
- everyone is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated
- providing training, development and progression opportunities to all staff
- understanding equality and inclusion in the workplace is good management practice and makes sound business sense
- reviewing all our employment practices and procedures to ensure fairness and inclusion for all
- taking steps to ensure equity amongst our workforce such as ensuring that our vacancies are advertised to a diverse range of potential candidates and, where relevant, to particular groups that have been identified as disadvantaged or underrepresented in the Company, taking positive action to recruit disabled people and ensuring there are no unlawful barriers to accessing our employment opportunities, training, progression opportunities, benefits and facilities
- diversity in our workforce will be regularly monitored to ensure equal opportunities throughout the Company. Where appropriate, measures will be taken to identify and remove unnecessary obstacles and to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups
- monitoring and reviewing this policy annually.

#### **5. Commitment as a service provider**

Southend Care is committed to:

- providing services to which all service users and clients are entitled regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation
- making sure our services are delivered equally and meet the diverse needs of our service users and clients

- Ensuring all service users and clients have the right to receive care, free from unlawful discrimination and to have their identity, preferences and rights respected.
- taking steps to ensure equity amongst our clients and service users such as removing any unlawful obstacles to accessing our services or facilities. Where appropriate, measures will be taken to identify and remove unnecessary barriers and to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups
- fully supporting this policy by ensuring all individuals working on behalf of Southend Care Ltd comply with this policy and relevant legislation.
- monitoring and reviewing this policy annually
- having clear procedures that enable our service users, clients, candidates for jobs and employees to raise a grievance or make a complaint if they feel they have been unfairly treated.

## 6. Other Responsibilities

Registered Managers are responsible for implementation, monitoring, and escalation. The Nominated Individual and Directors retain corporate accountability.

All visitors are expected to behave respectfully and refrain from discriminatory conduct.

External professionals and contractors operating within Southend Care Ltd premises must adhere to equality and human rights standards.

Any employee found to have breached this policy will be dealt with in accordance with our disciplinary procedure. Serious cases of discrimination may amount to gross misconduct resulting in dismissal without notice

## 7. Protected Characteristics

Southend Care Ltd recognises the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010:

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

Protection under **gender reassignment** applies regardless of whether medical treatment or surgical intervention has taken place.

Southend Care Ltd recognises that many neurodivergent conditions (including but not limited to autism, ADHD, and other cognitive differences) may fall within the definition of

disability where they have a substantial and long-term adverse effect on day-to-day activities.

No protected characteristic takes precedence over another. Decisions must be lawful, proportionate and evidence based.

## **8. Service Delivery Standards**

Southend Care Ltd will ensure:

- Assessments are free from bias.
- Care planning reflects identity, culture, and preferences.
- Communication needs are identified and recorded.
- Cultural, religious, and dietary needs are respected.
- Individuals are not subjected to degrading treatment.
- Services are not refused on discriminatory grounds.

### **8.1. Reasonable Adjustments**

Reasonable adjustments must be considered at assessment, admission, and review stages.

Adjustments may include:

- Accessible communication formats
- Translation services
- Equipment adaptations
- Flexible routines
- Environmental modifications
- Adjustments to support neurodivergent individuals, including communication style, sensory environment, or structured routines.

Failure to consider reasonable adjustments may constitute unlawful discrimination.

### **8.2. Human Rights in Practice**

Southend Care Ltd will uphold rights protected under the Human Rights Act 1998, including:

- Respect for private and family life
- Freedom of religion and belief
- Protection from degrading treatment
- Protection from discrimination

Care delivery must reflect these principles.

### **8.3 Sex-Based Care Requests**

Requests for care by a staff member of a particular biological sex for intimate care may be considered where lawful and proportionate.

Decisions must:

- Be assessed individually.
- Be documented.
- Balance the rights of all parties
- Maintain confidentiality.

## **9. Workforce and Employment**

Southend Care Ltd will:

- Promote equal opportunity in recruitment.
- Apply objective selection criteria.
- Provide equality and inclusion training.
- Make reasonable adjustments for employees.
- Treat part-time or fixed term staff the same as comparable full time or permanent staff, and receive no less favourable terms and conditions (on a pro rate basis where appropriate), unless different treatment is justified

Employment decisions must not be influenced by protected characteristics unless legally justified.

## **10. Unacceptable Behaviour and Discriminatory Abuse**

Southend Care Ltd has zero tolerance for:

- Racism
- Sexism
- Homophobia or transphobia
- Bullying or harassment
- Hate incidents.
- Discriminatory abuse

Patterns of incidents will be reviewed through governance systems.

## **11. Mutual Respect**

Southend Care Ltd expects all individuals within its services to treat others with dignity and respect.

This includes:

- Staff towards people who use services.
- People who use services towards staff
- Families and visitors towards staff and others

Discriminatory, abusive, or harassing behaviour — including behaviour relating to disability, neurodivergence, gender identity, race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation — will not be accepted.

Southend Care Ltd recognises its duty to protect both people who use services and employees from discriminatory treatment.

Concerns will be addressed proportionately through safeguarding, behavioural support, complaints, or disciplinary procedures as appropriate.

## 12. Recording and Information Management

Staff must:

- Use respectful and factual language.
- Avoid assumptions or stereotypes.
- Record preferred names and pronouns accurately.
- Maintain confidentiality regarding protected characteristics.
- Process equality data lawfully.

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Related policies and guidance	Disciplinary Policy Code of Conduct Safeguarding Policy Complaints Policy	Recruitment & Selection Policy Equal Opportunities Policy Professional Boundaries Policy	