



FORMERLY KNOWN AS SHABBAT WALK

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

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Date of next review: December 2026

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Registered Charity No 1182698

1. STATEMENT OF CORE PRINCIPLES

1.1 Hand in Hand is a charity that arranges volunteers to assist members of the community who need help navigating difficult circumstances. Our primary strength is the inspiring selflessness of the local high school students. We have 850 volunteers from across London and Manchester.

Hand in Hand provides ongoing support to families where either a child or parent is living with a mental or physical illness or disability. We also aim to lighten the burden in overwhelming situations, such as those relating to divorce, perinatal complications, death of a young parent, or severe financial hardship. Volunteers will go and give children in such families undivided attention, be a listening ear for them, play with and offer to do homework with them. Another aspect of our work relates to our care for the elderly, assisting them with visits, shopping on their behalf, and providing food packages.

1.2 Under the Equality Act 2010, it is unlawful for organisations, in the course of providing their services or in the treatment of their staff, to discriminate against people on the basis of a “Protected Characteristic”. The Protected Characteristics recognised by law are: disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, age, marriage or civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation (Protected Characteristics). Protection from discrimination can also apply to a person who does not hold a Protected Characteristic, but is wrongly perceived to do so, or because they associate with someone who has a Protected Characteristic.

1.3 Hand in Hand is committed to treating all human beings with equal dignity and respect, whether in its provision of services to the Orthodox Jewish community, or in its associations and dealings with the wider public.

1.4 Hand in Hand recognises that people within the Orthodox Jewish community may experience discrimination because of additional Protected Characteristics (i.e. disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, age, sex, or sexual orientation). Hand in Hand is committed to promoting equal opportunities to all groups within the Orthodox Jewish community it serves.

Lawful exemptions (provision of goods and services)

1.5 In very limited circumstances, the Equality Act 2010 permits organisations to provide or restrict services to people with a particular Protected Characteristic. These circumstances are summarised in the attached Schedule. Hand in Hand has reviewed the Schedule and taken specific legal advice in relation to the exemptions and Hand in Hand’s work, and is satisfied that it benefits from one or more of the lawful exemptions.

Equality and diversity in employment

1.6 Hand in Hand embraces the principles of equal opportunities in employment. It aims to encourage, value and manage diversity and it recognises that talent and potential are distributed across the general population. Not only are there moral and social reasons for promoting equality of opportunity, it is in the best interest of this organisation to recruit and develop the best people for the job from as wide and diverse a pool of talent as possible. That diversity adds value and fosters strong links across different communities.

1.7 Hand in Hand recognises that many people in society experience discrimination, which is defined below at paragraph 6.

1.8 All forms of discrimination are unacceptable, regardless of whether there was any intention to discriminate or not. All staff have a duty to co-operate with Hand in Hand to ensure that this policy is effective in ensuring equal opportunities and in preventing discrimination. All staff should draw the attention of their line manager to suspected discriminatory acts or practices or cases of bullying or harassment.

2. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT

2.1 Hand in Hand is committed to promoting equal opportunities for all staff and job applicants and to deliver fair and equal treatment in its provision of services. All staff, job applicants, service-users and the public will receive equal treatment, regardless of any Protected Characteristic, except in the limited circumstances permitted in law, as summarised in the attached Schedule. We will always seek legal advice before taking such action.

2.2 Hand in Hand will not discriminate against staff, job applicants, service-users or members of the wider public on the basis of any Protected Characteristic, except in the limited circumstances permitted in law, as summarised in the attached Schedule. We will always seek legal advice before taking such action.

2.3 This policy applies to all aspects of employment with us, including recruitment, pay and conditions, training, appraisals, promotion, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment. It also applies to Hand in Hand's provision of services to the community and in its dealings with the wider public.

3. WHO IS COVERED BY THE POLICY?

3.1 This policy covers all individuals working at all levels, including trustees (Directors), employees and volunteers (collectively referred to as staff in this policy). It also covers people [the Charity] comes into contact with through providing its services to the Orthodox Jewish community and through its dealings with the wider public.

3.2 All staff, including employees, consultants, workers, and volunteers must comply with this policy and must not unlawfully discriminate against or harass other people including current and former employees, job applicants, service-users, clients, customers, suppliers and visitors. This applies in the workplace, outside the workplace (when dealing with customers, suppliers or other work-related contacts or when wearing a work uniform), and on work-related trips or events including social events.

3.3 This policy does not form part of any member of staff's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

4. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS POLICY?

4.1 Hand in Hand's trustees have overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with discrimination law. Day-to-day operational responsibility, including regular review of this policy, has been delegated to the CEO.

4.2 THE CEO will lead by example and ensure that all staff adhere to the policy and promote our aims and objectives with regard to equal opportunities. He will be given appropriate training on equal opportunities awareness and equal opportunities recruitment and selection best practice.

4.3 Any questions about the content or application of this policy, or requests for training or further information should be addressed to the CEO.

5. SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

5.1 This policy applies to all aspects of Hand in Hand's relationship with staff and to all aspects of service delivery.

5.2 This policy applies to the all aspects of Hand in Hand's employment-related activities, including job advertisements, recruitment and selection, training and development, opportunities for promotion, conditions of service, pay and benefits, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment.

5.3 This policy also applies to all aspects of Hand in Hand's provision of services to the community and its dealings with the wider community and public.

5.4 We will take appropriate steps to accommodate all requirements of different religions, cultures, and domestic responsibilities as they apply to our staff members. Please see the following for specific information on our approach to these issues: Flexible working policy, Holiday and Leave policy.

6. FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

6.1 Discrimination by or against a member of staff, or in the Charity's provision of services, is prohibited unless there is a specific legal exemption. Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

6.2 Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the Protected Characteristics in 1.2 above. For example, rejecting an applicant because of their race on the basis that they would not "fit in" would be direct discrimination.

6.3 Indirect discrimination occurs where someone is disadvantaged by an unjustified provision, criterion or practice that also puts other people with the same Protected Characteristic at a particular disadvantage. For example, a requirement to work full-time puts women at a particular disadvantage because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Only permitting working people to pay for services by instalments would put pensioners at a disadvantage, as they are not “working”. Such requirements will need to be objectively justified.

6.4 Harassment (in employment) related to any of the Protected Characteristics is prohibited. Harassment is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone’s dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Harassment is dealt with further in our Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy. (In the provision of services, harassment related to any Protected Characteristic except for pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief or sexual orientation is prohibited. However, less favourable treatment because of pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief or sexual orientation may amount to direct discrimination.)

6.5 Victimisation is also prohibited. This is less favourable treatment of someone who has complained or given information about discrimination or harassment, or supported someone else’s complaint.

7. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

7.1 We aim to ensure that no job applicant suffers discrimination because of any of the Protected Characteristics, except where there is a lawful exemption (for example a need to recruit a woman, where this constitutes a genuine occupational requirement. An example of a genuine occupational requirement might be the need to recruit a female counsellor to work with female victims of domestic abuse). In every instance legal advice will be sought. Our recruitment procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities. Job selection criteria are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are relevant to the job and are not disproportionate. Shortlisting of applicants must be done by more than one person.

7.2 Job advertisements should generally be advertised to a diverse section of the labour market and should avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage particular groups from applying.

7.3 Applicants should not be asked questions which might suggest an intention to discriminate on grounds of a Protected Characteristic, for example whether they are pregnant or planning to have children.

7.4 Applicants should not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made. There are limited exceptions which should only be used on taking legal advice. For example:

7.4.1 Questions necessary to establish if an applicant can perform an intrinsic part of the job (subject to any reasonable adjustments).

7.4.2 Questions to establish if an applicant is fit to attend an assessment or any reasonable adjustments that may be needed at interview or assessment.

7.4.3 Positive action to recruit disabled persons.

7.4.4 Equal opportunities monitoring (which will not form part of the decision-making process).

7.5 Applicants should not be asked about past or current pregnancy or future intentions related to pregnancy. Applicants should not be asked about matters concerning age, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or gender reassignment without taking prior legal advice.

7.6 We are required by law to ensure that all employees are entitled to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status should not be made based on appearance or apparent nationality. All prospective employees, regardless of nationality, must be able to produce original documents (such as a passport) before employment starts, to satisfy current immigration legislation. The list of acceptable documents is available from UK Visas and Immigration.

8. STAFF TRAINING AND PROMOTION AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

8.1 Staff training needs will be identified through regular staff appraisals. All staff will be given appropriate access to training to enable them to progress within the organisation and all promotion decisions will be made on the basis of merit.

8.2 Workforce composition and promotions will be regularly reviewed to ensure equality of opportunity at all levels of the organisation. Where appropriate, steps will be taken to identify and remove unjustified barriers and to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.

8.3 Our conditions of service, benefits and facilities are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are available to all staff who should have access to them and that there are no unlawful obstacles to accessing them.

9. TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

9.1 We will ensure that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory.

9.2 We will also ensure that disciplinary procedures and penalties are applied without discrimination, whether they result in disciplinary warnings, dismissal or other disciplinary action.

10. DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT

10.1 If you are disabled or become disabled, we encourage you to tell us about your condition so that we can support you as appropriate.

10.2 If you experience difficulties at work because of your disability, you are encouraged to discuss with your line manager any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. Your line manager may wish to consult with you and your medical adviser(s) about possible adjustments. We will consider the matter carefully and try to accommodate your needs within reason. If we consider a particular adjustment would not be reasonable we will explain our reasons and try to find an alternative solution where possible.

10.3 We will monitor the physical features of our premises to consider whether they might place anyone with a disability at a substantial disadvantage. Where necessary, we will take reasonable steps to improve access

11. PART-TIME, FIXED-TERM AND FLEXIBLE WORK

11.1 Part-time and fixed-term staff should be treated the same as comparable full-time or permanent staff and enjoy no less favourable terms and conditions (on a pro-rata basis where appropriate), unless different treatment is justified.

11.2 The Charity has a separate Flexible Working Policy.

12. SERVICE DELIVERY

12.1 Hand in Hand provides assistance tailored to each family/individual via our Family Liaison Officer team, who spend hours on case management, visiting families, and creating plans to meet their needs. While other organisations assist with specific challenges, we aim to relieve whole family systems by alleviating the strain caused by these issues. Our continuing relationship with families enables us to build trust and see their challenges first-hand, while one-to-one relationships with volunteers give children invaluable support. Consequently, we can offer life-changing assistance, advice, and referrals when families and their children are suffering. Without our holistic support, family systems would struggle to function, causing long-term damage.

Hand in Hand works to tackle discrimination and inequality in respect of the Orthodox Jewish community's access to wider services and information. Within this context, Hand in Hand is committed to the pursuit of equal opportunities throughout the services offered. Hand in Hand will work to implement this policy in order to ensure that no user of our services receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of any Protected Characteristic.

12.2 The Board of Trustees intends to ensure that equal opportunities in its service delivery is a reality in practice.

12.3 Hand in Hand is committed to consult with service-users in order to ensure that our policies and work programmes are based on the expressed needs and wishes of our service users.

12.4 We will monitor the physical features of our premises to consider whether they might place anyone with a disability at a substantial disadvantage. Where necessary, we will take reasonable steps to improve access.

12.5 Hand in Hand encourages board-level participation from members of the Orthodox Jewish community. Appropriate training and information is available to members of the Orthodox Jewish community who need additional support to stand for election to the Board of Trustees and effectively participate in the Committee.

12.6 In order to assess the effectiveness of our equal opportunities policy, Hand in Hand will monitor take-up of services, will identify which groups are and are not benefiting from its services, and will put in place positive measures to promote equality of access across different groups within the Orthodox Jewish community.

12.7 All staff and service-users should be made aware of this Policy.

13. BREACHES OF THIS POLICY

13.1 We take a strict approach to breaches of this policy, which will be dealt with in according to our disciplinary procedure. Serious cases of deliberate unlawful discrimination may amount to gross misconduct resulting in dismissal.

13.2 If you believe that you may have been discriminated against you are encouraged to raise the matter through our Grievance Procedure or Complaints Procedure (depending on whether you are a member of staff or a service user). If you believe that you may have been subject to harassment you are encouraged to raise the matter through our Anti-harassment Policy. If you are uncertain which applies or need advice on how to proceed, you should approach the CEO. Complaints will be treated in confidence and investigated as appropriate.

13.3 There must be no victimisation or retaliation against staff who complain about discrimination. However, making a false allegation deliberately and in bad faith will be treated as misconduct and dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

14. MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE POLICY

14.1 Hand in Hand will undertake an annual Equality and Diversity Audit in order to ensure it is up-to-date and legally compliant. Recommendations for change should be reported to the Chief Executive.

14.2 We will continue to review the effectiveness of this policy to ensure it is achieving its objectives.

14.3 Staff are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved by contacting the Chief Executive.

15. RELATED POLICIES

15.1 This policy is supported by the following other policies and procedures:

- (a) Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy.
- (b) Grievance Procedure.
- (c) Disciplinary Procedure.
- (d) Flexible Working Procedure.
- (e) Maternity, Paternity, Adoption and Shared Parental Leave Policies.
- (f) Parental Leave Policy.
- (g) Time Off for Dependants Policy.
- (h) Dress Code.
- (i) Homeworking Policy.
- (j) Career Break Policy.