



RAIS Lancaster

Refugee Advocacy, Information and Support

Registered Charity No. 1193811

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

Policy Statement

RAIS, as a community organisation and service provider, has a part to play in reducing the disadvantages and discrimination and prejudice which certain people and groups have experienced. We want our membership, staff and volunteers to be representative of the community we serve, and to feel welcomed, safe and valued in our organisation. Together we seek to ensure our service provision is accessible and responsive to the experiences and needs of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Lancaster District; and to mitigating the disadvantages, prejudices and challenges faced by those groups. More broadly, we are committed to ensuring that in all our activities and communications we treat all sections of our community with respect and understanding.

We aim to create a safe and welcoming atmosphere for everyone. We want to challenge all forms of discrimination and prejudice based on race, ethnicity, nationality, creed, gender, sex, class, sexuality, gender reassignment, learning ability, physical impairment, mental illness, HIV status, age, occupation, income, wealth, and unrelated criminal conviction. We aim to design our activities, services and decision-making processes specifically to encourage and support participation from people who face disadvantage and discrimination in society, including women, people of ethnic minority heritage, disabled people, LGBTQ+ people, and people on low incomes.

We ask everyone connected with RAIS to abide by our Code of Conduct:

- People will be treated with dignity and respect regardless of race, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability and/or age.
- At all times people's feelings will be valued and respected. Language or humour that people find offensive will not be used, e.g. sexist or racist and homophobic jokes or terminology which is derogatory to someone with a disability.
- No one will be harassed, abused or intimidated on the ground of his or her race, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability or age. Incidents of harassment will be taken seriously.

Definitions and the Law

We wholeheartedly abide by the statutory requirements laid down in the Equality Act 2010. It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of age, disability, sex, gender re-assignment, pregnancy, parenthood, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership. These are known as protected characteristics. In addition, we should not discriminate against or harass a member of the

public in the provision of services. It is unlawful to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to using services caused by disability.

Direct discrimination – where a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic

Indirect discrimination – where a provision, criterion or practice is applied that is discriminatory in relation to individuals who have a relevant protected characteristic.

Harassment – where there is unwanted conduct, related to one of the protected characteristics.

In addition to complying with the Equality Act, RAIS is committed to ensuring that we are a diverse and inclusive organisation.

Diversity - having differences within an organisation or setting, recognising we are all different in many ways. People with differing identities, backgrounds and experiences should all have equitable access to resources and decision-making.

Inclusion – being proactive to make sure people with different backgrounds, experiences and identities feel welcomed, respected, and able to participate. It is about ensuring a culture exists where individuals can be their full selves.

Accessibility – ensuring that physical environments, services, resources and services are easy to reach and use; taking account of barriers that people might face to due to a protected characteristic, financial disadvantage, language barrier etc.

Responsibilities

Trustees are responsible setting the direction of the organisation, including its commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion. People in leadership positions in RAIS, including staff, should:

- Model inclusive behaviours
- Make sure there are adequate resources to support effective action
- Ensure there are safe and effective processes for addressing discrimination
- Take action to build a positive and equitable organisational culture

Members and volunteers and fundraisers should be aware of this policy and code of conduct and commit to treating all with respect, challenging discrimination where they come across it, and supporting the organisation to build an inclusive and fair culture.

It is the individual responsibility of every trustee, member of staff and volunteer to comply with the policy. If any person considers they have been the subject of, or witness to, unequal treatment they may make a complaint to the Chair of Trustees in the first instance, and. If appropriate to the safeguarding officer, and it will be fully investigated and appropriate action taken if a breach of this policy has occurred.

How we will implement this policy:

Accessibility: We aim to ensure that Refugees and Asylum Seekers are aware of the information and support available through RAIS, and promote our service through our

website, Facebook, our links through partner organisations including the Local Authority, Housing and other voluntary and community organisations. We aim to provide leaflets in a range of languages. Clients may contact us through our Helpline, using the contact details on our business cards, and/or through our twice weekly drop-ins, run at a fully accessible city centre location. We aim to provide support in whichever way is appropriate to the individual RAS, this can include through WhatsApp (where our messages are translated into various languages), one to one contact, by phone etc.

Awareness: The Board of Trustees will ensure that new staff, trustees, volunteers and members access this policy, and have the opportunity to ask questions they may have. All those associated with RAIS will be asked specifically to sign up to our Code of Conduct. They will also be informed of how to raise any concerns or complaints through our Complaints process.

Recruitment: We will ensure that the ways in which paid jobs and volunteer roles are designed, advertised and filled promote diversity and accessibility and that staff and trustees involved in recruitment are aware of their responsibilities in relation to equality of opportunity. We will do this through:

- Jobs and volunteer roles will be designed and promoted in a variety of ways in order to reach the widest cross section of the community
- Applicants will be supported within the interview process according to their needs and within our resources
- Interviews will be fair, asking only questions relevant to the job or the volunteer role, and which are non-discriminatory

Note that all our recruitment is also undertaken in line with our Safeguarding Policy.

Membership: we will actively take steps to promote RAIS membership across all sections of our community, and work with members to ensure a voice in the organisation's decision making and outward focused activities.

Supervision and support to staff and volunteers: all those supporting the work of RAIS will receive regular support sessions to discuss any issues, hear how things are going and to ensure everyone feels valued and listened to, as well as supported and safe in undertaking their activities for the organisation.

Communications: RAIS undertakes to utilise interpreters wherever needed, so that people using our services are enabled to participate and communicate in a way that is as comfortable and familiar as possible. Information for Refugees and Asylum Seekers is available through our leaflets in a variety of community languages as well as on our website. Large print information is also available on request. All our written communications are in plain English that is clear and easy to understand.

Feedback and engagement: We are developing ways to collect feedback from the people using our services, and to use that in our ongoing service development.

Monitoring: we will collect and collate information about numbers of people accessing our services and how they found out about us in order to continually improve our accessibility. Such information will not include anything that could identify an individual. A summary of this information and an assessment of our progress in ensuring an equitable, diverse, and inclusive organisation will be included in the Trustees' Report to the AGM each year.

This policy was adopted on:

23rd May 2022

This policy is due for review in:

May 2025