

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Policy statement

First Steps (Bath) is committed to providing equality of opportunity, inclusion and anti-discriminatory practice for all children, families, staff, and volunteers who use or work in our centres and services to allow room and support for all to develop, grow and thrive authentically. We value diversity and are committed to providing inclusive services that meet the needs of all children and families, particularly those needs arising from race, ethnic heritage, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, faith, or family circumstance. First Steps works following all relevant current legislation, including:

- The Equality Act 2010
- The Children Act 1989, 2004
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The SEND Code of Practice 2014

We aim to

- recognise the wide range and special needs of children and their families, and endeavour to meet these needs in a sensitive way (more detail is given in our Inclusion Policy and Procedure)
- recognise that many different families successfully love and care for each other.
- show respectful awareness of all the major events in the lives of families in the centres, and in our society as a whole, and welcome the diversity of backgrounds from which they come.
- encourage people with disabilities to enter and join our centres, making reasonable adjustments to ensure accessibility as appropriate.
- monitor and evaluate the extent to which our services are reaching, including and meeting the needs of families from the full range of backgrounds within our community.

Our responsibilities

- The CE and Senior Management Team are responsible for overseeing all aspects of the policy.
- All staff are responsible for upholding this policy and for promoting a general awareness of equality and anti-discriminatory practice.

Procedure for admissions

- Our centres are open to every family in the community.
- Information about our services, written and spoken, is in clear, concise English, and can be provided in additional languages as appropriate.
- Our Day Care Admissions policy sets out our waiting list arrangements, which in line with our charitable aims give consideration to local families, and those with additional needs, including special educational needs, disabilities, and social needs.
- Medical, cultural, and dietary needs are always noted and met.

Anti-discriminatory practice

- We make reasonable and appropriate adjustments for children and their families to ensure that all children are able to access their early years education, and that parents and carers are supported to take an active part in their child's learning. For example, providing a visual timetable for a child who has communication or processing difficulties, enabling them to understand the daily routine and confidently access activities throughout the day.
- Children and families are actively encouraged to welcome and experience a range of festivals, e.g., by listening to the stories, eating the special food, wearing the clothing, and taking part in the celebrations as part of the diversity of life.
- All children are respected, and their individuality and potential are recognised.
- We recognize and celebrate our staff and children's identities. We are a community built on an ethos of equality and respect where hair texture and style have no bearing on anyone's ability to succeed.
- We welcome Afro-textured hair worn in all styles including afros, locs, twists, braids, cornrows, fades, hair straightened through the application of heat or chemicals, weaves, wigs, headscarves, and wraps.
- Displays, activities and play equipment offer children positive imagery and the opportunity to develop in an environment free from prejudice and discrimination.
- Children are encouraged to explore, acknowledge, and value differences between themselves and others.
- Resources and materials are selected to give children a balanced view of the world and a positive appreciation for our diverse and multi-racial society and the many different types of families within it.
- We help children develop their self-respect and respect for others by avoiding stereotypes and derogatory pictures or messages about any group of people.
- Discriminatory behaviour or remarks are never acceptable in our centres, either from children or adults.
- Staff are expected to challenge discrimination - their response aims to be sensitive to the feelings of the victim(s) and to help those responsible to understand and overcome their prejudices.
- First Steps' Complaints Procedure (Grievance Procedure for staff) is available to anyone who is dissatisfied with our actions or our responses to discrimination.
- We work closely with other agencies, services, and professionals, to respond appropriately to the diverse needs of children and families.

Staff employment, training, and development

- Staff are recruited and appointed following equal opportunities legislation, as set out in our Staff Employment Policy and Procedure
- All staff, students and volunteers are given an induction, which includes Staff Training & Development and understanding other policies and procedures.
- Training and development opportunities are available to all staff, as set out in our Staff Training and Development Policy and Procedure
- We aim for all staff to receive basic Equalities training, e.g. online equalities training.
- We consider how different festivals and religious observances impact on staff and make reasonable adjustments to accommodate these.

Marketing and outreach

- Efforts will be made to ensure that First Steps is not advertised or marketed in ways that will make groups less aware of our services.
- Where there is an under-representation of groups among our service users, we will encourage greater participation through a variety of advertising methods and referral sources, through outreach methods in the community and quarterly reports on updates of services.

Partnership with Parents

- Partnership with Parents is central to First Steps' charitable aims and is reflected in the aims of this policy set out above.
- Children and families with English as an additional language are welcomed and valued, as are staff, students, volunteers, and visitors. Their language skills are recognised and respected at our centres.
- Our current policies are displayed on our website, at each of our centres and parents of children attending nurseries will be emailed a handbook which outlines key policies.

Links to other policies

- Staff Employment Policy and Procedure
- Staff Training and Development Policy and Procedure
- Compliments and Complaints Policy and Procedure
- Staff Grievance Procedure
- Day Care Admissions policy
- Inclusion Policy and Procedure

Policy revised and updated by staff from First Steps Moorlands Children's Centre July 2008 and by Helena Thompson, Director, January 2009

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 20th January 2009

Reviewed & updated by SMT February 2017

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Reviewed by SMT February 2020

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