

THE ATRIUM HEALTH CENTRE & SANDFORD SURGERY  
PATIENT POLICY

**Title:** Equality & Diversity  
**Review Date:** February 2029      **Version:** 1.3

### **Policy statement**

The practice values the rich diversity, skills and abilities that people from differing backgrounds and experiences bring to the workplace. Implementing and abiding by a policy that provides for diversity and equal opportunities and deters unlawful discrimination is therefore important to this practice.

Every person working for, or on behalf of, or visiting, this practice plays a vital role in implementing its aim to create an inclusive environment where diversity is welcomed, and everyone can work and visit without fear of discrimination.

The purpose of this policy is to set out the aims of the practice in creating an inclusive environment, where access to the practice is based on fair and objective criteria, where there is zero tolerance of unlawful discrimination and clear processes exist in terms of how the practice supports and works towards its aims.

The practice also aims to be clear about how it will deal with actions that adversely impact on its stated aims.

A key aspect of creating a diverse workplace, with equal opportunity afforded to all, is the non-tolerance of any form of discrimination, direct or indirect, within the surgeries working arrangements and practices.

### **Status**

The practice aims to design and implement policies and procedures that meet the diverse needs of our service and workforce, ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over others, in accordance with the [Equality Act 2010](#). Consideration has been given to the impact this policy might have in respect to the individual protected characteristics of those to whom it applies.

### **Scope**

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#### **Who it applies to**

This document applies to all employees of the practice, partners and other individuals performing functions in relation to the practice, such as agency workers, locums and contractors, as well as visitors and patients of the practice.

This policy recognises that the diversity that exists across the practice's patient groups should be reflected in the way the practice operates in terms of diversity within its employees. Also, fair and objective treatment of others should be part of the way the practice does things.

The practice will ensure that its working practices (including such aspects as recruitment and selection, learning and development opportunities, promotion opportunities, pay, benefits and terms of employment, redundancy and dismissal and disciplinary and grievance matters are addressed) demonstrate its commitment to fairness and equity, equality of opportunity and that it is free from any bias that is founded in unlawful discrimination.

#### **Why and how it applies to them**

Everyone is required to assist the practice in meeting its commitment to provide equal opportunities and avoid unlawful discrimination in employment and in the provision of its services

Individuals can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, the practice, for any act of unlawful discrimination and those who commit serious acts of harassment may be guilty of a criminal offence.

Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against employees, patients or others with whom the practice has contact are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under the practice's Zero Tolerance procedure.

## Terms used within the Equality Act 2010

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### Protected characteristics

These are the 9 characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment (including trans and non-binary status)
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins)
- Religion or belief
- Sex (including gender)
- Sexual orientation

### Direct discrimination

Where a person is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic (as listed above).

### Indirect discrimination

Where the practice applies a practice, requirement or condition which applies equally to all individuals, but which puts someone with a protected characteristic at an unfair disadvantage, unless this can be justified.

### Harassment

Unwanted behaviour linked to a protected characteristic that violates someone's dignity or creates an offensive environment for them.

The Equality Act 2010 also recognises sexual harassment as something separate to sex (i.e., female or male) harassment. Sexual harassment occurs when someone is subjected to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or when a person is treated less favourably because they have accepted or rejected unwanted conduct of a sexual nature.

### Victimisation

Treating someone unfairly because they have made a complaint about discrimination or harassment.

## Guidance

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### The law

The key legislation that the practice's policy relates to is the Equality Act 2010.

It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly because of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief (which includes ethical veganism as a philosophical belief) or because someone is married or in a civil partnership. These are known as "protected characteristics".

It is generally unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly, harass or victimise a member of the public based on any of the protected characteristics in relation to the provision of services or goods. It is unlawful to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to work or in using services caused by disability.

### **Dealing with discrimination**

Acts of discrimination (direct or indirect), whether intentional or unintentional, undermine the practice's aim of creating an inclusive environment. Therefore, the practice will take steps to promote diversity and educate everyone to ensure that its work activities and environment do not foster any unfair bias or discrimination. The practice will also ensure that its processes and procedures are free from unfair bias and that it will act promptly to deal positively with acts that are discriminatory.

The practice will not tolerate any form of bullying, harassment, victimisation or other behaviour that is founded in discrimination, in line with its *bullying, harassment and victimisation policy*.

The practice will fully investigate any complaint of discrimination, harassment, victimisation or bullying or any situation that comes to its attention where there is a concern that discrimination lies within it. The practice will ensure that the matter is properly dealt through its formal procedures. Any such proven behaviour that amounts to an act of discrimination, directly or indirectly, on the part of a patient or visitor to the practice will lead to investigation under the *Practice Patient Policy for Zero Tolerance* and may lead to removal from the practice patient list.

If a Patient or Visitor to the practice believes they have been subjected to any form of discrimination or harassment, victimisation or bullying that is founded in discrimination, they should advise the Patient Services Manager and discuss the matter with them. Their role is to help the patient and to determine an appropriate means of dealing with the issue.

Where the practice becomes aware of any indication of the existence of discrimination (or its potential existence), it will act promptly and robustly to establish the true nature of the situation and take appropriate action in line with its commitment to this policy.

### **Monitoring and Recording of Data**

The handling of personal data is controlled by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and associated legislation. GDPR requires the practice to comply with a number of principles regarding privacy and disclosure when handling equality data (i.e. 'special categories of data'), including ensuring such data are processed, stored and used for limited purposes, and always in accordance with Article 9 of the GDPR. The GDPR includes measures to ensure that information is processed fairly and seeks to protect individuals' rights to confidentiality. Documents including such data will be processed in accordance with the GDPR and data protection legislation and individuals have on written request, the right of access to personal data held about them.

### **Promoting equality and diversity**

The practice will ensure that staff understand how to positively promote diversity and equality in their execution of work activities and by their own attitudes and behaviour. Everyone must be aware that their actions influence others and therefore being positive about diversity and equality will have a positive influence in the workplace and the wider community that the practice serves.

Promotion of diversity and equality will be a key consideration as policies, procedures, protocols and processes are developed, implemented, monitored and reviewed. This will ensure that they are free from any unfair discriminatory bias.

All staff undergo Equality & Diversity training during their induction period at the practice and then every 3 years as an update (or sooner where required).