

Equality and Diversity Policy

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1. Supporting Documents

This Policy must be read in conjunction with:

- [Appendix A - Guidance for reflection for staff on sexuality and personal relationships](#)

2. Introduction

Keys Group recognises that children/young people who need care and support may come from different backgrounds to the staff that look after them. It is essential that each child is treated as an individual. This includes explicitly, the promotion of each child/young person's religion, language, gender, sexual orientation & cultural heritage in order to support the development of a positive identity and realisation of their full potential.

Children/young people may come with pre-existing stereotypes, attitudes and prejudices. It is therefore important that staff do not reinforce such prejudice. On the contrary, the aim must be to counteract such prejudice and create an ethos which is free from discrimination.

This policy outlines how the holistic needs of children/young people will be met.

This policy should be understood in relation to Placement Plans and the Equal Opportunities policy

The Equalities Act 2010 identifies a list of "protected characteristics". It is illegal for an organisation to harass or discriminate against anyone because of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

3. What is Equality and Diversity?

Equality is ensuring individuals or groups of individuals are treated fairly and equally and no less favourably, specific to their needs, including areas of race, gender, appearance, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation/identity and age.

Promoting equality should remove discrimination in all of the afore mentioned areas. Bullying, harassment or victimisation are also considered as equality and diversity issues.

Diversity aims to recognise, respect and value people's differences to contribute and realise their full potential by promoting an inclusive culture for all children/young people and staff.

4. Keys Group staff promote equality and diversity by:

- Gaining information and knowledge on each individual child/young person
- Gaining knowledge and understanding of individual children/young person's cultures, beliefs, religion, nationality, language, community, customs and traditions
- Making services accessible, through provision of information in required formats and languages
- Treating all children/young people and staff fairly
- Creating an inclusive culture for all children/young people and staff
- Ensuring equal access to opportunities to enable children/young people to fully participate in the day to day running of the service
- Enabling all children/young people to develop to their full potential.
- Equipping children/young people with the skills to challenge inequality and discrimination
- Ensuring all policies, procedures and processes are not discriminatory.
- Working with other external partner agencies that can support promotion including commissioners and all stakeholder groups.

4. Placement/Support Planning

Keys Group ensure placement/support planning, policies and procedures place particular emphasis on meeting the individual needs of children/young people that arise from their cultural background, religion and language.

The placement/support plan describes how these needs will be met on a day to day basis and how the effectiveness of these plans will be assessed.

Special efforts must be made to ensure that important aspects of a child/young person's heritage are not lost at any stage of their life whilst in the care/support of the Keys Group.

All placement/support planning is inclusive of the child/young person's involvement with children/young people at the centre of the process. Consideration of cultural, religious and linguistic needs must be undertaken using a person centred approach to ensure their individual needs and wishes are taken into consideration.

Each child/young person individual needs will not be generalised by use of stereotypes, myths or misconceptions.

5. Religious Needs

Each child/young person will be encouraged and supported to follow their chosen religion, supported to attend religious observance and provided with appropriate dietary and clothing as necessary.

It is important to remember that for all children/young people, there may be individual/family variances, and that these specific variances are given due consideration. Where appropriate, children/young person's immediate, and extended families may be a point of reference in identifying specific resources to meet individual needs. Community and faith groups are also a useful resource.

Religious festivals and holidays will be celebrated in accordance with each child/young person's beliefs. Furthermore religious festivals should be actively engaged with to promote an understanding of diversity with multi-cultural society today. For example: Christmas, Diwali, Eid etc.

Children/young people should have the opportunity to learn about various faiths in order to help them in consider the spiritual/religious aspects of their lives and that of others.

Each service will have details of all the local religious/spiritual places of worship of the major religions and ensure each child/young person is enabled to explore other faiths should they wish to do so.

Where there are specific places of worship that cannot be easily accessed in the immediate area, religious observance will be considered at the point of referral. Suitable arrangements will be made for the child/young person to be supported to attend a place of worship which ensures that children/young people maintain a healthy understanding of their identity and supports their religious needs.

Wherever possible, appropriate consideration will be given to providing a contemplation or prayer room/space within residential homes in order to support the religious needs of children.

6. Cultural Needs

Cultural needs should not always be assessed solely on the assumption of race or ethnicity. They must also encompass the type of upbringing, lifestyle and environmental influence including the area/community in which a child/young person has grown up in.

Children/young people come from a variety of social backgrounds and services will reflect this social and cultural diversity. Depending on the service, menu's, images on the walls and traditions are enmeshed in the fabric of the building and the ethos of the staff team ensuring that all children/young people feel unique and valued.

Keys Group provides specialist training for staff where necessary to meet the individual needs of children/young people.

7. Linguistic Needs

Not all children/young people have English as their first language. They may also have other communication needs. Staff will ensure effective communication is maintained between the child/young person, staff and family. Where necessary the services of translators and interpreters will be sourced.

The importance of body language is covered through the various training programmes provided by keys group, importantly recognising that certain non-verbal communication has significances within differing cultures.

Written documentation is available in differing formats, including large format, children/young people guides are aimed at different age groups.

8. Asylum seeking and Refugee children/young people

Asylum Seekers are people who flee their home country to seek refugee status in another country and then lodge an application for asylum with the government of that country.

Asylum seeking and refugee children/young people may have direct experience of

- high intensity war
- the destruction of their homes
- the violent death of family or friends
- getting separated from family
- injury
- the arrest of members of their family
- being arrested, detained or tortured themselves
- being forced to join the army or militias
- rape
- grave shortages of food, water or other necessities
- the fear of discovery or arrest
- hostility in their new homeland
- material deprivation in the UK

Keys Group recognise children/young people may experience 'flashbacks', with extreme emotions such as rage, terror, distress, shame or guilt. They may have difficulties in sleeping, eating or concentrating.

Keys Group will provide therapeutic support for the needs of asylum seeker/refugee children/young people, and work in partnership with the local authority and other external agencies.

9. Advocacy or Support Agencies

There are various advocacy support agencies available for children/young people to meet the diversity of needs currently represented within the sector. Appropriate support will be accessed should it be appropriate in consultation with the child/young person and their placing authority.

The manager will ensure as far as is reasonably possible, that professional services are provided to help children/young people develop individual identity in relation to their gender, religious, racial, cultural or linguistic background.

10. Dietary and Health Needs

Through the placement/support planning process and consultation with children/young people specific arrangements will be made to address any personal, cultural or religious needs in regard to health and diet. In addition, healthy options are promoted daily to support positive choices.

11. Anti-Oppressive Practice

Keys Group promotes equality of opportunity and the promotion of each child/young person's religion, language, gender, sexual orientation & cultural heritage in order to support the development of a positive identity, and realisation of their full potential.

Children/young people are actively included to make informed choices and be involved in the decision-making affecting their life. Assistance and equal opportunities for progression and personal development must be an intrinsic part of all children/young people's lives.

The manager actively promotes the inclusion of all children/young people in social group, counters isolation of individuals, nurtures friendships between children and supports anyone who for any reason does not readily integrate with the group.

Working in a multi-racial and multi-cultural society requires staff to be committed to equality in meeting the needs of all children/young people and their families, and to understand the effects of racial harassment, racial discrimination and institutional racism, as well as cultural misunderstanding or misinterpretation. Staff have an understanding of anti-oppressive practice and adhere to the principles to ensure to a high standard of care and support.

In order to make sensitive and informed professional judgments about a child/young person's needs, it is important that staff are sensitive to different family patterns and lifestyles that vary across racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

12. Staffing

Where possible staffing should reflect the background of the children/young people placed. Where this is not the case, options to address these shortfalls can be discussed and addressed during initial referral and planning process and reflected as part of the placement/support planning process.

13. Sexuality and Personal Relationships

13.1 Context

The Children's Act acknowledge the need for looked after children/young people to have a positive response to their emerging sexuality and development of personal relationships. Responding to and talking openly with children/young people about sex, sex education, sexuality and personal relationships, can be a difficult area to address. Staff can feel anxious and unsure about how, and to what depth, to talk and discuss personal topics and therefore, in order to provide safe and supportive response to children/young people, staff also need to feel safe and supported.

The following guidance aims to provide the foundation from which to develop safe and appropriate practice. The overall aim is to help staff consider, discuss and develop safe, anti-oppressive and empowering practice for all children/young people in relation to their sexuality.

13.2 Safe and Appropriate Boundaries:

The starting place in addressing, supporting and informing children/young people about sex, sexuality and personal relationships is to ensure that safe and appropriate boundaries are in place within the service.

Group living, brings together children/young people of both sexes, this will inevitably mean that there are times when any form of sexual activity between children/young people may be a possibility. Furthermore, some children/young people will have

experienced sexually abusive and/or blurred and confusing sexual boundaries. As such children will not necessarily be able to negotiate safe and appropriate sexual boundaries for themselves. For staff, the task in this area is an intense one. It is therefore necessary to be clear that sexual relationships are not acceptable between anyone in the home. Specific support, guidance and care to respond to each child/young person will be clearly documented in the care/support plan and risk assessments.

13.3 Staff Training and Development:

Alongside the above, staff teams will receive appropriate training which will continue their own professional development. This will provide the basis from which to develop a proactive response to the whole area of children/young people's sexuality. Keys Group Learning and Development department provide a range and suite of training to support staff in their roles.

13.4 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning and more (LGBTQ+):

Same sex relationships will be valued and negative attitudes towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning people are not appropriate and should be challenged. This term covers a broad range of people who have different lived experiences and may be at different stages in exploring their identity. It includes people who are asexual or have differences in sex development. There are also a wide variety of terms people might use to describe their sexuality (who they feel attracted to) or their gender identity (their personal, internal perception of their own gender). Young people who are questioning or exploring their sexuality or gender identity might have confusing or difficult feelings. Regularly reviewed individual support plans and risk assessments should set out how staff and anyone involved in the life of the child/young person should sensitively support each child/young person and effectively manage any assessed risk. All staff need to ensure the safe development and provide a safe environment for all children and young people. Staff need to be sensitive to their own feelings about relationships and personal views should not be imposed on children/young people. Care should be taken at all times with regard to confidentiality, language and behaviour and diversity should be positively represented. Staff should also be aware of local support services and information on services should be provided alongside other information produced for children/young people.

14. Training Requirements

Where appropriate Home Managers / Head Teachers / Line Managers (in offices) will ensure that familiarisation with this policy is a part of the induction process for all employees.

15. Equality Impact Statement

All relevant persons are required to comply with this policy and must demonstrate sensitivity and competence in relation to diversity in race, faith, age, gender, disability and sexual orientation. If you, or any other groups, believe you are disadvantaged by this policy please contact your line manager. Keys Group will then actively respond to the enquiry.