

THE RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE - EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES and ACCESS POLICY

1. General Statement of policy

The Rising Sun Arts Centre believes that an equal opportunities approach must be embedded in the culture of the organisation. It is what we do and how we do it - our practice - that defines where we stand in relation to equal opportunities. It is not position statements or written documents that do this, although they have their place. We do not believe that organisations can ever claim to have got everything right with their approach to equal opportunities. There are always new perspectives on discrimination to be explored, new forms of oppression to be challenged and new ways of challenging them. To meet these challenges we aim to develop a learning organisation. In such an organisation, all people feel free to raise issues of equality; training and learning from each other are highly valued, monitoring and evaluation are prized tools and freedom to admit mistakes and celebrate successes are of central importance.

Unfair discrimination in our society takes many forms. It may be direct and based on overt prejudice. It may be indirect and based on lack of awareness and understanding. The Rising Sun Arts Centre is fundamentally opposed to all these types of discrimination and seeks to ensure that in all its activities it does not take place against individuals or groups for any of the following reasons:

- gender*
- age*
- social and economic class
- employment status
- HIV status
- physical or mental disability*
- political belief
- religion or belief*
- gender reassignment*
- gender identity and expression
- race*, colour, nationality or national origin
- marital or parental status*
- sexual orientation*
- unrelated criminal conviction
- position as a carer
- status as a refugee/asylum seeker
- pregnancy and maternity*

The Rising Sun Arts Centre recognises the additional legal status of the protected characteristics contained within the Equality Act 2010 – marked with an *.

The Rising Sun Arts Centre also recognises and seeks to ensure that employees, volunteers and service users are not discriminated against or suffer harassment because of an association with another individual who has a protected characteristic or because they are perceived to have a protected characteristic.

Political beliefs which, in themselves, promote prejudice and discrimination (eg neo Nazism) are not tolerated by the Rising Sun Arts Centre. The relevance of unspent criminal convictions is determined at the discretion of the Board of Trustees.

Reviewed 13/04/2022

Date reviewed: July 2026. Updated to reflect change in RS staff structure – no paid Centre Manager in post.

RSAC's commitment to oppose discrimination and promote equality of access to services places an obligation on all personnel: paid staff, volunteers, trustees and committee members. It is the aim of RSAC to create a welcoming and safe working environment for paid staff, volunteers, trustees and committee members from diverse communities and to acknowledge the benefits of diversity.

Users of RSAC's services are expected to respect the values contained in this statement. It is understood that people have different levels of awareness with regard to equal opportunities and need opportunities to learn. Nevertheless, any behaviour that is seen as oppressive or discriminatory by trustees or management will be considered a serious breach of this policy.

The Rising Sun Arts Centre will take positive action to challenge disadvantage and discrimination and to promote diversity and full access to opportunity in all areas of its work and structures. By 'positive action' we mean measures undertaken with the purpose of achieving full access to opportunity for people and groups that face the consequences of past or present discrimination or disadvantage.

2. Delivery of service to users

The service users of the Rising Sun Arts Centre include – all members of the public who access our services, our partners and colleagues from the voluntary and the public sector, our volunteers and trustees. In order to ensure that discrimination in delivery of services does not take place, the Rising Sun Arts Centre will:

- (i) treat everyone who has contact with the organisation for whatever reason with dignity and respect.
- (ii) plan the delivery of services in a way that will not negatively affect how someone accesses our services because of a protected characteristic.
- (iii) take steps to establish what services are required by different sections of the community and the voluntary and community groups which represent their interests.
- (iv) seek to maximise the flow of information and support to groups and organisations based in communities which experience discrimination and social exclusion.
- (v) not permit discriminatory advertisements or news items to appear on our website
- (vi) seek to ensure that meetings, literature, website, publicity, training events and all other forms of communication are accessible to the widest possible range of individuals and communities.
- (vii) publicise its Complaints Procedure which is available for use by any service user who believes he/she has experienced adverse discrimination on the part of the organisation.

3. The use of buildings and venues and Access Policy

The Rising Sun will ensure that all visitors to our offices and events are not discriminated against, harassed or victimised when accessing our premises or venues and we will make reasonable adjustments for disabled people.

The Accessibility Policy is part of this Equal Opportunities Policy and should be read in conjunction with the Health and Safety policy

Definition of Disability

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People who have a disability have 'a physical or mental impairment which has a long term and substantial effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities'

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, people who have a disability must not directly or indirectly be discriminated against and their requirements should be considered in advance to enable any necessary adjustments to be made in order to prevent any disadvantage.

Statement of Intent

The Rising Sun Arts Centre (RSAC) is committed to providing a fully accessible environment which values and includes everyone physical, sensory, social, spiritual, emotional and cultural needs. We are committed to challenging negative attitudes about disability and accessibility and to developing a culture of awareness, tolerance and inclusion.

The staff and Trustees of the RSAC believe that we should provide a caring, positive, and safe environment.

Key Objective

To ensure full participation in the centre for everyone with a disability we recognise our duty

- not to discriminate against disabled people in provision of our services
- not to treat disabled people less favourably
- to take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled people at a substantial disadvantage in accessing our building and services
- to work on, and publish, an Accessibility Plan.

4. Recruitment & selection of personnel

(i) The trustees will seek to ensure that the composition of the Board, its sub-committees, staff and volunteers, reflects that of the local community. This is vital if the voice of excluded communities is to be heard within the organisation.

(ii) The Rising Sun Arts Centre has a Recruitment & Selection Procedure for engaging paid staff. It is designed to ensure an effective but fair recruitment process which follows equal opportunities principles.

(iii) Applicants for employment and voluntary work by RVA will be given a copy of the Equal Opportunities Policy.

(iv) All new staff, volunteers and committee members will be helped to assess their equal opportunities training needs and offered appropriate training.

5. Protection for employees, volunteers and partners

(i) The Rising Sun will not tolerate its staff, volunteers or partners to be subjected to harassment by another staff member or any third party whether they are service users or other partners and will monitor policy and staff feedback to minimise the risk and take action should an incident occur.

(ii) Any member of staff who feels they have been subjected to harassment should raise the matter through the grievance process.

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(iii) Employees will not be subjected to a detriment, such as being denied a training opportunity or a promotion because he or she made a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010 or because he or she is suspected of doing so, or being about to do so.

(iv) The Rising Sun considers harassment to be a disciplinary offence. The organisation takes seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities.

Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

Further, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

6. Monitoring and evaluation

(i) The Board of Trustees has responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the centre in promoting equal opportunities and the procedures (outside the scope of this document) for addressing non-compliance with the commitments of the general policy statement and equality legislation.

(ii) The Board will request an Annual Equality Audit to review:

- the characteristics represented within our staff, volunteers and trustees
- the accessibility of the services we provide
- any reasonable adjustments that have been made or not made during the year
- any relevant legislative changes that have occurred during the year

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