



Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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Author:	Robert Samuel & Lydia Phillips
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1. Introduction and Purpose

This policy has been produced to promote and champion equal opportunities, celebrating differences and recognising the importance of diverse and inclusive working partnerships, for children, families, victims and staff involved in the Youth Justice Service (YJS). The ethos of this policy should underpin all work undertaken by Hertfordshire Youth Justice Service.

The aim of this policy is to provide confidence to all those who encounter our service, YYS staff and the wider community, that Hertfordshire YYS are committed to pro-actively providing a service that is diverse, inclusive and provides equal opportunities for all persons. Where this is not the case, and instances of discrimination, prejudice and or unfair treatment have occurred, Hertfordshire YYS will treat the matter seriously, fully investigate and take necessary action.

The Youth Justice Service recognises that for some of those who use our service and sections of the community, barriers such as age, gender, disability, health, socioeconomic status, religion, belief, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation may prevent or hinder their ability to engage and or comply with the YYS and any outcomes. The YYS will make every effort to tailor support plans which recognise and meet the individual needs of the child, their family and victims of crime.

2. Scope of Policy

This policy sets out Hertfordshire Youth Justice Service's values on Discrimination, Equality, Inclusion and Disproportionality and how we aim to prevent and address any unlawful discrimination or other unfair treatment, whether intentional or unintentional, direct or indirect. YYS are committed to upholding Hertfordshire's internal values of connecting with our communities and service users, being the change and working in partnership for an inclusive Hertfordshire through a strengths-based, relational based lens.

It is the responsibility of everyone involved in YYS to ensure the principles of the Diversity and Inclusion Policy are understood and implemented. Hertfordshire YYS, as part of Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and as a multi-agency partnership, takes all claims of inappropriate behaviour, bullying, harassment and/or discrimination seriously. This includes appropriate challenge of any individual whose behaviour is considered to be creating unfair practice or outcome issues based upon diversity or difference.

3. Statement of Intent

Valuing diversity, reducing inequality, and ensuring all people are treated with dignity and respect to achieve positive change are fundamental beliefs for the YYS in Hertfordshire.

We make a firm commitment to developing and supporting our staff, so we have a focused, agile, and disciplined workforce, properly and appropriately skilled to support the delivery of the organisation's strategic priorities and objectives, enabling our staff to respond to challenges for all children we work with.

YYS is committed to building an environment that celebrates diversity and tackles all forms of discrimination. We will promote equality of opportunity for children, victims and our staff team and volunteer base, working to be a role model on equality issues.

The commitment outlined in this policy covers all aspects of the organisation and it is expected that all employees, secondees, agency workers and volunteers who work on behalf of, represent or engage with YJS will adhere to the principles of this policy.

Everyone involved in YJS plays a part in making sure all aspects of our work are inclusive and welcoming of everyone and that we work cooperatively and strategically to reduce barriers to desistance and positive outcomes, particularly where disproportionality has been identified during assessment, and measures can be taken to negate this as part of intervention planning.

Hertfordshire YJS is committed to ensuring that all people irrespective of their protected characteristics of age, disability, colour, race, ethnic origin, gender identity, gender expression, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy, nationality, religion, or sexual orientation have a genuine and equal opportunity to participate in YJS activities.

4. Legal Context

The Equality Act 2010 provides legal protection from discrimination in the workplace and wider society, including those accessing a public service such as the YJS. [Equality Act 2010 guidance](#), published by Government, gives an overview on who is protected from discrimination, the types of discrimination under the law and what action can be taken in instances of unfair discrimination.

5. Defining Discrimination

The Youth Justice Service recognises that discrimination can take many forms including verbal, physical and online abuse. It is necessary for people to be aware of the different types of discrimination and the impact their actions have on others.

- **Direct discrimination** is where a person is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic.
An example of direct discrimination would be a refusal to accept a child on to a sports programme or reparation activity based on their gender.
- **Discrimination by association** is direct discrimination against someone because they are associated with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.
An example would be a child refused bail because they have an association with a dual heritage individual.
- **Discrimination by perception** is direct discrimination against someone because the other person thinks they possess a particular protected characteristic.
An example would be a heterosexual man who is perceived to be gay or bisexual and is refused entry to certain place or activities or role.
- **Indirect discrimination** occurs where a provision, criterion or practice is applied such that it would be to the detriment of a considerably larger proportion of the relevant group to which the individual belongs than to others. This would not be objectively justifiable and would be to the individual's detriment.

An example of indirect discrimination would be requiring children on an intervention programme to quickly read and interpret a long piece of text that could put people with dyslexia at a disadvantage, or a job requiring people to be clean shaven (without appropriate justification) which can put some religious groups at a disadvantage.

- **Harassment** is defined as unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for that person, even if this effect was not intended by the person responsible for the conduct.
An example of harassment would be an unwelcome personal comment or invading a personal space.
- **Victimisation** is considered to take place where someone is treated less favourably than others because they have alleged or supported a complaint or grievance or have given evidence in relation to a complaint.
An example would be taking breach/ enforcement action against a child who challenges their YJS worker through a complaint.
- **Bullying** may be defined as behaviour which is offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting or an abuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate, or injure. Bullying is not limited to but can include racist, sexist, and homophobic / bi-phobic / transphobic language and / or abuse.
An example would be using a culturally offensive colloquialism about a service user's cultural background.

In addition, and central to YJ practice; is a zero-tolerance culture to racism within the service, equipping staff (from which ever multi agency partner they may be seconded) through training, supervision, and support. We do not expect global majority groups or those experiencing harm to address racism, we set expectations at service and leadership level regarding the culture and behaviours that is consistent with equality, diversity, and fair treatment for all. We will actively promote anti-racism in our work with our service users, colleagues and partners.

6. Rights of Service Users

The rights of all those who encounter our service regarding the implementation of this diversity policy are as follows:

- The right to be treated as an individual and with respect.
- The right to be provided with up-to-date information regarding the YJS, in a format which is accessible and translated into the appropriate language.
- The right to receive a relevant, accessible service that is free from discrimination.
- The right to have equal access to all appropriate services from the YJS and not to feel excluded because of age, disability, ethnic background, skin colour, language, faith, health, social and economic backgrounds, sexuality, or other prejudice.

7. Employment and Staff Development

Hertfordshire YJS will aim to ensure that diversity and equality of access underpin all aspects of employment policy and practice to ensure that people are appointed on merit and are fairly assessed on the basis of their skills, abilities and objective criteria related to the job.

It is the responsibility of Managers to:

- Implement and actively promote the YJS Diversity Policy regarding recruitment practices and staff development.
- Make every effort to recruit and retain a workforce, including volunteers, that reflects the diversity of our community.
- Support staff in increasing their understanding of diversity issues through regular staff development programmes.
- Ensure all staff undertake mandatory diversity and inclusion training and any additional training as required or when individual training need identified through performance & development process (appraisal), supervision, or other route. Mandatory corporate and Children's Services Diversity and Inclusion training must be undertaken as part of induction (includes Basic Autism Awareness and Introduction to Social Graces).
- Promote the career development of global majority groups and those who come from other disadvantaged communities and/or groups.
- Create a safe working environment where any form of unfair discrimination and harassment is dealt with quickly, appropriately, and effectively and where staff feel supported in challenging unfair discrimination and harassment.

8. Values and Expectations

As a multi-agency service, Hertfordshire YJS will:

- Aim to create an environment in which everyone (children, their families and carers, victims, volunteers, and staff members) feel respected and valued for their diversity and individuality they bring.
- Ensure children, their families and staff are treated fairly and with respect.
- Ensure all services provided are accessible by all; and negating/reducing any socio-economic barriers to engagement with the service, by identifying and implementing additional support where necessary.
- Dignity and respect are promoted, and all forms of discrimination and inappropriate behaviour are challenged and dealt with through the appropriate channels which could include disciplinary or enforcement channels.
- Help to create a work environment where colleagues feel fully supported to speak out about discriminatory and inappropriate behaviour they have witnessed or experienced.
- Not tolerate or allow to go unchallenged any form of discrimination, harassment and bullying by any individual towards other individuals whilst engaged in any YJS activities, including from child to child; through timely challenge and reporting/escalating where necessary.
- Continue to lead by example in the development, treatment and consideration of its service users, employees and volunteers and their diverse needs.
- Investigate complaints of discrimination on any grounds in line with Hertfordshire County Council's complaints procedure, alongside any seconded staff members' parent agency policies.

There is an expectation that any individual involved with Hertfordshire YJS, including those who advocate our work, to:

- Fully adopt and embrace the ethos of equity and diversity as outlined in this policy.
- Be respectful of all others and not discriminate, bully, harass or victimise anyone including but not limited to service users.
- Respect individual difference based on any characteristic or cultural factor.
- Where necessary explain the policy and its implications to others including children in language they understand.
- Be role models for everyone involved in YJS activities.

9. Delivery

Hertfordshire YJS aims to ensure that diversity and equality of access underpin all aspects of practice. It is the responsibility of all YJS staff and volunteers to:

- Ensure that they understand the aims and principles of the Hertfordshire Youth Justice Service Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- Ensure that they adopt the YJS vision of equality of opportunity and embrace the expectations of the Policy.
- Put this policy into practice in all areas of work in which they are engaged which involves being prepared to appropriately challenge comments and / or actions from colleagues which conflict with the YJS Diversity Policy.
- Act to tackle unfair discrimination by reporting any concerns to their manager, or another manager if not suitable to raise with direct line manager, so that issues can be discussed, problems addressed, and action can be taken to remedy the situation.
- Where identified, make suggestions to their manager / supervisor, ways in which equal opportunities can be improved and promoted.
- Escalate structural and strategic discriminatory barriers to achieving positive outcomes and diversity issues for individuals and groups via the Hertfordshire Youth Justice Management Board (HYJMB) directly to the Chair, El Mayhew (El.Mayhew@hertfordshire.gov.uk)
- Make all service users aware of the treatment they can expect under this Policy and advise people of their right to complain if they feel they have been discriminated against.
- YJS Management Team to ensure that teams are adapted to be culturally sensitive, respecting customs and religious practices which may conflict with normal office hours.
- YJS Management Team to develop and use consultation processes to establish the needs and satisfaction levels of disadvantaged groups.
- YJS Management Team to use recorded data on ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, and socioeconomic status to identify trends and patterns in offending, reoffending, types of order and compliance, to help improve access to the services and support available to children and their families.
- YJS Management Team to regularly review policies and procedures to ensure they are in line with best practice and all legal requirements.

Any employee, agency worker, seconded staff or volunteer who works on behalf of, represents or engages with YJS who displays any behaviour which is contrary to this policy. Hertfordshire County Council's [RISE values](#), [Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2024](#) and or [Diversity & Inclusion Workforce Strategy 2022](#), or its intent will be subjected to the appropriate disciplinary procedure.

The expectations and values considered in this policy are discussed with children and their families at the start of any involvement with the YJS, as part of discussions around expected standards of behaviour. Any incidences of discriminatory or inappropriate behaviour will be challenges and escalated as necessary.

Any individual may raise a complaint, and no employee or volunteer will be penalised for doing so unless it is without foundation and not made in good faith. To make a complaint, please visit: [Complain, compliment or comment about our services | Hertfordshire County Council](#)

10. Monitor and Review

Monitoring and reviewing Diversity, Inclusion and Disproportionality is considered an essential process for Hertfordshire YJS to identify patterns and highlight areas of concern in its practices or the practices of its partners.

Hertfordshire Youth Justice Service (YJS) and the Hertfordshire Youth Justice Management Board (HYJMB) commit to taking action to strengthen our understanding around potential bias and disproportionality and to identify any gaps in approaches to tackling disproportionality, within the Hertfordshire Youth Justice System.

Hertfordshire YJS will continue to work with all partner agencies, including Hertfordshire Constabulary and wider agencies/services working in Hertfordshire to identify, challenge and tackle disproportionality by:

- Establishing a Disproportionality Working Group under the HYJMB
- Developing the breadth of data monitoring disproportionality and overrepresentation of certain groups of children within the YJS.
- Presenting quarterly data for ongoing scrutiny by the Hertfordshire Youth Justice Management Board.
- Listening to the voices of children and families about their lived experiences.
- Considering and taking any appropriate action to address concerns which may arise further to the monitoring process, through direct approach to a single partner or via escalation to the HYJMB where multiagency or system issues are considered.

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years and more frequently, if required, in the event of changes to related legislation or practice.

11. Hertfordshire Youth Justice Management Board

The Hertfordshire Youth Justice Management Board will:

- Operate as a multi-agency partnership to actively promote this policy, and adhere to the principles herein, in its role as the governing body of the YJS.
- Actively work with the Head of Service to respond to unmet need in relation to service provision for disadvantaged groups.

- Ensure that the agencies represented on the YJS Management Board share a joint commitment to addressing diversity issues and discrimination within their own agency.
- Review this policy every two years and approve any updates.

12. Useful Information

Hertfordshire County Council have significant information, guidance, policies, training, and support for staff which can be found here: [Children's Services diversity and inclusion- Herts CC](#) (internal staff only)

Hate Crimes and Hate Incidents: [Herts Against Hate](#)