



Houghton Regis Helpers
07587 004514

Houghton Regis Helpers Equality and Diversity Policy

November 2023

1. **General Statement**

- 1.1 Houghton Regis Helpers good neighbourhood scheme is committed to achieving equal opportunities in the services it provides. We believe that equality for all is a basic human right and actively oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. We celebrate the diversity of our community and seek to reflect that diversity within our good neighbourhood scheme. In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 no user of Houghton Regis Helpers services or volunteer should receive less favourable treatment or be prevented from taking part in an activity based on a particular protected characteristic they may have including: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 1.2 As a provider of a service to the community, Houghton Regis Helpers accepts the responsibility to promote equal opportunities and challenge discrimination wherever it occurs. We will treat all people with dignity and respect, recognising the value of everyone. This document sets out the main consequences of this commitment and the action to be taken in order to achieve equal opportunities.
- 1.3 It is the responsibility of all volunteers and clients to ensure that no individual receives less favourable treatment than any other on the grounds stated in Para. 1.1 of this policy.
- 1.4 Houghton Regis Helpers recognises that some users of its services may, because of their past or present distress or medical condition, say or do things which would otherwise be unacceptable and incompatible with Houghton Regis Helpers Equality and Diversity Policy. Houghton Regis Helpers will do all it can to challenge such behaviour. In cases where intervention is possible a gentle approach will be adopted which aims to alter attitudes and behaviour while maintaining support for the distressed client. Volunteers will report such behaviours to the Officers of the group, who will investigate. If it is believed that the client lacks the mental capacity to change their behaviour and it is believed the client is unlikely to find support elsewhere, volunteers will be notified that there is potential for offensive behaviour or language being used and it will be their decision whether or not they are willing to support the client.
- 1.5 Occasionally a client may knowingly make comments that are discriminatory or abusive and are totally against the anti-discriminatory ethos of the group. In such situations volunteers must report immediately to the Officers of the group, who will investigate. In cases of extremely offensive behaviour or language Houghton Regis Helpers reserve the right to protect our volunteers by ceasing all further help to the resident forthwith. The client will receive written notification of the action taken.
- 1.6 The organising committee of Houghton Regis Helpers will review this policy biennially, or sooner if required within the law.

2 **Responsibility**

- 2.1 The organising committee of Houghton Regis Helpers has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy. However, all volunteers and clients have a duty as part of their

involvement with Houghton Regis Helpers to do everything they can to ensure fairness and that the policy works in practice.

- 2.2 Houghton Regis Helpers is committed to inclusive recruitment of volunteers and will strive to recruit volunteers to reflect the diversity of the community.
- 2.3 Houghton Regis Helpers will bring to the attention of all volunteers and clients the existence of this policy and will provide such guidance as is necessary to ensure that the policy is effective and that everyone is aware of it.
- 2.4 Those responsible for recruiting volunteers to work with Houghton Regis Helpers good neighbourhood scheme are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of Houghton Regis Helpers Equality and Diversity Policy and for ensuring that those volunteers adhere to it while working with Houghton Regis Helpers.
- 2.5 Every effort will be made to ensure that the services offered by Houghton Regis Helpers reflect the composition of the community it serves. Houghton Regis Helpers is committed to encouraging access from under-represented groups.
- 2.6 If any client or volunteer feels that they have been, or are being discriminated against, in any way, they are urged to pursue the matter with the officers of the committee.
- 2.7 All instances or complaints of discriminatory behaviour will be treated seriously.
- 2.8 Complaints or allegations of an unfounded or malicious nature will also be treated as serious.

3 Disabled Access

- 3.1 Houghton Regis Helpers will endeavour to ensure, as far as is practicable, that all the premises it uses have disabled access. When considering new premises, every effort will be made to ensure such premises are fully accessible.

4 Use of Language

- 4.1 Volunteers and clients should avoid and challenge the use of language which, in any way, may be regarded as discriminatory, particularly in relation to the protected characteristics listed below (Equality Act 2010):

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

- 4.2 Where the language used has a personal impact on others, and it has been made clear to the person concerned that their use of such language is unwelcome and/or offensive, appropriate action may be taken if they persist with it.

- 4.3 If a volunteer makes comments that are discriminatory or abusive or behaves in a way that is against the anti-discriminatory ethos of the group, either knowingly or unknowingly, an investigation regarding the offensive conduct will be carried out by Officers of Houghton Regis Helpers and action may be taken to terminate the volunteer's membership in accordance with the Constitution Section 5(d) In cases of extremely offensive behaviour or language the Officers of Houghton Regis Helpers reserve the right to protect our clients by terminating the volunteer's membership of the group with immediate effect. The volunteer will receive written notification of the decision taken.
- 4.4 All materials used or developed by Houghton Regis Helpers will be judged in the light of the promotion of equal opportunities, and those considered to be discriminatory will not be used.

5 Sexual Harassment


- 5.1 No volunteer or client should be subject to sexual harassment.
- 5.2 Unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature includes:
- verbal sexual abuse
 - unwelcome and inappropriate physical contact
 - repeated remarks which an individual finds offensive, humiliating or violates dignity
 - displaying or sharing of photos of a sexual nature in person, on phones, social media or through other communication methods such as email
- 5.3 If it has been made clear to the person concerned that their behaviour is unwelcome and they persist with it, then the client or volunteer who is the recipient of the behaviour will be entitled to make a formal complaint to the officers of the committee.

6 Equal Opportunities Monitoring

- 6.1 The organising committee will endeavor to monitor Houghton Regis Helpers equality and diversity in practice with regards to recruitment of volunteers and provision of services to clients.
- 6.2 Annual monitoring of the provision of services within the local diverse community will be carried out to ensure Houghton Regis Helpers are providing equal opportunities to both clients and volunteers.
- 6.3 Quarterly reports to BedsRCC will contribute to this annual monitoring.
- 6.4 Designated Equality & Diversity Officer is the Secretary

Houghton Regis Helpers committee is committed to reviewing this policy and our good practice biennially, or sooner if required within the law.

Chair's signature: (Vice-Chair)
Print Name
Adopted on: 17 November 2023
Review date: November 2025



ERIC GALLUCCI