Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy

Date last reviewed: October 2026 **Date for review: October 2027**

AFRIL is committed to encouraging equity, diversity and inclusion among our workforce, volunteers, and in all forms of service delivery, and eliminating unlawful discrimination.

This statement covers our equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) approach. We use the term 'equity' as opposed to 'equality' because we understand 'equality' to mean each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities. By contract 'equity' recognises that each person has different circumstances and allocates the resources and opportunities needed for each individual to reach an equal outcome. Definitions of terms used in this document:

'Equity' - our intention to work to ensure fairness so people have the resources and opportunities they need to reach equal outcomes; treating all people with compassion and without discrimination.

'**Diversity**' - our intention to recognise and value aspects of the differences between people when it is relevant to do so. These differences can include:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race and ethnicity (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin)
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- neurodiversity
- socio-economic background.

'**Inclusion**' - the importance of actively making sure people feel valued, respected and able to contribute fully within the organisation regardless of their background; the importance of ensuring services are delivered so that all people in our remit have opportunity to access.

This policy applies to:

- all AFRIL staff, volunteers and sessional workers employed by AFRIL irrespective of funding agent;
- all aspects of promotional, educational, and campaigning functions of AFRIL; and
- all members and affiliate organisations, and conveys an expectation on those who work with us.

The spirit and purpose of this policy will be incorporated into guidance for our service users who are expected to implement key principles and respect for the diversity and inclusion of others when accessing AFRIL services.

1 Declaration of intent

1.1 Action for Refugees in Lewisham (AFRIL) is committed to equity, fairness and respect for all people in, or applying to be in, our employment (temporary, part-time or full-time), volunteering for us, accessing our services, or otherwise working with us. We are committed to ensuring that we do not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics, namely:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin);
- religion or belief;
- sex; or
- sexual orientation.

We also work to ensure that no-one is disadvantaged or unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of:

- neurodiversity; or
- socio-economic background.

1.2 We oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination in relation to:

- pay and benefits;
- terms and conditions of employment;
- dealing with grievances and discipline;
- dismissal;
- redundancy;
- leave for parents or carers;
- requests for flexible working; and
- selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities

1.3 AFRIL aims to be an organisation which, to the benefit of our people, our service-users and our community, actively dismantles racism everywhere it manifests, whether inside our organisation or wider. We work to ensure that people of all ethnicities feel welcomed to work, volunteer or seek help, there is equal opportunity, and everyone is treated with dignity and respect. We reject all forms of racism and there is absolutely no place for it at AFRIL.

1.4 AFRIL's Board of Trustees will review the content and effectiveness of the policy annually. The Director is responsible for the policy's day to day implementation, and it is a requirement for all staff and volunteers to embrace this.

1.5 AFRIL will monitor and review the composition of its Board of Trustees with the aim of promoting a broad-based representation.

2 Recruitment of staff and volunteers

2.1 Attracting and retaining diverse talent is critical to success. We will invest effort in diverse routes into the organisation, promote inclusive recruitment processes, and communicate job or voluntary offerings across various channels. The recruitment process must incorporate equity, diversity, and inclusion standards, and we will review the process to prevent bias and structural barriers. Our ambition is for transparency and equity in access to opportunities.

2.2 For staff: A written job description and person specification shall be prepared in respect of every vacancy that arises and every new post that is created, and checked for EDI compliance and best practice. It shall be checked and agreed by the recruiting manager and Director for direct and indirect discrimination before the recruitment procedures commence. In order to support diverse recruitment, applicants should be made aware that life experience and voluntary work as well as paid work, and from any country, are valued. All jobs should be advertised in line with AFRIL's written recruitment policy.

2.3 For staff and volunteers: All interviews should be conducted by a panel of at least two representatives. We aim for all interview panels to be diverse and representative of the membership of the organisation. Members of staff can be involved at all stages of the selection process in an advisory role to achieve wider diversity.

2.4 For staff and volunteers: Short-listed applicants with a disability requiring adjustment will be invited to discuss their specific needs and requirements that will enable them to compete. AFRIL will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the specific needs of employees with a disability are met to support them to carry out their duties.

2.5 For staff and volunteers: To ensure parity, all candidates for a particular post will be asked the same questions and given the same tasks to complete, relevant to the role. During each interview, summary notes will be taken and at the end of the interview a form will be completed for each candidate, noting their response to the topics and themes raised. These will be reviewed at the end of the interview process by the panel to see that all candidates have been treated fairly and equally.

2.6 For staff and volunteers: no questions are permitted in interview that are intended, or could be construed as intended, to make a decision that could discriminate on the basis of any protected characteristic, or other basis included in this policy. It is principally the responsibility of the chair, but also of any member of the panel, to challenge if such questions are asked.

2.7 For staff and volunteers: An equality monitoring section should be included separately on the application form. The EDI policy and the purpose of monitoring should be clearly explained, and that it plays no part in the selection process itself.

3 Creating an inclusive working environment

3.1 We are committed to creating an inclusive working environment which prioritises AFRIL's culture, wellbeing, and psychological safety for staff and users. We are keen to create environments where our people feel safe, valued and work together to deliver AFRIL's mission. It is incumbent on all staff to work together to ensure a culture that is inclusive, safe, and accountable. We will act to model and communicate standards that foster an environment of trust and belonging within AFRIL and our services. We aim to have a workplace culture that is caring and empathetic to our colleagues' physical, emotional, and mental well-being – where staff feel valued and safe to be themselves in the workplace. We will ensure that our colleagues' psychological safety and well-being remain a priority. To perform at their best, staff should be supported to bring their authentic selves to work, and we will celebrate and embrace differences in pursuit of inclusion.

3.2 We believe in accountability so teams and individuals can take more ownership of their impact on others. This can be done using performance management, demonstrating our values and behaviours and calling out exclusionary behaviours.

3.3 All AFRIL's people – paid or volunteer - should have access to support. If someone feels isolated, provision should be made for support from other parts of AFRIL or from outside the organisation. Use of AFRIL's Employee Assistance Programme and group clinical supervision should be encouraged.

4 Training

4.1 New staff will be inducted into the staff development, training policy and EDI policy. Staff will be made aware of training opportunities available to them, and be positively encouraged to take them up. Reasonable facilities will be offered to staff to take study leave where the training is linked to their role at AFRIL.

5 Disciplinary and grievance

5.1 AFRIL aims to create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued. We also all have a responsibility to develop an environment where we empower, encourage individuals to speak out against misconduct and unacceptable behaviour.

5.2 This commitment includes training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the equality, diversity and inclusion policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

5.3 All staff should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, customers, suppliers and the public

5.4 AFRIL takes seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by employees, volunteers, service users, suppliers, visitors, and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities.

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

5.6 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 Implementation

6.1 Employment, recruitment and service delivery procedures and practices will be undertaken strictly in accordance with the following and all other relevant legislation:

- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Civil Partnership Act 2004
- The Gender Recognition Act 2004
- The Equality Act 2006
- The Equality Act 2010

6.2 In addition, the Equality and Human Rights Commission website may be referenced, to help with any queries: http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/

6.3 DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) Checks will only be requested when necessary. The guidance for whether the check is necessary are found on https://www.gov.uk/government/news/dbs-check-eligibility-guidance-for-the-charity-sector-and-overseas-aid-organisations

6.4 In order to implement this EDI policy, AFRIL accepts that it needs to ensure that all staff and volunteers involved in selection and recruitment within the organisation have received adequate and appropriate training in interview techniques, and have a full understanding of the principles set out in this EDI policy.

7 Equal opportunity in service delivery

7.1 AFRIL is committed to ensuring equality of access to all its services. The Board of Trustees will take action to provide genuine equality of opportunity and monitor the outcome. The Board of Trustees will aim to ensure that no sector of the refugee, asylum seeking, migrant or BAME community shall be denied access or receive poor service on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics.

7.2 The Director and Board of Trustees will aim to ensure that all AFRIL's services will be provided in line with this policy. In order to promote equality of access we aim to:

- develop a system for monitoring the profile of clients who access our service (e.g. age, gender, sexual orientation etc), should they agree to sharing this data. We will make it clear that it is not a requirement for them to share any personal data that they are not comfortable with;
- deliver services based on consultation with those who receive the services and ensure positive steps are taken to include excluded groups in decision making;
- ensure all services are flexible and responsive to the changing needs in the community;
- make information on services widely available and, where necessary, targeted to ensure maximum awareness of provisions;
- develop and maintain systems to audit and monitor service delivery and consumer satisfaction;
- ensure an accessible complaints procedure is available to help against discrimination in service allocation and delivery;
- develop positive action programmes to target the needs of usually excluded groups; and
- present AFRIL, in advertising and publicity, as an organisation committed to promoting equality of access to employment and services.

7.3 Organisational responsibility for implementation of the EDI policy lies ultimately with trustees. All staff have a duty to implement AFRIL's EDI policy on a day-to-day basis, and the Director will manage and oversee the development and implementation of equity, diversity and inclusion work and practice.

7.4 All staff have a duty to ensure our beneficiaries act in line with AFRIL's EDI policies so that, for example, clients are not permitted to refuse appointment(s) with a particular advisor on the basis of a protected characteristic. The differences between a client discriminating and a reasonable request based on cultural or case specific sensitivities will be explored and discussed with relevant staff and volunteers in training. Examples of legitimate requests that we would be keen to facilitate might include a female client not wanting a male caseworker because of religious considerations, or a client requesting someone who speaks their language where possible.

8 Review

8.1 AFRIL will monitor and review the effectiveness of this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy on an annual basis.

9 Information

9.1 This document shall be circulated to all employees and volunteers and will be available to job applicants on request.