



## Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy

Ascend Adventure is committed to equal opportunity and diversity and will provide a workplace free of discrimination and harassment. All individuals will be treated equally and their different skills, experience and abilities will be acknowledged and promoted. Ascend Adventure values the contribution of individuals irrespective of gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, religion or religious beliefs, age, trade union membership, disability or status as a part-time or fixed-term worker. Ascend Adventure promotes a culture that actively values difference.

This policy covers all of Ascend Adventure's employees and any other individual who may contact us, for example, volunteers, potential employees, contract workers, service users, external agencies and the general public.

### Legislation

Ascend Adventure has a legal responsibility to ensure that individuals are not discriminated against, directly or indirectly, or suffer harassment or victimisation on the grounds of their age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status including civil partnership, religion or belief, race, disability or trade union membership or status as a part-time or fixed-term worker. The law also protects ex-offenders from discrimination. This policy complies with current UK legislation and Codes of Practice on discrimination and harassment. This policy is in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

### Definitions

Protected Characteristics are those characteristics of people that are protected by legislation against discrimination, harassment or victimisation. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

### Discrimination

#### Types of discrimination:

Direct Discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have (see perception discrimination below), or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic (see discrimination by association below).

Discrimination by association is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic. It applies even if that person does not actually possess that characteristic.

Perception discrimination is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic.

Indirect Discrimination can occur when a condition, rule, policy or practice in the organisation that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic. Indirect discrimination can be justified if it can be shown that the organisation acted reasonably in managing the business i.e. that it is 'a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim'. A legitimate aim might be any lawful decision made

in running the organisation. Being proportionate means being fair and reasonable, including showing that 'less discriminatory' alternatives to any decision have been looked at.

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. Harassment applies to all protected characteristics except for pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnership.

## Responsibility

Every employee has a personal responsibility for the implementation of the policy. All employees have a personal responsibility to comply with this policy and to ensure the success of its practical application. This includes:

complying with this policy and promoting a harmonious environment;  
not discriminating in the course of employment against any individual;  
not encouraging other employees to discriminate; and  
reporting any discriminating action to the Directors.

## Application of these Principles to Employees

Ascend Adventure is committed to equal opportunity and diversity at every stage of the employment process. All recruitment and selection procedures will be designed in such a way that they ensure all candidates are treated equally. Selection will match the merits and abilities of the candidate against the requirements of the vacancy.

Job descriptions and person specifications will be based only on conditions objectively related to the requirements of the vacancy. Particular note should be given to indirect discrimination in this area.

Job advertisements will not be confined unjustifiably to those areas or publications that would exclude or disproportionately reduce the number of certain candidates.

Interviews and other forms of assessment will only contain questions and exercises on matters that are directly related to the job requirements. Candidates will be invited to inform the organisation of any disabilities they may have in order that the necessary arrangements can be made to ensure they are not prevented from performing to their full potential either during the selection process or job for which they are suitably qualified. Records of all the assessment criteria and the candidate assessment must be made at every stage of the selection process.

The same criteria as applied to recruitment and selection are applied to all employees/candidates when decisions on promotion and transfer are being taken.

## Terms and Conditions of Employment

The terms and conditions of employment, access to benefits and other facilities do not differentiate between employees either directly or indirectly, on grounds of age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status including civil partnership, religion or belief, race, disability or trade union membership or status as a part-time or fixed-term worker.

## Training and Development

Training and development helps develop employees to their full potential and any discrimination in this area will hamper Ascend Adventure's long term objectives. To avoid discrimination in the allocation of training and development such opportunities will be available for all employees on an equal basis. The prime consideration will be the training need of the individual to enable them to perform in their role.

## Performance Management

The performance and development of all employees is assessed against unbiased and justifiable criteria. Any poor performance issues will be handled objectively, according to the relevant disciplinary procedure.

## Termination of Employment

The selection criteria for termination of employment including dismissal, redundancy or retirement are not unlawfully discriminatory.

## Application of these Principles to Service Users

Ascend Adventure is committed to equal opportunity and diversity for their service users and will not discriminate or offer services less fairly on account of age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status including civil partnership, religion or belief, race, or disability. Where a service cannot be offered to all who wish to use it, the selection criteria will be fair and reasonable. Ascend Adventure is committed to reducing barriers to participation and reasonable adjustments will be made to services offered to ensure fair and equal opportunity to participate is open to all.

Ascend Adventure will monitor activities to ensure fair treatment and patterns of under-representation are identified. Every reasonable effort will be made to develop appropriate strategies to address these patterns of under-representation.

Ascend Adventure will continue to develop appropriate marketing strategies and ensure that publicity material, events and information are available to the widest possible range of clients, paying particular attention to language, wording, images, content and format.

## Disabled Employees

Employees who are disabled or become disabled in the course of their employment should inform Ascend Adventure. All employees will be asked to complete a 'Disability and Adjustments Form' both at the start of their employment and if their circumstances change. They may also wish to advise Ascend Adventure of any 'reasonable adjustments' to their employment or working conditions, which they consider to be necessary, or which they consider would assist them in the performance of their duties. Careful consideration will be given to any proposals of this nature and Ascend Adventure may need to consult with you and your doctor about this. If such adjustments are considered reasonable, having regard to the resources of Ascend Adventure, the adjustments will be made. There may, however, be circumstances where it will not be reasonable for Ascend Adventure to accommodate

these proposals and where less favourable treatment and/or a failure to make reasonable adjustments may be justified in accordance with statutory provisions.

### Complaints of Discrimination

Ascend Adventure will deal effectively with all complaints of discrimination. Any employee who believes that he or she has been treated unfairly within the scope of this policy should raise the matter with the Directors in writing. No individual will be penalised for raising such a grievance or reporting an act of discrimination unless it is untrue and made in bad faith. Ascend Adventure will deal with complaints from service users relating to this policy in accordance with its complaints procedures.

### Acts of Discrimination

Any employee who harasses or discriminates against another employee or candidate will be subject to disciplinary action, this includes any harassment or discriminatory comments posted on social media or internet sites. In serious cases, discriminatory behaviour may be deemed to constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in dismissal without notice.

### Policy Review

This policy was last reviewed on: 17th January 2021

Date of next review: 17th January 2023 or sooner in the event of new legislation.