

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy V 1.4

APPEER COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY (CIC)

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to affirm APPEER CIC's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in all aspects of our operations. It sets out the principles, responsibilities, and practices needed to create an environment that values and respects diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. We strive to be fully inclusive and do not discriminate based on race, disability, sex, gender identity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or any other protected characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

Scope of policy

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, volunteers, board members, and anyone engaged with APPEER CIC in any of our programmes, services, and activities.

We define EDI as:

- Equity:** The fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all individuals, while striving to identify and eliminate barriers.
- Diversity:** The presence of differences among individuals, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies.
- Inclusion:** The creation of environments in which individuals or groups feel welcomed, respected, supported, valued fostering a genuine sense of belonging

Our commitments

At APPEER, we are committed to creating a community where everyone feels valued, respected and included. We recognise that our work takes place within a diverse society, and we actively celebrate difference while challenging barriers to equality and equity and are committed to the following:

1. Equity and Fairness

Treating everyone with dignity, fairness and respect, ensuring equal access to opportunities and support.

2. Valuing Diversity

- Recognising and celebrating the diverse backgrounds, identities, and lived experiences of autistic girls and women, assigned female at birth, their families, and professionals.

- Acknowledging intersectionality, including the ways autism may be experienced alongside gender, race, culture, sexuality, disability, and other factors.

3. Inclusion in Practice

- Creating safe, accessible, and welcoming spaces – both online and offline – where people feel they belong.
- Using positive, respectful and inclusive language in all our communications
- Providing reasonable adjustments (RA) where necessary to remove barriers to participation.

4. Challenging Discrimination

- Having zero tolerance for discrimination, harassment, or bullying in any form. Further guidance can be found in our Anti-Harassment policy.
- Empowering staff, volunteers, and community members to speak up and challenge exclusionary or harmful behaviours.

We are committed to empowering staff, volunteers, and community members to speak up and challenge exclusionary or harmful behaviours in a safe and constructive way through the provision of:

Clear policies – including a Harassment Policy and Whistleblowing Policy to set expectations and provide protection.

Training and awareness – regular INSET sessions and learning opportunities to build confidence in recognising and addressing harmful behaviours.

Safe reporting mechanisms – including anonymous feedback channels and clear routes for raising concerns.

Culture of accountability – encouraging openness, listening without judgement, and taking action where needed.

5. Accessibility

- Ensuring our sessions, events, and resources are accessible to all participants, with adjustments made where needed.
- Continuously improving the accessibility of our venues, resources, and communications.
- Providing staff and volunteers with fair access and resources

6. Continuous Learning

We are committed to building a culture of ongoing learning and reflection, ensuring our practice is inclusive, responsive, and informed by lived experience.

Annual training and development – for staff and volunteers on equity, diversity, inclusion, and autism-informed practice.

Listening to lived experience – gathering feedback from autistic people, parents/carers, and professionals through anonymous surveys, coffee mornings, and feedback channels, with new focus groups being introduced.

Collaboration and external engagement – contributing to Local Authority forums and targeted strategic groups (e.g. the All-Age Autism Strategy) to share insights and shape wider provision.

Commitment to improvement – using feedback and learning to adapt our services, policies, and practices in meaningful ways.

6. Accountability and Transparency

- Embedding EDI into all policies, programmes, and decision-making.
- Reviewing our commitments regularly to ensure they remain meaningful and effective.

Responsibilities for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

The responsibility of upholding our commitments to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion lies with everyone connected to APPEER. Specific responsibilities include:

Directors	Ensuring compliance, oversight, and accountability for EDI across the organisation.
Managers	Embedding the policy into practice, supporting staff and volunteers, and addressing any issues that arise.
Staff and Volunteers	Modelling inclusive behaviours, treating all participants with respect, and upholding EDI in day-to-day work.
Everyone involved with APPEER	Sharing responsibility for challenging discrimination, promoting inclusion, and fostering a safe and welcoming environment

Practical Implementation of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion within APPEER CIC

We will put our EDI commitments into practice in the following ways:

1. Recruitment

Ensuring fair, transparent and accessible processes that welcome applications from diverse backgrounds.

- Using accessible application processes (clear language, flexible formats)
- Diverse recruitment panels where possible
- Commitment to fair shortlisting and unbiased decision-making.
- Ongoing monitoring and review – tracking each stage of recruitment to identify areas for improvement and ensure continuous fairness.

2. Training and Development

Providing ongoing development on EDI awareness and training and development opportunities

- Unconscious bias, and autism-informed approaches for staff, volunteers and directors

- Offering equal access to training and career development.

3. Inclusive Service Delivery

Embedding inclusive practice across all programmes, groups and events, with consideration of gender, culture, language, disability access and neurodivergence.

4. Effective Communication

Using respectful, person-centred and accessible language in all written, verbal and digital communication.

5. Review and monitoring

APPEER is committed to ensuring that this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy is a living document that guides our everyday practice. To achieve this, we will:

6. Regular Review

The policy will be formally reviewed at least every 12 months by the HR Manager, CEO and Directors, or sooner if there are changes in legislation, best practice, or organisational needs.

7. Accountability

The CEO and Trustees have overall responsibility for monitoring implementation, with managers ensuring day-to-day compliance.

8. Data and Evidence

Where appropriate and in line with data protection principles, we will collect and monitor diversity data relating to staff, volunteers and programme participants. This will help us identify under-representation and address barriers to inclusion.

9. Feedback

We will actively seek feedback from autistic girls and women, parents/carers, staff, volunteers, and partner organisations to evaluate the inclusivity of our services.

10. Adapting Practice

We will use the evidence and feedback gathered to update policies, improve training, and adapt services to better meet the needs of our community.

11. Transparency

Outcomes from monitoring and review processes will be shared with staff, volunteers, and (where appropriate) with participants and families, to ensure openness and trust.

12. Positive workplace culture

At APPEER, we are committed to fostering a workplace culture that reflects our values and supports the wellbeing of everyone connected to our organisation.

Respect, Belonging and Psychological Safety

We promote a culture where all staff, volunteers and participants feel respected, valued, and safe to express themselves without fear of judgement or reprisal.

Inclusive Everyday Practice

We embed inclusive approaches in daily working life, such as flexible working for carers, neurodiversity-friendly environments, and sensitivity to cultural or individual needs.

Zero Tolerance

We have zero tolerance for discrimination, bullying, harassment, or victimisation in any form. All concerns will be taken seriously and addressed promptly in line with our Complaints and Grievance Procedures.

Raising Concerns

If you have a concern regarding EDI, issues should initially be raised with the Business Manager who manages HR at Appeer who can provide support and advice and support the formal complaints procedure if necessary.

Complaints regarding

APPEER has a formal complaints procedure that can be used by anyone who has concerns about equality, discrimination, or inclusion issues within our activities or operations. For full details, please refer to our **Complaints Policy**.

Recording and Resolution

Incidents involving beneficiaries that have a discriminatory dimension will be logged and recorded. Staff will work with those involved to develop mutual understanding and resolve issues constructively.

If the concern involves the CEO, it may be raised with our Staffing & Governance Director (tamsin@appeer.org.uk).

Further Information

For any questions or clarifications about this policy, please contact Annaliese Boucher at annaliese@appeer.org.uk.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION POLICY Version No: 1.4	
Summary:	Our policy detailing how we support equality, diversity and inclusion within Appeer.
Policy Owner:	Annaliese Boucher
Author:	Annaliese Boucher
Target Audience:	Beneficiaries and Staff

Approved and Ratified By:	Tamsin O’Luanaigh
Version Date:	20 th August 2025
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Next Review Date:	9h September or earlier if changes in Programmes or legislation

Change Record				
Date	Author	Version	Page/s	Reason for Change
26 th May 2021	Jo Dilworth, CEO	1.1	Throughout	In-person Sessions starting and key changes needed
1 st December 2021	Jo Dilworth, CEO	1.2	Throughout	Evolution of women’s and teen Programmes and changes in admissions process
20 th March 2024	Jo Dilworth, CEO	1.3	Throughout	Changes in role
20 th August 2025	Annaliese Boucher, Business Manager	1.4	Throughout	Wording and clarifications