

## ADMISSIONS POLICY (v1.5)

### APPEER COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY (CIC)

THIS POLICY MUST BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH ALL APPEER POLICIES, WHICH ARE AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE. IF YOU CANNOT ACCESS OUR WEBSITE, PLEASE TELEPHONE US ON 07861 696542 OR EMAIL OR EMAIL [CLAIRE@APPEER.ORG.UK](mailto:CLAIRE@APPEER.ORG.UK) TO REQUEST COPIES TO BE SENT TO YOU. KEY POLICIES RELEVANT TO ADMISSIONS ARE:

1. GENERAL TERMS & CONDITIONS
2. ATTENDANCE, ARRIVAL AND COLLECTION POLICY
3. SAFEGUARDING POLICY
4. HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY
5. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY
6. GDPR POLICY

In this policy, the following definitions apply:

"Appeer"	Appeer Community Interest Company ("We, our, us")
"Session"	An activity Session, talk or other event, run either by Appeer or a third-party service provider contracted by Appeer, whether one-off or as part of a Programme
"Online Session"	Activity Sessions, talks or group meetings utilising the Zoom or other remote online meeting platform, either delivered by Appeer or a third party service provider contracted by Appeer.
"Programme"	A package of Activity Sessions delivered during a set period (including online Sessions), taking place at predetermined times and locations, and run either by Appeer or a third-party service provider contracted by Appeer.
"Participant" and "Adult Participant"	A person registered with Appeer and/or who has, is or will attend an Appeer Session, talk or other event
"Representative"	A parent or carer (legal guardian) of the Participant

### POLICY STATEMENT

Autistic girls and women sometimes struggle to access large mainstream social activity groups due to their anxiety or preferences and/or because they feel uncomfortable in autistic-specific groups which are male dominated. Appeer aims to fill this gap, providing autistic girls and women with an authentic peer group with whom they can connect, enjoy activities, improve their wellbeing and develop life and work skills. We also seek to provide an opportunity for their parents and carers to connect with their peers.

It is Appeer's policy, and our legal obligation under the Equality Act 2010, not to exclude any eligible participant due to specific needs and/or medical conditions if we can meet their needs and fulfil our duty of care to them and the other participants. To this end, Appeer will implement reasonable accommodations for disabled Participants who meet our Admissions criteria.

In pursuit of the goals above, this policy aims to provide clarity about admissions to Appeer Sessions and the application process.

## **ADMISSIONS CRITERIA**

In order to provide appropriate peer support and to meet our duty of care to all participants, we can only admit potential participants who sit within our target beneficiary group, whom we are able to support according to the scope of our expertise and resources and who will benefit in the ways outlined above. The profiles and needs of each child vary, so decisions about whether applicants can be admitted to Appeer Sessions are made on a case-by-case basis according to the criteria below and the level of support required. Potential Participants or their Representatives should read Appeer's Admissions Policy and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy prior to applying for a place.

This admissions process will be applied in the best interests of the autistic girl or woman concerned, their family and the wider cohort.

Appeer is able to accept applications from those who meet all of the following criteria:

- have a diagnosis of autism or are actively seeking a diagnosis; and
- reside in, or locally, to Surrey; and
- meet the age criteria for the specific Session or programme; and
- who consistently identify as a girl or woman (she/her) or who were socialised as females and/or were assigned female at birth who may be gender questioning and/or who may identify as non-binary; and
- are able to access the relevant Session or programme without 1:1 support and with a reasonable degree of independence; and
- are likely to benefit from Appeer activities and the prospective peer group; and
- wish to attend themselves.

Where we are unable to offer a place within Appeer services, we endeavour to signpost families to other services.

## **ADMISSIONS FOR AUTISTIC YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER AGE 18**

### **Stage One: Initial Application**

Parents/carers of eligible autistic girls who would like to apply for a place on an Appeer service must complete an Appeer Sign Up Form (at [www.appeer.org.uk/new-joiners](http://www.appeer.org.uk/new-joiners)) if places are available before booking their first Session or event.

It is the responsibility of the Representative to give full and accurate information about the applicant, including any allergies, dietary needs, medical conditions, social, emotional and mental health challenges or risks, other risk factors and special educational needs or disabilities, when completing the Application Form before attending any Sessions. We strongly recommend that families read the Appeer Admissions criteria (shown above) before completing and submitting this form.

The CEO, Engagement Director or relevant Programme Manager will then arrange an initial chat by telephone or video call with the Representative to clarify any details, answer questions, discuss the suitability of Appeer services for the applicant and assess whether and how Appeer can make reasonable adjustments to accommodate any additional needs disclosed. This will take place when there is capacity within the chosen programme.

An admissions decision (Stage Three) may be made at this point, or the applicant may be invited to attend a trial Session (Stage Two).

### **Stage Two: Trial Session**

Eligible applicants' first Session will be considered a trial Session, to enable them to experience an Appeer Session and what it offers, and for Appeer staff to assess our capacity to support ongoing attendance.

Similarly, because our programmes can vary in terms of aims, objectives, activities and cohort, the first Session of any new programme an eligible applicant attends will be considered a trial Session.

Appeer will make all reasonable adjustments possible to ensure that a disabled girl is not placed at a disadvantage to her peers within the Session. If the family has any concerns or questions prior to the trial Session, they should contact Appeer in good time beforehand.

### **Stage Three: Admission Decision**

Based on the information collected at Stage One and/or Stage Two, Appeer will decide whether the applicant meets our Admissions criteria and we can meet their needs and therefore admit them to ongoing Sessions.

This may be communicated to the Representative of the applicant at any stage, and, as support needs can change, admissions eligibility may be reassessed at any time during their engagement with us.

Appeer may also terminate the application process at any stage, declining admission to a participant if not enough information has been provided to determine eligibility.

If it is determined that Appeer services are not suitable for a potential participant, we will explain the outcome in writing, and in some cases via phone call to the Representative. If circumstances subsequently change substantially, applicants are welcome to re-apply via the Appeer applications process in place at that time.

## **ADMISSIONS FOR AUTISTIC WOMEN**

The admissions process for Autistic Women is the same as for Autistic Young People Under Age 18 outlined above but the terms "Representative" or "girl" are substituted with "applicant". In most circumstances, it is expected that autistic women will make their own applications and contact details should be those of the applicant and not a Representative. However, should someone else make an application for them, e.g., a Representative or a support worker, this must be with the consent and involvement of the applicant.

## **ADMISSIONS FOR REPRESENTATIVES OF AUTISTIC GIRLS AND WOMEN**

Appeer's events for Representatives are open to anyone supporting autistic girls and women, without requiring an application process.

Participation in Representative support Sessions held alongside girls' and teens' Sessions are open to the Representatives of the girls attending those Sessions only.

We are committed to making reasonable adjustments for attendees. Please contact [claire@appeer.org.uk](mailto:claire@appeer.org.uk) if you require adjustments.

## **ADMISSIONS TO EXTENDED PROGRAMMES**

Admissions for extended programmes like Teens Exploring Work and The Young Autistic Women's Group follow the same stages as above but may have additional admissions criteria and require

additional information. Full details can be found when these programmes are advertised on our website; contact [claire@appeer.org.uk](mailto:claire@appeer.org.uk) for more details.

Admissions for termly Weekday Groups for girls aged 10-18 also follow the same stages as above for **family funded places**, but some additional assessments may be put in place for young people who are new to Appeer. Full details can be found on the Weekday section on our website; contact [cathryn@appeer.org.uk](mailto:cathryn@appeer.org.uk) for more details.

Admissions for termly Weekday Groups for girls aged 10-18 for **local authority, school or other agency funded places** additionally require professionals to complete a professional referral form if the family are new to Appeer and some additional assessments may be put in place for young people who are new to Appeer. Full details can be found on the Weekday section of our website; contact [cathryn@appeer.org.uk](mailto:cathryn@appeer.org.uk) for more details.

## COMPLAINTS

The admissions process is designed to support both applicants and existing participants, but it is recognised that decisions may sometimes be disappointing. If Representatives wish to appeal or make a complaint about the outcome they should do so in writing to the Engagement Director, Cathryn Jagger ([cathryn@appeer.org.uk](mailto:cathryn@appeer.org.uk)) and CEO, Jo Dilworth ([jo@appeer.org.uk](mailto:jo@appeer.org.uk)) within one calendar month.

In the event that you are not satisfied that the process was handled appropriately, contact Paige Sinkler [paige@appeer.org.uk](mailto:paige@appeer.org.uk) who will arrange for another Director to reconsider the management of the complaint and provide a final decision.

## VARIATIONS

Appeer reserves the right to unilaterally vary this policy from time to time. Any request to amend or vary this policy will require the written consent of Appeer.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have any questions or concerns about this policy, contact the CEO, Jo Dilworth ([jo@appeer.org.uk](mailto:jo@appeer.org.uk)).

ADMISSIONS POLICY Version No: 1.5				
Summary:		Our policy to clarify our admissions process for families who are considering applying for Appeer Sessions and for staff involved. We strongly recommend that every family reads this document so they are fully aware of the admissions process and what Appeer can and cannot provide, so they can make a fully informed decision when applying.		
Policy Owner:		Jo Dilworth		
Author:		Jo Dilworth		
Target Audience:		Participants, potential Participants and their Representatives, Staff and Volunteers		
Approved and Ratified By:		Cathryn Jagger		
Version Date:		19th March 2024		
Date of issue:		20th March 2024		
Next Review Date:		20th March 2025 or earlier if changes in programmes or legislation.		
Change Record				
Date	Author	Version	Page/s	Reason for Change
10 June 2021	Jo Dilworth, CEO	1.1	Changes throughout the document to reflect restarting of in-person Sessions.	To accommodate restart of in-person Sessions.

1 December 2021	Jo Dilworth, CEO	1.2	Throughout	To accommodate new teen groups and changes to the admissions process
9 September 2022	Jo Dilworth, Co-CEO Paige Sinkler, Co-CEO	1.3	Throughout	In response to solicitor review and for consistency with other policies, procedures and General Terms & conditions
15 <sup>th</sup> October 2023	Jo Dilworth, Co-CEO	1.4	Throughout	Annual review of policy
19 <sup>th</sup> March 2024	Jo Dilworth, CEO	1.5	Throughout	Amendments due to changes in role