OVERCOMING MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS  
(OMS) 

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY
1. Context

Overcoming MS (OMS) enables people with MS to transform their lives by actively championing the evidence-based OMS recovery programme and its ability to make a positive impact.

We recognise that to fulfil our mission and be successful we need to be able to respond to the diverse needs and expectations of our community and work effectively with all of our partners and stakeholders. We also recognise that in pursuit of our goals we must adhere to and champion our values, being:

- Evidence-based
- Empowering
- Community-focused
- Caring
- Inclusive
- Collaborative

We are committed to developing a culture and working practices in which equality, diversity, inclusion and fairness for all are integral to everything we do.

2. Policy statement

OMS is committed to preventing any form of discrimination and inequality in the workplace, across all of our activities, and to being compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and any other relevant legislation. This policy sets out how our organisation will promote equal opportunity and prevent all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

The aims of the policy are, to:

- create a positive culture throughout OMS, where diversity, inclusion and respect are at the core of all our activities.
- create an inclusive environment in which individual differences and the contributions of our community members, employees, trustees and volunteers are recognised and valued.
- ensure staff, volunteers and trustees are engaged with the development and implementation of this policy.
- encourage positive action to overcome disadvantage and discrimination wherever we witness it.
- ensure equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is promoted through our work, both internally and externally.
- create a working environment that promotes dignity and respect for all.
- implement inclusive recruitment practices.
- regularly review our support and information offer to ensure it is accessible, fair and appropriate to all of our key stakeholder groups.

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• provide relevant information and training to employees, trustees and volunteers to ensure that they are fully aware of EDI issues and their responsibilities relating to these areas
• embed EDI into our policies, procedures and everyday activities.

3. Legal requirements
OMS will adhere to all relevant legislation in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion, which aims to protect individuals against all forms of discrimination because of a particular protected characteristic, including:

• Equality Act 2010
• Employment Rights Act 1996
• Part time working regulations 2000
• Rehabilitation of Offenders Act
• Equal Pay Act 1970

4. Policy scope
This policy applies to all employees, everyone working on behalf of OMS as well as volunteers and Trustees.

5. Equal opportunities
OMS is committed to equal opportunities in employment and in all of our activities. We will take every reasonable step to ensure that no person working for the organisation or seeking employment with us, or anyone approaching us for information or support will receive less favourable treatment or will be disadvantaged by requirements or conditions that cannot be shown to be justifiable on the grounds of their age, disability (including mental health), gender, gender reassignment, ethnicity, faith/religion, sexual orientation, marital/civil partnership, socio economic status, family status or trade union membership.

Recruitment and selection criteria and procedures will be regularly reviewed to ensure that individuals are selected and treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities.

6. Roles and responsibilities
All staff, volunteers and trustees must adhere to this policy. The CEO and the Chair of the Board of Trustees are responsible for ensuring the policy is implemented.

6.1 The CEO has responsibility to:

• set a positive example by ensuring that their actions and behaviours promote EDI.
• stop inappropriate behaviour as soon as they become aware of it.

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• support and implement action that OMS takes to improve diversity, inclusion and equal opportunities, where that action has been agreed as policy.
• encourage employees and volunteers to maximise their contribution to the work of OMS and support them to reach their full potential.
• provide appropriate learning opportunities to staff and volunteers in order to put the EDI policy into practice.
• ensure staff and volunteers are aware of and carry out their responsibilities under the law and this policy.
• ensure OMS strategic and operational policy framework is compliant with all relevant EDI legislation.

6.2 **Employees** are responsible for:

• acting in ways that respect and value the diversity of others.
• challenging and reporting any behaviour that could be interpreted as discriminatory.
• understanding what is expected of them in terms of their performance, their behaviour and their conduct towards others.
• setting a positive example at all times.
• challenging any behaviour that could be interpreted as unfair discrimination and reporting appropriately.

6.3 **Volunteers** have a duty to:

• act in ways that respect and value the diversity of others.
• attend appropriate training arranged by OMS regarding EDI issues, as appropriate.
• not discriminate against anyone accessing our information, support and community engagement programmes or other members of the organisation
• challenge any behaviour that could be interpreted as unfair discrimination and reporting appropriately.

6.4 **Trustees** have a duty to:

• act in ways that respect and value the diversity of others.
• attend appropriate training arranged by OMS regarding EDI issues, as appropriate.
• challenge any behaviour that could be interpreted as unfair discrimination
• ensure all strategic decisions taken are compliant with any relevant EDI legislation.

7 Monitoring and review

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OMS currently does not routinely collect and monitor EDI data on people with MS or their families reaching out to us or interacting with our information and support initiatives.

We may capture some information on individual’s age, diagnosis, gender and geography if they willingly offer this to us. This information is then securely stored within our CRM system Dynamics.

If any specific information and/or support need gets highlighted to us by a person with MS, we will assess it and make every reasonable effort to meet that need.

As the organisation grows and develops, we will review our information capture and monitoring needs and respond accordingly.

OMS EDI policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if triggered by an incident or change in legislation.

8 Key definitions

Direct discrimination

Occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have had, or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic.

Discrimination by association

This is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.

Perception discrimination

This is direct discrimination against someone because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic, even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic.

Indirect discrimination

Can apply if you have a condition, rule, policy or even a practice that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic. Can be justified if you can show it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate business aim.

Harassment

“Unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose of violating an individual’s dignity or creating and intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the individual.” Employees can now complain about behaviour they find
offensive even if it is not directed at them, and need not possess a relevant characteristic themselves. Also protected from harassment because of perception and association.

Third party harassment

Employers are potentially liable for harassment of your employees by people who are not employees of the organisation, such as people accessing services. You will only be liable when harassment has occurred on at least 2 previous occasions, you are aware it has taken place and have not taken reasonable steps to prevent it from happening.

Victimisation

Occurs where an employee is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act, or because they are suspected of doing so. An employee is not protected if they have maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint. There is no longer a need to compare treatment of a complainant with that of a person who has not made or supported a complaint.
### OMS EDI Policy

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