

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Version	Author / Owner	Approved By	Date Approved	Next Review Due
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The Somerville

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Organisation: The Somerville

Policy owner: CEO

Approved by: Board of Trustees

Date approved: 1st March 2026

Review date: 1st March 2027

1. Purpose of this policy

Somerville is committed to creating a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment where all children, young people, families, staff, volunteers, trustees, partners and visitors are treated with dignity, fairness and respect.

We recognise that young people and communities may experience discrimination, exclusion or disadvantage because of who they are, where they live, their background, their identity, their needs or their life experiences. As a youth-led adventure playground and community space, Somerville has a responsibility to actively challenge discrimination and prejudice and to build a culture where everyone feels they belong.

This policy explains how Somerville promotes equality, diversity and inclusion across our programmes, staffing, governance, recruitment, premises, partnerships and day-to-day practice.

2. Our commitment

Somerville will:

- treat all people fairly, respectfully and with dignity;
- challenge discrimination, prejudice, bullying, harassment and victimisation;
- promote inclusive practice across all activities and services;
- listen to young people, families, staff and volunteers about barriers they may face;
- make reasonable adjustments wherever possible so that people can take part fully;
- ensure staff, volunteers and trustees understand their responsibilities under this policy;
- promote equality and fairness in recruitment, volunteering and governance;
- monitor who accesses our provision and identify where we may need to improve inclusion;
- take concerns, complaints and grievances about discrimination seriously.

Somerville will not tolerate discrimination, harassment, bullying, intimidation or victimisation by staff, volunteers, trustees, young people, families, visitors, partners or contractors.

This commitment applies to all aspects of employment and engagement with Somerville, including:

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

All staff and volunteers should understand that they, as well as Somerville, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation or unlawful discrimination carried out in the course of their work, against colleagues, young people, families, visitors, partners or others.

3. Legal framework

This policy is informed by the Equality Act 2010, which protects people from discrimination in relation to the following nine protected characteristics:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

Somerville recognises that people may experience discrimination because of one protected characteristic or because of a combination of characteristics and life circumstances.

4. What we mean by equality, diversity and inclusion

Equality means making sure people are treated fairly and have access to opportunities, support and services.

Diversity means recognising, respecting and valuing the different backgrounds, identities, experiences, cultures, abilities and perspectives that people bring.

Inclusion means actively creating an environment where people feel welcomed, respected, heard and able to participate fully.

At Somerville, inclusion is not only about access to the building or activities. It is about culture, relationships, communication, youth voice, safeguarding, staffing, leadership and how decisions are made.

5. Types of discrimination and unacceptable behaviour

Somerville recognises the following forms of discrimination and harmful behaviour:

1. **Direct discrimination**
Treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic.
2. **Indirect discrimination**
Having a rule, practice or arrangement that may appear neutral but disadvantages a group of people with a protected characteristic.
3. **Discrimination by association**
Treating someone unfairly because they are connected to someone with a protected characteristic.
4. **Discrimination by perception**
Treating someone unfairly because they are believed to have a protected characteristic, whether or not this is true.
5. **Harassment**
Unwanted behaviour linked to a protected characteristic that violates someone's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment
6. **Victimisation**
Treating someone badly because they have raised a concern, made a complaint, supported someone else to complain, or challenged discrimination.
7. **Bullying and prejudice-based behaviour**
Repeated or serious behaviour that targets, excludes, humiliates or harms someone because of their identity, background, ability, appearance, beliefs or circumstances.

Examples may include racist, sexist, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, disablist, faith-based or class-based comments, jokes, assumptions, exclusion, stereotyping, name-calling, online abuse or unequal treatment.

Sexual harassment may amount to both an employment matter and a criminal matter, such as in cases involving sexual assault. Harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, which is not limited to circumstances relating to a protected characteristic, is also a criminal offence.

6. Responsibilities

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for:

- ensuring Somerville meets its legal and charitable responsibilities;
- approving and reviewing this policy;
- ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion are considered in governance, strategy, risk and decision-making;
- holding the CEO accountable for implementing this policy.

CEO

The CEO is responsible for:

- leading the implementation of this policy;
- ensuring staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities;
- ensuring EDI is included in induction, supervision, staff development and policy review;
- responding to concerns, complaints and grievances linked to discrimination;
- reporting significant EDI issues to trustees where appropriate;
- ensuring equality monitoring and learning informs organisational development.

Staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers are responsible for:

1. treating everyone with dignity and respect;
2. modelling inclusive and anti-discriminatory practice;
3. challenging discriminatory behaviour, language or exclusion;
4. reporting concerns in line with Somerville's procedures;
5. taking part in relevant training;
6. adapting their practice to support different needs wherever possible.

Young people, families, visitors and partners

Everyone using Somerville is expected to:

1. respect the rights, dignity and safety of others;
2. avoid discriminatory language, behaviour or exclusion;
3. raise concerns if they experience or witness unfair treatment.

7. Inclusive youth work and adventure play practice

Somerville will promote inclusion by:

1. creating a welcoming environment for young people from different backgrounds, identities, cultures, abilities and experiences;
2. listening to young people about what makes them feel safe, included and respected;
3. involving young people in shaping activities, programmes and decisions;
4. recognising different communication styles, confidence levels and support needs;
5. offering a mix of activities so that young people can participate in different ways;
6. making reasonable adjustments for young people with additional needs or disabilities;
7. using reflective practice and debriefs to identify barriers, concerns and learning;
8. challenging discriminatory language or behaviour as part of our safeguarding and youth work practice;
9. recognising that some young people may have experienced racism, poverty, trauma, exclusion, special educational needs, disability, mental health challenges or other barriers.

Somerville will aim to balance open-access adventure play with thoughtful support, so that young people can take appropriate risks, build confidence and feel a sense of ownership and belonging.

8. Accessibility and reasonable adjustments

Somerville will take practical steps to make its provision, premises, activities and communications accessible to young people and families wherever possible. We will consider premises, facilities, communication methods and potential barriers for different groups of young people.

This may include:

1. adapting activities so young people with different physical, sensory, emotional, cognitive or communication needs can participate;
2. considering access needs when planning trips, events, workshops and sessions;
3. offering information in simpler language or alternative formats where needed;
4. speaking with young people and families about support needs;
5. reviewing physical access barriers across the site;
6. considering sensory needs, quiet space, emotional regulation and communication needs;
7. seeking advice or specialist support where required;
8. including accessibility in risk assessments and programme planning.

Where Somerville cannot immediately remove a barrier, we will be honest about this, consider reasonable alternatives, and use the learning to inform future improvements and fundraising priorities.

9. Recruitment, volunteering and selection

Somerville is committed to fair and inclusive recruitment. Somerville will:

1. use clear job descriptions and person specifications;
2. avoid unnecessary requirements that may exclude people unfairly;
3. advertise roles through a range of channels where possible;
4. use inclusive and accessible language;
5. shortlist against agreed criteria;
6. ask candidates consistent and relevant questions;
7. make reasonable adjustments for candidates who request them;
8. ensure safer recruitment processes are followed for roles working with children and young people;
9. consider diversity, lived experience and local knowledge as strengths where relevant to the role;
10. ensure decisions are based on skills, experience, values and suitability for the role.

Somerville will not discriminate unlawfully in recruitment, selection, volunteering, promotion, training, supervision, pay or access to opportunities.

Decisions about staffing, volunteering and progression will be made on merit, based on skills, experience, values and suitability for the role, other than in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act 2010.

The CEO is responsible for overseeing that recruitment and selection practice matches this policy – including that job adverts use inclusive, accessible language, and that shortlisting and interview decisions are applied consistently against agreed criteria. Any concerns about recruitment practice should be raised with the CEO or, where the concern relates to the CEO, with the Chair of Trustees.

10. Staff and volunteer training

Somerville will ensure staff and volunteers receive information and training about equality, diversity, inclusion and their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

Somerville will include EDI within:

8. staff and volunteer induction;
9. safeguarding training and discussions;
10. supervision and one-to-one meetings;
11. team meetings and reflective practice;
12. ongoing staff development;
13. trustee induction where relevant.

Training will include:

1. the Equality Act 2010 and protected characteristics;
2. anti-discriminatory practice;
3. unconscious bias;
4. inclusive communication;
5. disability awareness and reasonable adjustments;
6. cultural awareness and anti-racism;
7. challenging discriminatory language and behaviour;
8. creating inclusive environments for children and young people.

Somerville will keep a record of staff and volunteer training.

11. Complaints, grievances and concerns

Somerville takes concerns about discrimination, harassment, bullying, exclusion or unfair treatment seriously.

Young people, parents/carers, staff, volunteers, trustees, visitors or partners can raise concerns through:

1. speaking to the CEO or another trusted senior member of staff;
2. using Somerville's Complaints Procedure;
3. using Somerville's Staff Grievance Procedure, where the concern relates to employment;
4. using Somerville's Whistleblowing Procedure, where there is a serious concern about wrongdoing, unsafe practice or organisational failure;
5. using Somerville's Anti-Bullying Policy, where a young person experiences prejudice-based bullying from another young person, such as racist, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, disablist or faith-based bullying;
6. using Somerville's Safeguarding and Child Protection procedures, where the concern relates to the safety or welfare of a child or young person.

Concerns will be handled sensitively, fairly and as confidentially as possible. Somerville will not victimise anyone for raising a concern in good faith or supporting someone else to do so.

Where concerns relate to safeguarding, Somerville's safeguarding procedures will take priority.

Using Somerville's internal procedures does not affect a member of staff's right to make a claim to an employment tribunal within 3 months of the alleged discrimination.

Contact details for raising a concern:

7. General/office: office@somerville-online.org.uk, 0207 732 1403, The Somerville, 260 Queen's Rd, London SE14 5JN;
8. CEO: Kirsty Collander-Brown – kirsty.cb@somerville-online.org.uk;
9. Chair of Trustees (for concerns about the CEO or senior leadership): Jacqui Shimidzu – jacqui@somerville-online.org.uk.

Full details of how concerns are handled, including timescales and the option to raise a concern anonymously, are set out in Somerville's Complaints Procedure, Staff Grievance and Disciplinary Procedure, and Whistleblowing Procedure.

12. Communication and awareness

Somerville will make staff, volunteers, trustees and relevant stakeholders aware of this policy by:

1. including it in induction materials;
2. making it available in the staff policy folder/shared drive;
3. discussing key expectations in team meetings and supervision;
4. referring to it in recruitment, onboarding and volunteer processes;
5. sharing relevant expectations with young people and families in accessible ways;
6. displaying simple messages about respect, inclusion and reporting concerns within the building where appropriate.

Somerville will aim to communicate this policy in language that is understandable and relevant to young people.

13. Monitoring equality and inclusion

Somerville will monitor equality and inclusion in proportionate and appropriate ways. This may include:

1. collecting equalities information through membership forms where appropriate;
2. monitoring who attends sessions and who may be under-represented;
3. reviewing feedback from young people, families, staff, volunteers and partners;
4. recording and reviewing complaints, grievances, safeguarding concerns or incidents involving discrimination;
5. using staff debriefs and supervision to identify inclusion issues;
6. reviewing recruitment processes and outcomes where possible;
7. considering EDI as part of programme planning, risk assessment and evaluation.

Somerville will use this information to improve practice, identify barriers and strengthen access, safety and belonging.

14. Breaches of this policy

Breaches of this policy may be addressed through:

1. informal discussion, guidance or restorative conversation;
2. supervision, training or additional support;
3. staff disciplinary procedures;
4. volunteer management procedures;
5. complaints procedures;
6. safeguarding procedures;
7. ending access to Somerville's provision in serious cases where someone poses a risk to others.

Somerville will respond proportionately, taking account of the seriousness of the concern, the needs of those affected, safeguarding responsibilities and the need to maintain a safe and inclusive environment.

For staff, particularly serious breaches of this policy may amount to gross misconduct under Somerville's disciplinary procedure and could lead to dismissal without notice.

15. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the CEO and Board of Trustees, or sooner if:

1. there are changes in legislation or guidance;
2. a serious incident, complaint or grievance highlights a need for review;
3. young people, families, staff, volunteers or trustees identify barriers or gaps;
4. Somerville's activities, staffing or premises change significantly.

The CEO is responsible for ensuring the policy is reviewed and updated. The Board of Trustees is responsible for approving the policy.

16. Declaration

This policy has been approved by the Board of Trustees and will be implemented across Somerville's work with children, young people, families, staff, volunteers, trustees, partners and visitors. Somerville is committed to upholding the principles set out in this policy and reviewing it annually, or sooner if required.

This policy is fully supported by senior management and has been developed with reference to staff feedback [insert details of any staff or representative consultation as appropriate].

Signed on behalf of the Board of Trustees:

Name: Jacqui Shimidzu

Role: Chair of the Board

Signature:

Date: 1st March 2026

Signed by CEO:

Name: Kirsty Collander-Brown

Signature:

Date: 1st March 2026