

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION



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RFA Beauty Foundation Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Introduction

RFA Beauty Foundation is a charity based in Stoke-on-Trent dedicated to supporting vulnerable mothers (especially single mothers and those with infants) who are facing hardship. Our beneficiaries include women from all walks of life – young parents, refugees and asylum-seekers, disabled parents, and those experiencing poverty or social isolation . Many of the families we assist have no recourse to public funds due to their immigration status, leaving them without access to mainstream support . This policy affirms RFA Beauty's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in all aspects of our work. We recognize that embracing EDI is not only a legal obligation but also fundamental to our mission of compassion and empowerment. By fostering an inclusive environment, we ensure every mother and child we serve feels valued, respected, and able to access the help they need without fear of discrimination.

Purpose and Scope

This Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy applies to everyone involved in RFA Beauty Foundation's activities. That includes all employees, volunteers, trustees, partners, and the service users we support. It provides guidance and standards for how we treat one another and our service users, ensuring dignity and fairness for all. We expect all staff and representatives of RFA to uphold this policy in their daily actions and decision-making. Likewise, those who use or interact with our services should also be treated in line with this policy. In short, EDI is everyone's responsibility – from trustees setting strategy to volunteers at our mother-and-baby support sessions. By setting clear expectations, this policy helps create a safe, welcoming atmosphere for everyone connected to RFA Beauty Foundation.

Legal Framework: The Equality Act 2010 and Protected Characteristics

RFA Beauty Foundation is committed to complying with the Equality Act 2010 and all related legislation. Under the Equality Act, it is unlawful to discriminate against people on the basis of certain protected characteristics. The Act identifies nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including ethnicity and national origin), religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation . We will treat all people equally and with respect irrespective of any of these characteristics .

In practice, this means RFA Beauty will never unjustly deny someone our services, opportunities, or fair treatment based on who they are. For example, we will not tolerate ageism towards young or older parents, racism or xenophobia towards migrant or BAME families, or stigma based on a mother's disability or mental health condition. Pregnancy and maternity are central to our charity's work – we uphold the rights and dignity of pregnant women and new mothers at all times. We also recognize marital status and family structure diversity: whether a woman is single, divorced, married or in a civil partnership, she will receive equal respect and support from us.

Furthermore, sex and gender reassignment are protected – we support an inclusive definition of “mother” to include all who identify as women (including trans women) and those non-binary or trans parents who birth and care for children; no one will be excluded or treated unfairly due to their gender identity. Religion or belief is likewise respected – we accommodate religious needs in our service delivery (for instance, being mindful of dietary needs or prayer times). Finally, we affirm the rights of people of all sexual orientations to be treated with dignity and free from prejudice. Every individual has multiple facets to their identity, and all are entitled to equal protection under this policy.

Beyond these nine legal categories, RFA Beauty Foundation understands that true inclusion goes further. We serve many women facing extreme socio-economic disadvantage – poverty itself can be a barrier that marginalises people. We will strive to be inclusive of those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and to mitigate barriers faced by people in hardship. We also recognise the challenges of those with insecure immigration status (such as women with no recourse to public funds) and will support them equally, even though immigration status is not a protected characteristic in law. In the spirit of the Equality Act’s broad aims, we treat all service users and stakeholders fairly, regardless of their life circumstances or personal characteristics. Everyone who comes to RFA Beauty Foundation should feel safe to be themselves in an environment that is welcoming and values diversity.

Our Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

At RFA Beauty Foundation, we are committed to providing a culture of dignity, respect, and fairness. Being in need should never mean being treated as “less than.” We believe every mother and child has inherent worth, and we celebrate the diversity of our community. In all our programs and interactions, our team will show compassion, courtesy and cultural sensitivity. We value each person’s unique background and story, and we listen without judgment to understand their needs.

Equal and Respectful Treatment: RFA is committed to treating all people – staff, volunteers, and service users – with equal respect irrespective of protected characteristics or other personal attributes. We maintain a zero-tolerance stance towards discrimination, harassment or bullying of any kind. Sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic or otherwise offensive and inflammatory remarks or behaviour are not acceptable in our organisation. Such conduct has no place in our work and will be addressed swiftly if it occurs. Instead, we promote an environment where everyone’s dignity is upheld. For our service users, this means every mother who contacts us or visits our centre will be made to feel equally welcome and valued, regardless of her background. For our staff and volunteers, this means a workplace culture where individual differences are celebrated and everyone can contribute their best without fear of prejudice.

Inclusive Mission and Values: Equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded in RFA’s core values of Compassion, Dignity, Empowerment, and Community. We believe in delivering services in a culturally sensitive manner, being mindful of different traditions, languages and needs. We also believe in empowering service users by involving them in decisions about the support they receive. This co-creation of services (often called co-design) ensures that our programmes truly reflect what mothers and families need, rather than making assumptions.

RFA Beauty's approach echoes best practices in the wider charity sector: we work alongside the community and people with lived experience of poverty to shape solutions together. By actively seeking input and feedback from the women we support, we make our services more effective and inclusive. Ultimately, meaningful diversity and inclusion work is core to our mission of breaking down barriers and ensuring no mother is left behind.

Commitment to Accessibility: We are dedicated to making our services accessible to all. This includes physical accessibility (choosing venues that are pram-friendly and wheelchair-accessible, for example) and financial accessibility (our services and essential supplies are provided free of charge to those in need). We also strive for informational accessibility and inclusive communication – communicating in clear, understandable language and providing information in formats that meet people's needs. We will not overload our clients with jargon or judgment; instead we use plain, compassionate language that everyone can engage with. Where needed and feasible, we will arrange translation or interpretation (including British Sign Language) so that language is not a barrier to a mother getting help. We are also mindful that some of our service users have low literacy or cognitive difficulties, so we will adapt our communication style accordingly (for example, explaining forms or instructions verbally, using visuals, etc.). All staff and volunteers are encouraged to speak and write in a manner that is inclusive and respectful. This also means using individuals' preferred names and pronouns and avoiding assumptions about identity or family situation. By normalising respectful, inclusive language in our workplace and services, we ensure everyone feels seen and respected. (For instance, we respect how each person identifies – no one should be misnamed or misgendered. While we won't force anyone to share personal information they are not comfortable with, we encourage a culture of openness where people can self-identify and be referred to appropriately.)

Trauma-Informed Approach: Many of the women and families we support have experienced trauma – whether domestic abuse, homelessness, persecution, or other hardship. RFA Beauty Foundation therefore adopts a trauma-informed approach in our services and internal culture. Being trauma-informed means we acknowledge the prevalence of trauma and its effects, and we take care to interact in ways that do not re-traumatise but instead promote healing and trust. We ensure all staff and volunteers receive training or guidance on supporting people who may be trauma survivors. For example, our team learns how traumatic experiences can influence someone's behaviour or reactions, particularly under stress. We create an environment where mothers feel safe to share their stories, and we are mindful of triggers that may cause distress. If a service user is a victim of abuse or harassment, we will provide direct support and follow our safeguarding procedures to protect them. The individual's voice and choices will be at the heart of any action taken in response – we empower survivors by involving them in decisions about their care. Our trauma-informed approach also means we exercise patience, empathy and non-judgmental listening in every interaction. We understand that what might appear as withdrawn or angry behaviour could be a response to trauma. Our staff are trained to de-escalate conflict and sensitively address any prejudiced attitudes a service user may have, while maintaining a safe space for others. In short, we meet people where they are, with understanding and support. This approach aligns with our duty of care and with best practices in supporting vulnerable populations.

Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusive Practice: Stoke-on-Trent is a diverse community, and RFA's beneficiaries include local British parents as well as those from migrant and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds. We strive to ensure our services are culturally competent. This means we respect different cultural norms around parenting, family roles, diet, dress, and communication. We do not expect everyone to conform to one way of doing things. Instead, we educate ourselves about the cultures of the communities we serve and adapt our support accordingly. For example, we are mindful of religious dietary restrictions when distributing baby formula or food parcels, and we schedule events and workshops at times that accommodate major religious observances where possible. We also work to have informational materials and signage in languages commonly spoken in our community, or use interpreters, so that non-English-speaking mothers feel included. Our volunteers and staff are encouraged to be curious and open-minded about cultural differences, and never to impose their own values on service users. By delivering services in a culturally sensitive manner, we ensure every parent can engage with us comfortably and with their dignity intact.

Service User Involvement and Co-Design: A key aspect of our inclusion strategy is involving service users in shaping what we do. RFA Beauty Foundation is not a one-size-fits-all charity; we know that those who use our services are experts by experience. We regularly invite feedback, ideas and participation from the mothers and families we support. This can include surveys, suggestion boxes, feedback conversations at our "Mother's Nest" support sessions, or even inviting service users to co-create programs and sit on advisory groups. We believe empowerment means giving people agency in the support they receive. By co-designing our services with the community, we build offerings that are relevant, accessible, and truly inclusive. This participatory approach also helps us identify and remove any barriers that might be unintentionally excluding someone. For instance, if mothers with disabilities or those without transport face difficulty attending our sessions, we want to hear that and adjust our approach (such as providing a ramp or offering outreach/home visits). Engaging service users in decision-making not only improves our services, it also helps the women we support to feel valued and heard. It fosters a sense of community and solidarity – "nothing about us without us." We are committed to continued learning and improvement through active dialogue with those we serve. This approach is in line with the best practices of leading anti-poverty charities, which emphasise the importance of meaningfully engaging people with lived experience in decision making.

Inclusive and Accessible Services

In delivering our services, RFA Beauty Foundation will ensure inclusion and accessibility at every step. Our goal is that every mother and child who needs us can access support on equal terms, without physical, social, or cultural barriers getting in the way.

Accessible Service Delivery: We will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of service users with disabilities, health conditions, or other challenges. For example, if a mother with a learning disability needs information in a simpler format or extra time to understand a workshop, we will provide that support. If a parent has mobility issues, we offer home visits or ensure our venues have proper access. We are prepared to offer flexibility – such as longer appointment times for someone who needs more time to process information, or meeting in a quieter space for someone overwhelmed by crowds. We also provide multiple ways to engage with us: in-person support at our community hub, phone consultations, online communication, and outreach via partner agencies, so that people can choose the mode of help that works best for them.

Mothers who cannot come to us in person (due to disability, small babies, safety concerns, etc.) will not be left out; we will try to reach them through alternative means whenever possible. Additionally, our materials and facilities take into account parents with babies and toddlers – for instance, ensuring there is space for prams, a private area for breastfeeding if desired, and baby-changing facilities that are accessible to all parents.

Inclusive Communication: As noted, we strive to communicate in an inclusive way. Our staff and volunteers are trained to use clear and inclusive communication, and to understand the different needs people may have – including people with learning disabilities, autistic people, or anyone who has experienced trauma . This training helps our team convey information patiently and without jargon, check understanding, and remain sensitive to each individual’s communication style. We recognise that effective communication is two-way: we not only speak clearly, but also listen actively. Frontline workers will listen to service users’ concerns attentively and with empathy, making sure each person feels heard. We encourage an ethos of “listening without judgment” in line with our values . For service users with limited English proficiency, we use language services or community interpreters when available, ensuring they can understand their rights and the support on offer . We also incorporate visual aids or demonstrations during educational sessions (e.g., showing how to prepare formula or use a baby carrier) to accommodate those who learn better through seeing or doing. All written materials (such as flyers, forms, and our website content) are reviewed for readability – using plain British English, explaining any necessary technical terms, and avoiding insensitive or exclusionary language. Our commitment to inclusive communication extends internally as well: staff and volunteers are expected to converse respectfully, avoid slang or acronyms that others might not know, and to be mindful of tone (especially in written communications like emails or social media). We foster an environment where everyone feels able to communicate openly and respectfully, regardless of background or language ability.

Dignity and Respect in Services: Every person who comes to RFA Beauty Foundation for help should feel welcome, safe, and respected from the moment they approach us . Staff and volunteers will greet service users warmly and assist them without bias. We do not permit any form of segregation or less favourable treatment. For example, no client will be made to wait longer or receive sub-par service because of who they are. We serve each individual on the basis of need and fairness. Staff are reminded to check their own biases and ensure they do not, even unconsciously, favour one group over another. We actively challenge stereotypes – for instance, we reject any notion that single mothers are “less capable” or that refugees “deserve less help.” Instead, we affirm the strengths and potential of all the women we support. We maintain confidentiality and privacy, recognising that trust is crucial. Personal information about service users (particularly health, immigration status, or any protected characteristic) is handled respectfully and only shared on a need-to-know basis in line with our data protection and safeguarding policies. By respecting each person’s dignity, we help build their self-esteem rather than erode it . This is vital, because many of our service users have faced stigma or marginalisation elsewhere; at RFA, they will not be judged or shamed for their circumstances. Instead, they will find a community that embraces them as they are and stands up against any form of discrimination.

Collaboration and Community Inclusion: RFA Beauty Foundation works closely with other local organisations, agencies, and community groups to promote inclusion beyond our own services.

We partner with health visitors, children's centres, social services, and other charities to ensure our service users (who are often socially isolated) are connected to a wider support network. We also participate in local forums and initiatives that celebrate diversity and promote equality in Stoke-on-Trent. By collaborating in the community, we help combat the isolation and stigma that many single mothers experience. Our charity is built on the idea that "it takes a village to raise a child," so we actively cultivate that village. We welcome mothers of all backgrounds into our programs and encourage peer support among them – fostering friendships across cultural or social divides. Internally, we mark and celebrate events that matter to our diverse community (such as Black History Month, International Women's Day, Refugee Week, Disability Awareness events, etc.) to raise awareness and show solidarity. Through these practices, we aim not only to be non-discriminatory, but proactively inclusive – going the extra mile to make everyone feel they belong.

Inclusive Workplace and Volunteering

RFA Beauty Foundation is equally committed to EDI within our own workforce and volunteer base. We believe a diverse and inclusive team makes us a stronger, more effective charity. Our policies and practices in recruitment, training, and daily work life reflect our commitment to fairness and equal opportunity.

Fair Recruitment and Equal Opportunity: We hire staff and engage volunteers on the basis of merit, competency and alignment with our values – never on the basis of bias. Our recruitment processes are designed to be open, fair and inclusive. We advertise opportunities widely, in inclusive language, to attract candidates from all backgrounds. Job descriptions focus on essential skills and avoid unnecessary requirements that could exclude certain groups (for example, we will not require qualifications or availability that aren't truly needed for the role, as that might disadvantage those with non-traditional career paths or caring responsibilities). We welcome applications from people with lived experience relevant to our work, including those who may have been single mothers or faced hardship themselves, as well as from underrepresented groups. In line with best practice, we seek to ensure the diversity of our organisation is appropriate to the community we serve – meaning we strive for our staff, trustees and volunteers to collectively reflect a variety of ages, ethnicities, abilities, and backgrounds, just like our service users. When recruiting, we will make reasonable adjustments for applicants with disabilities or special requirements, such as providing application forms in alternate formats or flexibility in interview scheduling. We are committed to being a family-friendly and disability-confident organisation; for example, we can offer roles with flexible or part-time hours (subject to organisational capacity) to accommodate those with childcare or disability needs. No candidate will be treated less favorably due to any protected characteristic during hiring. Shortlisting and interviews will be conducted using objective criteria and structured questions to minimise bias. All those involved in hiring (staff or trustees) are briefed on equality responsibilities. Ultimately, our goal is to recruit the best people for the job while providing equal opportunity for all and eliminating any discriminatory barriers.

Dignity at Work: Within RFA's work environment, everyone has the right to be treated with respect and to work in a place free from discrimination or harassment. We promote a culture of inclusion, where individual differences and contributions are recognised and valued. Team members are encouraged to share their ideas and perspectives, knowing they will be heard. We foster collaboration and respect diverse viewpoints in decision-making. Harassment, bullying or victimisation among staff or volunteers is strictly prohibited, whether based on protected characteristics or otherwise. This includes any form of unwanted behaviour – jokes, slurs, exclusion, or threats – that creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment. We have a separate Anti-Bullying/Harassment procedure (as part of our HR policies) that staff can consult, but this EDI policy underlines our commitment that any form of harassment is misconduct and will be dealt with seriously. If a staff member or volunteer experiences or witnesses harassment or bias, they are not only encouraged but expected to speak up and report it, confident that the matter will be handled promptly and fairly. Every employee and volunteer at RFA has a personal responsibility to uphold these standards and contribute to an environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and safe to be themselves.

Training and Awareness: RFA Beauty Foundation recognises that policies alone are not enough – we back up our commitments with training and ongoing learning. All new staff, volunteers, and trustees receive an induction that covers our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and related policies (such as Safeguarding and Code of Conduct). We ensure that mandatory EDI training is provided, either through internal sessions or external courses, to build understanding of key concepts like unconscious bias, cultural competency, inclusive communication, and trauma-informed practice. New team members are expected to complete basic EDI training within their probationary period. We also seek out relevant training opportunities for specific challenges – for example, training on refugee awareness, disability inclusion, or LGBTQ+ inclusion – so that our team can support all service users knowledgeably and sensitively. Additionally, we periodically refresh training for existing staff and volunteers (at least annually or bi-annually) to ensure everyone stays up-to-date and to reinforce the importance of EDI in our work. We keep a small budget for staff development in this area, and encourage our team to attend free workshops or webinars on diversity and inclusion when available. By continuously educating ourselves, we aim to embed EDI into the fabric of our organisational culture.

Inclusive Leadership and Governance: Our leadership (the Board of Trustees and management team) are committed to championing equality and diversity. They set the tone by modelling inclusive behaviour and holding the organisation accountable to this policy. The Board will consider EDI implications in strategic decisions – for instance, when developing new services or partnerships, they will ask how these plans meet the needs of different groups and advance equality. We also consider EDI in selecting trustees and advisors, seeking a broad range of skills and perspectives on our Board. The senior leadership will treat any complaints or incidents relating to discrimination with the utmost seriousness, ensuring proper investigation and response (see next section). Furthermore, leadership will monitor and review our employment practices (recruitment, pay, promotion, training opportunities) to detect and address any inequities. If issues are found – for example, if any group is underrepresented or not thriving – the leadership will take action, such as targeted outreach in recruitment or additional support and mentoring for those who need it.

Preventing and Addressing Discrimination and Harassment

RFA Beauty Foundation will actively prevent discrimination and harassment wherever possible, and respond robustly if incidents do occur. We define discrimination as unfair or unequal treatment of an individual based on a protected characteristic (or other unjust grounds), which results in disadvantage. Discrimination can be direct (e.g. refusing someone a service or opportunity because of their race or disability) or indirect (e.g. a rule or practice that applies to everyone but disproportionately disadvantages a group, without good reason). Harassment is any unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic (or of a sexual nature) that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment for them. It can include slurs, jokes, intrusive questions, physical advances, or other demeaning behavior. Victimisation means treating someone badly because they have made a complaint or raised a concern about discrimination (or supported someone else who did). All these forms of conduct are completely unacceptable in or around RFA Beauty Foundation.

We take a proactive stance to ensure our workplace and service environments are free from discrimination/harassment. This involves setting clear expectations (through this policy and training), challenging prejudiced remarks or behaviors immediately, and creating a culture where equality is everyone's business. Staff and volunteers are empowered and obliged to challenge any instance of discrimination or harassment they witness – whether it's an inappropriate comment during a team meeting or a service user being treated unfairly at an event. Sometimes, discrimination can occur unintentionally due to ignorance or stereotypes; in such cases we favour education and correction, making it clear what was wrong and how to behave appropriately. However, if discrimination or harassment appears deliberate or repeated, we will not hesitate to take formal action. This could include removing a volunteer from their role, applying our staff disciplinary procedure for employees, or (in the case of service users or visitors) issuing a warning or excluding the individual from our premises if needed to protect others. Any decision to exclude someone from our services due to discriminatory or harassing behaviour will be made with reference to our charity's constitution and governance procedures – meaning such a serious step would involve trustee oversight and fairness.

To reinforce: offensive and inflammatory remarks or conduct have no place at RFA Beauty. For example, racist or anti-immigrant comments towards a refugee mother, or sexual harassment of a volunteer, or bullying a staff member for their disability, are all violations of this policy (and possibly of the law). We will support those who are targeted and ensure there are consequences for those who perpetrate such behaviour.

Reporting and Responding to Concerns

Despite our best efforts at prevention, we recognise that issues may arise. RFA Beauty Foundation is committed to providing a safe, confidential and effective process for anyone to raise concerns about discrimination, harassment or any breach of this policy. We encourage an open culture where concerns can be raised without fear of reprisal.

How to Raise a Concern: If any staff member, volunteer, service user, or other person associated with RFA believes they have been subjected to discrimination or harassment or have witnessed it happening to someone else, they should report it as soon as possible. There are multiple channels to do so, depending on one's role and preferences:

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- **Service Users (Beneficiaries):** A service user who feels unfairly treated or offended by something at RFA (for example, how a volunteer spoke to them, or how a decision was made) can raise the issue with any staff member or volunteer they trust. We will take it seriously and try to resolve it informally if appropriate (sometimes a simple mediated conversation can clear up misunderstandings). If the service user is not satisfied or the issue is serious, they are encouraged to make a formal complaint through our Complaints Policy procedure. Information on how to lodge a complaint is made available on our website and in our service venues (and staff/volunteers will assist service users in accessing it if needed). A complaint can be made in writing or verbally; if verbal, we will document it. Once a formal complaint is made, management will investigate (or appoint an appropriate person to investigate) and respond according to our Complaints Policy. The complaint will be dealt with promptly and the service user will be informed of the outcome. We handle such complaints with sensitivity and confidentiality. No service user will be penalised in any way for raising a concern in good faith – it is their right to be heard without fear, and we will continue to support them during and after the process.
 - **Staff and Volunteers:** An employee or volunteer who experiences or witnesses discrimination/harassment should report it to their line manager or the project manager as soon as possible. If the concern involves that manager, or if the reporter does not feel comfortable going through the usual line management, they may approach a different senior staff member or directly contact the Chair of Trustees. We also have a Whistleblowing Policy which provides an avenue for staff or volunteers to raise serious concerns anonymously or without going through line management, if they fear repercussions or believe the issue is being ignored. For instance, if a volunteer believes a trustee is behaving discriminatorily, they could use the whistleblowing channel to ensure the matter is addressed at Board level. In any case, when a concern is raised, the organisation will handle it under either our internal grievance procedure (for staff) or a volunteer problem-solving procedure. We note that instances of micro-aggressions, bullying, harassment or discrimination can be raised in line with our grievance procedures and will be fully investigated by the appropriate manager, with full support given to the individual impacted. This means we will gather information from all sides fairly and come to a finding. If the allegation is substantiated, RFA will take appropriate action. For staff, this might mean disciplinary action (up to and including termination of employment) against the perpetrator. For volunteers, it could mean additional training and a warning for a first minor offense, but could lead to ending their volunteering role for serious misconduct. For trustees, the Board may take steps in line with our governance rules (such as suspension or removal from the Board) if a trustee is found to have breached the EDI policy. Throughout any investigation, we ensure that those who reported the issue are protected from retaliation (no one will be treated poorly for speaking up – in fact, retaliating against a complainant is itself a serious breach of this policy). We also ensure confidentiality is maintained to the extent possible, sharing details only with those who need to know in order to address the matter.

Investigation and Outcome: When a complaint or grievance is raised, RFA Beauty will handle it promptly and fairly. Typically, the Manager (or an appointed senior person/trustee not involved in the allegation) will look into the facts. They will speak to the person who raised the concern to fully understand what happened and how they were affected. They will also give the person against whom allegations have been made an opportunity to respond and tell their side of the story – even if a complaint is against a specific individual, that person will have a chance to express their point of view, accompanied by a friend or representative if they wish, and the person who made the complaint can similarly be accompanied when explaining their experience. We aim to handle complaints in an impartial, objective manner, ensuring both parties are heard. If the complaint is against the organisation as a whole or a broad practice (rather than an individual), the Manager and Trustees will review how our policies or culture may have contributed, and work to ensure such issues are addressed so they do not recur. In all cases, the investigation will be conducted with discretion and sensitivity – only those involved will be part of the process. Once the investigation is concluded, a decision will be made on what action to take. Possible outcomes include: no further action (if the complaint isn't substantiated or was based on a misunderstanding, though we may still facilitate mediation or feedback), apology and reconciliation if appropriate, changes to procedures or additional training, or disciplinary measures as noted above if misconduct occurred. If someone was found to have engaged in discrimination or harassment, the outcome will reflect the seriousness – from a formal warning up to termination or exclusion from the charity's activities, depending on the severity and whether there have been past incidents.

After an outcome, we will communicate back to the parties involved. The person who raised the concern will be informed that their complaint was investigated and generally what outcome/resolution was reached (we may not be able to share every detail if it involves confidential HR action, but we will assure them that appropriate steps were taken). Likewise, individuals who were accused will be told of the findings and any consequences or required actions on their part.

Support and Non-Retaliation: RFA Beauty Foundation will support anyone who comes forward with concerns. We understand it can be difficult to speak up about discrimination or harassment, especially for vulnerable service users or junior staff, so we commend their courage and will ensure they do not suffer for it. As stated, any form of retaliation or victimisation against a person for raising a concern is strictly forbidden and would itself result in disciplinary action. Instead, we aim to create an environment where people feel safe and supported in reporting problems. If needed, we can arrange extra support for someone who experienced harassment (for example, time off to recover, counselling referral, or connecting them with external support agencies). We also recognize the impact these issues can have on bystanders or the wider team, so we may hold a debrief or learning session (without naming individuals) to reinforce lessons learned and restore a positive environment.

Links to Other Policies

This Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy is part of a broader framework of policies that together ensure a safe, fair and effective organisation. It should be read in conjunction with the following RFA Beauty Foundation policies, which complement and reinforce our commitment to EDI:

- **Safeguarding Policy:** Our Safeguarding policy outlines how we protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse or harm. Discrimination or harassment based on protected characteristics can be a form of emotional abuse or neglect. If any discriminatory behaviour puts a child or vulnerable mother at risk of significant harm, it becomes a safeguarding concern and will be handled under safeguarding procedures (for example, hate incidents or domestic abuse rooted in discrimination would trigger safeguarding actions). Safeguarding principles of dignity, empowerment and protection align closely with this EDI policy's aims of respect and inclusion. We ensure that our safeguarding training incorporates awareness of discriminatory abuse (such as racially or religiously motivated bullying) so staff stay vigilant. In practice, when a concern is raised that involves potential harm, we may invoke both safeguarding and EDI protocols to ensure the individual is safe and the underlying equality issue is addressed.
- **Complaints Policy:** Our Complaints Policy provides a formal mechanism for service users (or others) to complain about any aspect of our services or conduct. As noted above, if someone feels they faced discrimination while accessing our service, making a complaint is a valid and encouraged route. This EDI Policy gives overarching commitments, while the Complaints Policy gives the step-by-step process of how to lodge a complaint, response times, and appeals. They should be used together when dealing with issues of unfair treatment in service delivery.
- **Whistleblowing Policy:** Our Whistleblowing Policy allows staff, volunteers, or others closely involved with RFA to raise serious concerns about wrongdoing in a confidential way, without fear of reprisal. Equality and inclusion breaches – for example, a culture of racism in a project, or a trustee consistently making discriminatory decisions – could constitute the kind of malpractice that whistleblowing covers, particularly if previous attempts to address it have been ignored. The Whistleblowing Policy provides an avenue to escalate such issues directly to senior leadership or external authorities if needed. This EDI Policy underlines that we want people to report wrongdoing and will protect whistleblowers who highlight equality issues. Both policies together ensure that even deeply embedded problems can be brought to light and resolved.
- **Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policies:** While not always public-facing, our internal staff Code of Conduct and disciplinary procedures back up the expectations set in this EDI Policy. They detail what is considered misconduct (which includes any form of discrimination, harassment or bullying) and the process for handling such misconduct. If a staff member violates the EDI principles, the disciplinary policy will be applied. Our Volunteer Agreement and guidelines similarly incorporate respectful conduct expectations. These documents work hand-in-hand with the EDI Policy: the EDI Policy states the values and rules, and the Code/Disciplinary policies provide the mechanisms to enforce them when necessary.
- **Data Protection and Confidentiality Policies:** These policies ensure that personal information (including data about protected characteristics, health, etc.) is handled lawfully and respectfully. Adhering to them is part of respecting individuals' privacy as mentioned in this EDI Policy.

Governance and Review

Ultimate responsibility for this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy rests with the Board of Trustees of RFA Beauty Foundation. The Board is accountable for ensuring that the charity complies with equality legislation and that this policy is effectively implemented. The Trustees will review reports or incidents related to EDI and champion a positive, inclusive culture from the top. Day-to-day, the Manager (or Chief Executive) of RFA is responsible for operational implementation of the policy – making sure staff and volunteers are aware of it, arranging training, and addressing issues that arise. However, every member of the organisation, regardless of role, has a duty to uphold the principles of this policy and can be held accountable if they fail to do so. We include a reminder of this responsibility in staff contracts, volunteer agreements, and trustee inductions.

This policy will not sit on a shelf – it will be actively used and periodically reviewed. We will monitor our progress in several ways: tracking diversity data in our workforce and beneficiaries, gathering feedback from service users about how included and respected they feel, and auditing our practices for any bias. Any findings will inform improvements or action plans to advance equality (for example, if we find certain groups are not accessing our service, we will investigate why and outreach to them).

The Board of Trustees commits to reviewing this EDI Policy on a regular basis. At a minimum, the policy will undergo a formal review every two years, to ensure it remains up-to-date with any changes in law or best practice. We may review and update it sooner if needed – for instance, if there is a significant incident that reveals a gap in the policy, or if new equality legislation comes into force, or if our user demographic changes in a way that needs new measures. When under review, we may consult staff, volunteers, and service users for input, to ensure the policy continues to meet the needs of all stakeholders. Any revisions will be approved by the Board and then communicated to everyone in the organisation (via team meetings, email, and training as appropriate). We will also update the version on our website so that funders and the public always have the current version.

For transparency and accountability, we note the adoption details of this policy: This Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy was approved by the Board of RFA Beauty Foundation and is effective immediately. It will be reviewed yearly. The Chair of Trustees (on behalf of the Board) and the Manager will sign off the policy and ensure its dissemination. All staff, volunteers and trustees will be asked to confirm they have read and understood the policy as part of their induction or as part of the rollout of this updated policy.