



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Version:	V2.0 updated September 2026
Review Cycle:	Annually
Approved by:	Board of Trustees
Policy Owner:	Charity Lead Sarah Kekoa
Next Review Date:	September 2027



1. Purpose and Scope

Autism Angels is committed to equality, equity, diversity and inclusion and to creating an environment in which everyone is treated with dignity, fairness and respect. We recognise that equality does not always mean treating everyone in exactly the same way. Individuals may require different approaches, support or reasonable adjustments to enable them to participate safely, meaningfully and with dignity.

This policy sets out how Autism Angels promotes equality of opportunity, respects diversity, removes or reduces barriers to participation and seeks to prevent unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation.

The policy applies to all aspects of Autism Angels' work, including our educational, therapeutic, wellbeing, equine, volunteering and community activities, and to our relationships with children and young people, parents/carers, team members, volunteers, schools, local authorities, visitors, contractors, suppliers and other partner organisations.

2. Legal Framework

Autism Angels will have regard to relevant equality legislation, including the Equality Act 2010 and associated statutory requirements and guidance.

The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are:

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

Nothing in this policy prevents Autism Angels from taking lawful positive action, making reasonable adjustments, or providing individualised support where this is appropriate.

3. Our Commitment

Autism Angels will seek to:

- provide an inclusive, welcoming and respectful environment;
- treat people fairly and with equity, courtesy and dignity;
- recognise and value individual differences, strengths, needs and experiences;

- identify and reduce unnecessary barriers to participation;
- make reasonable adjustments for all individuals where required and appropriate;
- ensure decisions about access, support, recruitment and participation are based on relevant needs, abilities, suitability, safety and the requirements of the activity or role, rather than unlawful discrimination;
- challenge discriminatory, bullying, harassing or victimising behaviour;
- promote inclusive practice in our communication, learning, therapeutic support and organisational decision-making.

4. Children and Young People

Autism Angels works with children and young people with a wide range of needs and recognises that an equitable approach may require support to be adapted to the individual.

Where appropriate, reasonable and safe, adjustments may include:

- changes to communication methods or the way information and instructions are presented;
- additional processing time and reduced verbal demand;
- access to quieter or lower-sensory environments;
- flexibility around participation, transitions and the pace of activities;
- visual, practical or alternative approaches to learning and engagement;
- individualised support strategies agreed with the child or young person, parent/carer and relevant professionals where appropriate.

Children and young people will not be excluded from opportunities unless there is a lawful, proportionate and objectively justified reason, including where an activity cannot be undertaken safely even after reasonable adjustments have been considered.

Where Autism Angels cannot safely meet a particular need, we will communicate this respectfully and, where possible, explore alternative ways of providing support or signpost to a more appropriate specialist service.

5. Disability and Reasonable Adjustments

Autism Angels will take reasonable steps to avoid all children, young people, team members, volunteers and others being placed at a substantial disadvantage. Where possible this may include adjustments to practices, the physical environment, communication, equipment or the way an activity is delivered.

Reasonable adjustments will be considered on an individual basis, taking account of the person's needs, the nature of the activity, available resources, the physical environment, safeguarding requirements and health and safety.

Some equine and farm-based activities involve inherent risks. Autism Angels may not have the facilities, equipment or specialist training required to safely support every physical or medical



need in every activity. Registration information, taster sessions, risk assessment and discussion with the individual and/or parent/carers will be used to determine how support can be provided safely. Where riding cannot be offered safely, alternative Autism Angels activities will be considered where appropriate and individuals may be signposted to a specialist organisation.

6. Forms of Discrimination and Unacceptable Conduct

Direct discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs where a person is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic. Protection can also apply where discrimination is because of a protected characteristic of someone with whom the person is associated, or because a person is perceived to have a protected characteristic.

Indirect discrimination

Indirect discrimination can occur where a provision, criterion or practice applies to everyone but puts people who share a protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage and cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Discrimination arising from disability

This can occur where a disabled person is treated unfavourably because of something arising in consequence of their disability and the treatment cannot be objectively justified.

Failure to make reasonable adjustments

A failure to comply with the duty to make reasonable adjustments for a disabled person may amount to unlawful discrimination.

Harassment, bullying and victimisation

Autism Angels will not tolerate harassment, bullying, intimidation or victimisation. Harassment may include unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic, or unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Unacceptable behaviour may be verbal, non-verbal, written, physical or online and may occur on site, during off-site activities, at work-related or Autism Angels events, or through electronic communications and social media.

Examples may include discriminatory or degrading comments, jokes or images; unwanted sexual comments or conduct; offensive nicknames; deliberately excluding someone because of a protected characteristic; ridicule; intimidation; or repeated behaviour that undermines or humiliates another person.



A single serious incident may amount to harassment. Conduct described as 'banter' or a 'joke' is still unacceptable.

7. Recruitment, Selection and Volunteering

Autism Angels team members work on a self-employed basis. Autism Angels also works with volunteers (and some times work experience or work placements). Recruitment and selection will focus on the experience, abilities, suitability and qualifications required for the role, together with all relevant safeguarding and safer recruitment requirements.

Opportunities will be communicated, as far as reasonably practicable, in ways that do not unnecessarily exclude people with a protected characteristic. Role descriptions and selection criteria will be limited to requirements that are relevant to safe and effective performance of the role.

The core safeguarding and suitability requirements will be applied consistently. Reasonable adjustments may be made to the recruitment and selection process where appropriate, including to communication, interview or taster arrangements, without compromising safeguarding requirements.

Where a particular characteristic is a lawful occupational requirement and is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, Autism Angels may apply that requirement to a specific role.

8. Team Members and Volunteers

All team members and volunteers are expected to comply with this policy and to contribute to an inclusive environment. They must treat others with dignity and respect, challenge or report inappropriate behaviour where appropriate, and support reasonable adjustments and individualised approaches.

Autism Angels will provide information and training on equality, diversity and inclusive practice appropriate to roles and responsibilities.

Serious or repeated breaches of this policy may result in appropriate action, which may include ending a self-employed engagement or volunteering arrangement. Safeguarding concerns will be managed in accordance with Autism Angels' safeguarding procedures.

9. Clients, Families, Partners, Suppliers and Third Parties

Autism Angels will not unlawfully discriminate when deciding whether or how to provide services, work with families or engage with partner organisations.

Where different needs arise from disability or another protected characteristic, Autism Angels will consider appropriate and lawful steps to meet those needs. Decisions will be based on



relevant factors such as the person's needs, the nature of the service, safeguarding, health and safety, resources and Autism Angels' ability to provide safe and appropriate support.

Autism Angels expects visitors and partner organisations to treat children, families, team members and volunteers with dignity and respect. Appropriate action may be taken where a third party engages in discriminatory, harassing or otherwise unacceptable behaviour.

10. Reporting Concerns and Complaints

Any allegation or concern relating to discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation will be taken seriously and handled sensitively. Concerns should be raised as soon as reasonably practicable so that they can be considered and appropriate action taken.

Team members and volunteers should raise concerns with Sarah Kekoa. If they do not feel able to raise the matter with Charity Lead Sarah Kekoa, they may speak to Designated Safeguarding Lead Amanda Whittaker.

Children and young people, parents/carers, schools, local authorities and other external parties may raise concerns with Autism Angels in accordance with the Autism Angels Complaints Policy and Procedure.

No person will be disadvantaged or treated unfavourably for raising a genuine concern or complaint, or for supporting another person who has done so. Deliberately false allegations made in bad faith may be addressed separately.

Information will be handled confidentially so far as is reasonably possible. However, information may need to be shared with relevant individuals in order to investigate a concern fairly, meet safeguarding duties or comply with legal obligations.

11. Safeguarding

Discriminatory, bullying or harassing behaviour may also constitute a safeguarding concern, particularly where it affects a child or young person. Where a concern meets or may meet a safeguarding threshold, Autism Angels will respond in accordance with its Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and associated procedures.

Safeguarding considerations take priority where there is a concern that a child, young person or adult may be at risk of harm.

12. Responsibilities

Ultimate responsibility for implementation of this policy rests with Charity Lead Sarah Kekoa and the Board of Trustees. All team members and volunteers are responsible for applying the policy in their work and when representing Autism Angels.

Everyone working with or on behalf of Autism Angels is expected to:



- promote equality, equity, diversity and inclusion;
- treat others fairly, respectfully and with dignity;
- consider individual needs and reasonable adjustments;
- avoid discriminatory assumptions or practices;
- raise concerns about discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation;
- co-operate with any review or investigation carried out under this policy.

13. Monitoring and Review

Autism Angels will keep the effectiveness of this policy under review. This may include consideration of complaints and concerns, safeguarding incidents, feedback, recruitment and volunteering practice, accessibility issues, reasonable adjustment requests and learning from children, young people, families, team members and partner organisations.

The policy will normally be reviewed annually and sooner where there are relevant changes to legislation, statutory guidance, organisational practice or the needs of the people Autism Angels supports.

14. Related Autism Angels Policies and Procedures

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Complaints Policy and Procedure
- Health and Safety Policy
- Educational Visits Policy and associated risk assessments
- Data Protection / GDPR Policy
- Service Level Agreement and relevant registration/consent documentation

15. Contacts

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