

South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth; Equality and Diversity Policy

1. General Statement

- 1.1. South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth is committed to achieving equal opportunities in the services it provides. No user of South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth services or volunteer should receive less favourable treatment because of: - sex, colour, ethnic origin, age, race, disability religion, party politics, sexual orientation and/or marital status.
- 1.2. As a provider of a service to the community, South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth accepts the responsibility to promote equal opportunities and challenge discrimination wherever it occurs. This document sets out the main consequences of this commitment and the action to be taken in order to achieve equal opportunities.
- 1.3. It is the responsibility of all members and volunteers and service users to ensure that no other service user or member or volunteer receives less favourable treatment than any other on the grounds stated in Para. 1.1 of this policy.
- 1.4. South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth recognises that some users of its services may, because of their past or present distress or illness, say or do things which would otherwise be unacceptable and incompatible with South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth Equal Opportunities Policy. South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth will do all it can to challenge such behaviour. In cases where intervention is possible a gentle approach will be adopted which aims to alter attitudes and behaviour while maintaining support for the distressed client.
- 1.5. The committee of South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth will review this policy every year at their AGM.

2. Responsibility

- 2.1. The committee of South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy. However, all volunteers and service users have a duty as part of their involvement with South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth to do everything they can to ensure that the policy works in practice.
- 2.2. South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth will bring to the attention of all members, volunteers and service users the existence of this policy, and will provide such training as is necessary to ensure that the policy is effective and that everyone is aware of it.

Those responsible for recruiting volunteers to work with South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth projects are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth Opportunities Policy and adhere to it while working as either members or volunteers with South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth.

- 2.3. Every effort will be made to ensure that the services offered by South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth reflect the composition of the community it serves. South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth is committed to encouraging access from under-represented groups.
- 2.4. If any service user or volunteer feels that they have been, or are being discriminated against, in any way, they are entitled to pursue the matter with the committee.

- 2.5. All instances or complaints of discriminatory behaviour will be treated seriously.
- 2.6. Complaints or allegations of an unfounded or malicious nature will also be treated as serious.

3. Disabled Access

- 3.1. South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth will endeavour to ensure, as far as is practicable, that all the premises that it uses have disabled access. When considering new premises, every effort will be made to ensure such premises are fully accessible. At present meetings are held in a house that is difficult for wheelchair access. Members of South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth would assist anyone disabled to attend in this premise, but if this is too difficult then the venue would be changed to enable disabled access. Some sites are difficult to access, but we aim to provide a range of activities in a range of sites so that we make our best endeavor to accommodate people's disabilities. However, we will not give up so much time to accommodate and support those with additional needs that we discriminate against the needs of the rest of the group and the work party etc. Time has to be equally and fairly shared.

4. Use of Language

- 4.1. Volunteers and service users should avoid and challenge the use of language which, in any way, belittles:
 - disabled groups and/or individuals with additional needs or health issues
 - any race, culture or religion
 - a person's sexual orientation
 - women and/or men.
 - Any orientation to a political party. Although this government has a poor record on environmental issues that does not mean that those who vote and support the Conservative Party are not equally keen environmentalists and language should not make them feel ill at ease for their political persuasion.
 - Dismissive or prejudicial reference to immigrants.

There will be many times when comments are made with the best intention but can belittle peoples' beliefs or disability or health, race, gender, political views, culture etc. There is an expectation that members of South Beds Friends of the Earth will be courteous and friendly and make people attending meetings or work parties feel welcome and able to raise issues and be quick to appreciate any possible concerns over language and attitude.

- 4.2. Where the language used has a personal impact on others, and it has been made clear to the person concerned that their use of such language is unwelcome and/or offensive, disciplinary action may be taken if they persist with it.
- 4.3. All materials used or developed by South Bedfordshire Friends of the earth will be judged in the light of the promotion of equal opportunities, and those considered to be discriminatory will not be used.

5. Sexual Harassment

- 5.1. No volunteer or service user should be subject to sexual harassment.
- 5.2. This is interpreted as unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature including:
 - verbal sexual abuse
 - physical contact
 - repeated remarks which an individual finds offensive
- 5.3. If it has been made clear to the person concerned that their behaviour is unwelcome and they persist with it, then the service user or volunteer who is the recipient of the behaviour will be entitled to make a formal complaint.

6. Equal Opportunities Monitoring

6.1. The committee will monitor South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth equal opportunities progress, development and practice.

Adopted on: _ March 7th 2016_____

Reviewed date: __ at the 2016 AGM (usually November) _____