

Equality, Dignity and Diversity Policy



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Policy:

Mansfield and Sutton Astronomical Society is committed to equality in its provision of activities and as a society aims to promote and advance public education in the science of astronomy. We also extend the principles of the Equalities Act (2010) to our members and volunteers although acknowledge that the Act does not provide protection in law as regards volunteering or society membership (as the society does not meet the definition of 'an association' as defined by the Act).

All members must be aware that where the Society provides any services which have a contractual nature, for example something the Society makes a charge for other than membership, then the Equalities Act (2010) applies in law and legal action may be taken against the Society if there is a breach of this. An example would include direct or indirect discrimination towards any member of a paying visiting group.

MSAS believes that the role of the Society is to affirm and enable all people to develop their interest in and knowledge of astronomy.

Our intention is to ensure that no member of MSAS nor any participant in our activities, receives less favourable treatment due to a protected characteristic (i.e. age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation). All members have a responsibility to co-operate with measures to ensure equal opportunity and non-discrimination.

We aim to create a culture that respects and values each other's' differences, that promotes dignity, equality and diversity, and that encourages individuals to develop and maximise their true potential.

We aim to remove any barriers, bias or discrimination that prevent individuals or groups from realising their potential and contributing fully to the Society's activities and to develop an organisational culture that positively values diversity.

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We are committed wherever practicable, to achieving and maintaining a membership and volunteering base that broadly reflects the local community.

We endeavour to ensure that individuals are treated fairly as members or participants in MSAS activities.

Every member is responsible for ensuring this Equality and Diversity Policy is applied to all our activities on or off site, in addition, be aware that the committee takes a very dim view of anyone who commits, authorises, contributes to or condones acts of discrimination on the grounds of a protected characteristic (i.e. age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation), and this behaviour will be responded to robustly.

The society will use orientation and induction processes to ensure members and volunteers are aware of their responsibilities on equality and diversity.

MSAS will collect anonymised monitoring information relating to equality and diversity within the society and will actively seek feedback periodically from members regarding their experience of the society including any experiences of discrimination.

We will aim to ensure that our communications are accessible, including our website.

Important definitions

Discrimination

Direct Discrimination is when you treat someone less favourably than others for unlawful means, for example not employing someone because of their gender or disability. MSAS will treat all forms of discrimination as a disciplinary matter.

Indirect Discrimination is when a policy, practice or procedure that applies to everyone might disadvantage a particular group, and which cannot be justified

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in relation to the activity. Mansfield and Sutton Astronomical Society will monitor and regularly review its policies, practices and procedures in order to ensure that they do not disadvantage any particular group.

Discrimination by association is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses one of the applicable protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, sex, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation). It is unacceptable and Mansfield and Sutton Astronomical Society will treat it as a disciplinary manner.

Perception discrimination is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not possess that characteristic. It is unacceptable and Mansfield and Sutton Astronomical Society will treat it as a disciplinary manner.

Harassment is unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive working environment.

Mansfield and Sutton Astronomical Society will treat harassment as a disciplinary matter regardless of whether or not an individual has been targeted on the basis of protected characteristics.

Victimisation is when you treat someone less favourably or discriminate against them because they have pursued or intend to pursue their rights relating to alleged discrimination. Mansfield and Sutton Astronomical Society will treat victimisation as a disciplinary matter.

Positive action to address imbalances in volunteering and membership is allowed in particular circumstances. Examples would include encouraging people from particular groups to apply where they are under-represented and training for people from under-represented groups. Mansfield and Sutton Astronomical Society may use positive action to address imbalances that are apparent from monitoring data.

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Procedure:

We have chosen to adopt the principles of the Equalities Act (2010) and all members should therefore be aware that the following acts are liable for action by the committee, which may include removal from a role or in extremis, from membership of the society:

- Discriminating against, or harassing fellow or future members as defined in this Equality Policy
- Inducing or attempting to induce other members to practise discrimination or harassment as defined in this policy
- Indulging in verbal or physical, sexual or racial harassment of a nature that is known, or should be known, to be offensive to the victim
- Victimising individuals who have made allegations or complaints of any discrimination or harassment or provided information about such discrimination or harassment

Please note any society action does not prejudice a referral to the police where there is potential criminal action; be aware Nottinghamshire police investigate misogynistic behaviour, including language, as a hate crime in addition to other forms of discrimination such as racism and homophobia.

1. If you feel you have been a victim of discrimination please contact the trustees at the first opportunity, you are welcome to do this verbally or in writing via:

secretary@sherwood-observatory.org.uk

If you have a complaint that in anyway involve the secretary you should instead email:

chair@sherwood-observatory.org.uk

You shall receive an acknowledgement within 5 working days, and either the chair or secretary will advise you of the next steps the committee is taking.

2. If you perceive a problem in recruitment, selection, training as a volunteer you should raise it in the first instance with your volunteer supervisor or a trustee.

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3. Trustees have a duty to investigate any issue of discrimination, and take a view on if this is an organisational failing or is a complaint against member conduct, in which case the procedure is to follow the 'settling differences' policy and the 'compliments, comments and complaints policy'. All cases of potential discrimination will be investigated and we will treat all complaints fairly, quickly and with confidentiality.
4. Any organisational failings which result in discrimination whether towards members or the public should be pursued in line with the 'compliments, comments and complaints policy'
5. Any member who has reported, in good faith, allegations of discrimination or harassment, will not be victimised by being treated any less favourably than any other member as a consequence of taking such action.

Supporting legislation and guidance:

- Equalities Act (2010)
- Volunteering and the Equalities Act (2010) as per case law: X(Appellant) v Mid Sussex Citizens Advice Bureau and another (Respondent) [2012] UKSC 59
- Equalities and Human Rights Commission guidance: "What equality law means for your association, club or society"

Key society policies to be read in conjunction with this document:

- Member and Trustee codes of conduct
- Settling differences and member conduct
- Safeguarding
- Financial policy
- Compliments, comments and complaints
- Volunteering