MEDWAY PUZZLES

Charity Number: 1192687

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

Policy Version	2026
Date Approved	7th September 2026
Review Date	September 2027
Approved by	Board of Trustees

1. Policy Statement

Medway Puzzles is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion and to creating an environment where everyone is treated fairly, with dignity, respect and understanding.

We believe that everyone who comes into contact with Medway Puzzles should feel welcomed, valued, safe and included.

This commitment applies to our trustees, staff, volunteers, members, children, young people, adults, parents, carers, families, visitors and members of the public.

Medway Puzzles will not tolerate unlawful discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying or victimisation.

As a charity supporting autistic people, disabled people, people with additional needs and their families and carers, we recognise that inclusion may require us to adapt how we communicate, organise activities and provide support.

2. Purpose

- promote equality, diversity, inclusion and fairness throughout Medway Puzzles;
- ensure people are treated with dignity and respect;
- prevent unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation;
- promote equal access to our activities, services and opportunities;
- identify and reduce barriers that may prevent people from participating;
- make reasonable adjustments for disabled people where required;
- provide an inclusive and supportive environment for autistic and disabled people;
- ensure concerns and complaints relating to discrimination or harassment are taken seriously and dealt with appropriately.

3. Equality Act 2010

Medway Puzzles is committed to complying with the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation.

The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race, including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origin;
- religion or belief;
- sex; and
- sexual orientation.

Medway Puzzles will not unlawfully discriminate against a person because of a protected characteristic.

We also recognise that people can experience disadvantage or exclusion for reasons including financial hardship, caring responsibilities, communication difficulties, social isolation and other personal circumstances.

4. Disability, Autism and Reasonable Adjustments

Medway Puzzles is committed to making our services and activities as accessible and inclusive as reasonably possible.

We recognise that treating everybody fairly does not always mean treating everybody in exactly the same way.

Reasonable adjustments may be needed to remove or reduce disadvantages experienced by disabled or autistic people.

Depending on individual circumstances, adjustments may include:

- providing information in an accessible or easier-to-understand format;
- allowing additional time to process information;
- providing quieter spaces or reducing sensory demands where practicable;
- adapting activities where reasonably possible;
- considering accessibility when selecting venues;
- supporting different communication needs;
- allowing appropriate support from a parent, carer or support worker;
- making reasonable changes to procedures or arrangements.

Where possible, Medway Puzzles will discuss reasonable adjustments directly with the individual and/or their parent, carer or representative.

5. Our Commitment

- provide equality, fairness and respect for everyone involved with the charity;

- promote a culture in which individual differences are respected and valued;
- provide an environment free from unlawful discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying and victimisation;
- take reasonable steps to prevent harassment and inappropriate behaviour;
- challenge discriminatory behaviour and language;
- make decisions fairly and objectively;
- consider accessibility when planning activities, events and services;
- provide appropriate equality, diversity and inclusion information or training to trustees, staff and volunteers;
- make reasonable adjustments where required and reasonably practicable;
- encourage people to raise concerns without fear of unfair treatment;
- take complaints seriously and respond appropriately;
- review our practices and procedures to identify unnecessary barriers to participation.

6. Harassment, Bullying and Victimisation

Medway Puzzles will not tolerate bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, intimidation or victimisation.

This applies whether behaviour takes place face-to-face, during activities or events, at football, sporting or social activities, in Medway Puzzles premises or other venues, by telephone or text message, by email, through social media, messaging applications or other online platforms.

Unwanted behaviour that violates someone's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment may constitute harassment.

Sexual harassment and inappropriate sexual behaviour will be taken particularly seriously.

Complaints will be considered promptly, fairly, sensitively and, as far as reasonably possible, confidentially.

Serious concerns may result in disciplinary action, termination of a volunteer role, suspension or exclusion from activities, or referral to another organisation or statutory authority where appropriate.

Where a concern also raises a safeguarding issue, Medway Puzzles' Safeguarding Policy and procedures will be followed.

7. Recruitment and Volunteering

Medway Puzzles aims to provide fair and inclusive opportunities for employment and volunteering.

Recruitment, selection, training, development and progression decisions will be based on the requirements of the role, relevant skills, experience, suitability and merit, subject to any lawful exceptions or positive action permitted by legislation.

Reasonable adjustments will be considered during recruitment and volunteering arrangements for disabled applicants and volunteers.

8. Members, Families and Service Users

Everyone accessing Medway Puzzles should be treated fairly, respectfully and with dignity.

We will aim to ensure that activities and services are accessible to the people they are intended to support.

No member, parent, carer or service user should be subjected to unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

Medway Puzzles may provide activities or services specifically designed for particular groups where this is consistent with the charity's charitable purposes and permitted by law.

9. Responsibilities

The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for ensuring this policy is implemented and reviewed.

Trustees, staff and volunteers are expected to:

- follow this policy;
- treat others with dignity and respect;
- promote inclusion;
- avoid discriminatory or inappropriate behaviour;
- challenge or report serious discriminatory behaviour where appropriate;
- respect individual communication and support needs;
- cooperate with reasonable adjustments;
- report concerns through the appropriate Medway Puzzles procedure.

Everyone representing Medway Puzzles has a responsibility to contribute towards a welcoming, respectful and inclusive environment.

10. Complaints and Concerns

Anyone who believes they have experienced or witnessed discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation should raise the matter with an appropriate Medway Puzzles representative.

Concerns may be raised with:

Paul Harper - CEO
Telephone: 07506 114611
Email: paul.harper@medwaypuzzles.co.uk

Amanda Birch - Chair of Trustees
Email: amanda.birch@medwaypuzzles.co.uk

Where a complaint concerns one of the people named above, it should be raised with another Trustee who is not involved in the matter.

No person should be treated unfairly because they have raised a genuine concern or supported someone else in raising a concern.

Complaints will be handled in accordance with the relevant Medway Puzzles complaints, grievance, disciplinary or safeguarding procedures.

11. Confidentiality

Information relating to equality, discrimination or harassment concerns will be handled sensitively.

Information will normally only be shared with people who need it in order to investigate, respond to or manage the concern, or where Medway Puzzles has a legal or safeguarding reason to share information.

12. Monitoring and Review

The Trustees will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and consider whether Medway Puzzles' activities, services and practices remain fair, accessible and inclusive.

Any equality monitoring information collected by the charity will be handled appropriately and in accordance with data protection requirements.

Medway Puzzles will not collect unnecessary personal information solely for the purpose of monitoring equality.

This policy will normally be reviewed annually, or earlier following:

- significant changes to legislation or official guidance;
- a serious equality or discrimination incident;
- changes to Medway Puzzles' services or structure; or
- identification of improvements that should be made.

13. Related Medway Puzzles Policies

- Safeguarding Policy;
- Complaints Procedure;
- Volunteer Policy;
- Code of Conduct;
- Data Protection and Privacy Policy;
- Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures; and
- Health and Safety Policy.

14. Approval

This Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy has been approved by the Board of Trustees of Medway Puzzles.

Signed copy held by the charity

Signed: _____

Amanda Birch - Chair of Trustees

Date: 7/9/26

Signed: _____ Signed copy held by the charity

Paul Harper - Trustee / CEO

Date: 7/9/2026.

Next Review Date: September 2027