

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

Policy on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging (DEIB)

September 2021

Introduction

Action for Happiness (AfH) is a global movement that celebrates diversity and is committed to fairness and respect for everyone. Our mission is to create a happier, kinder world. This includes a commitment to building a more inclusive society where everyone feels that they belong and that they matter.

Access to health and happiness is unequal across our society. In particular, Black, Asian and ethnic minorities, people in lower socioeconomic groups, disabled people, and the LGBTQ+ community are often more likely to face physical and mental health inequalities.

As part of our ongoing journey of learning and improvement around Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB), we acknowledge that the AfH response to events such as the murder of George Floyd has often been inadequate. Recognising that we have lots more work to do to be better has acted as a catalyst for change, and we are open to on-going feedback from staff, volunteers, supporters and the wider public on how to do this.

This focus on DEIB is vitally important within our movement and the related 'sectors' which we are part of - including wellbeing/wellness, mental health, positive psychology and community-building. These sectors sometimes lack diverse voices and perspectives and are often more biased towards a 'straight, white, middle-class, able, western' framing. In addition, these sectors have sometimes appropriated indigenous wisdom and practices without giving due credit and acknowledgement.

We are committed to acting with compassion and kindness and to creating a movement which provides psychological safety and actively welcomes, connects and values everyone, free from bullying, harassment, victimisation, prejudice or unlawful discrimination. All AfH Trustees, staff and volunteers must behave in accordance with this Policy.

Together, we aim to create an environment where our work and activities can always take place safely, according to the law and in line with our mission and values. Our aim is for our movement to be truly representative and inclusive of all sections of society, where everyone's differences and contributions are recognised and valued.

Action for Happiness is for everybody.

Let's take action to be
**Happier and
Kinder, Together**



Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging

This section explains what these terms mean to us and what we are doing to change our workplace and our movement.

- **Diversity** is about welcoming all the ways we are different (both visible and invisible) and promoting a wide range of different people and perspectives.
- **Equity** is about recognising that each person has different circumstances and may need different resources and opportunities to reach an equal outcome.
- **Inclusion** is about valuing people's unique ideas and lived experiences and ensuring they feel involved, respected, connected, and have their voice heard.
- **Belonging** is about creating a culture where people can be themselves, have psychological safety, appreciate each other, and feel part of something bigger.

Diversity

Welcoming all the ways we are different (both visible and invisible) and promoting a wide range of different people and perspectives.

Current challenges

AfH currently lacks diversity in our team, board, and the broader community of wellbeing experts and academics we work with. A recent survey of our members (2020) found that we reach a higher proportion of women than men, while on other demographics like ethnicity and sexuality we broadly mirror the UK population; however, we want to go further – and to reach, involve and support people from a much more diverse range of backgrounds. We are monitoring but not yet sufficiently tracking and reporting diversity in our membership. We are not yet offering training on DEIB issues for our Trustees, staff and volunteers.

Our response so far

AfH has put diversity at the heart of our recruitment approach for new Trustees and staff and this will form part of related policies and employment contracts. In our events/webinars we are actively inviting and welcoming a more diverse range of experts and voices. We are also incorporating diversity into the design and content of our courses; and issues relating to DEIB are now regularly discussed by our Trustee Board. Our Director has been working with an expert coach on diversity issues and we are planning training for staff and volunteers. We intend to track our journey and to demonstrate that we are putting this policy into practice.

Equity

Recognising that each person has different circumstances and may need different resources and opportunities to reach an equal outcome.

Current challenges

Our reliance on online systems means that some activities may not be equally accessible, for example to people who lack access to the technology or connectivity for signing up. Prior to Covid we also struggled to ensure accessibility to some in-person events and courses, for example in venues without suitable access arrangements. Some of our online/visual resources are not fully accessible, for example, for people with visual impairment. And our online events and videos are not accessible to certain audiences, e.g. people with hearing impairment. Although we pride ourselves on being evidence-based, some of our resources and materials can appear too 'academic' as a result and therefore not as engaging for the wider public as they could be. And although we have built a large AfH community, we are still failing to reach certain ethnic and minority groups and struggling to engage people from lower incomes or poorer socio-economic backgrounds.

Our response

All AfH courses, events, groups and community-facing activities are provided either free at the point of access or via a 'donation of your choice' approach which ensures that they are accessible to everyone, regardless of their financial situation. Our community groups and courses use a peer-to-peer (rather than expert-led) model which ensures they stay relevant to local stakeholders and needs. We also adopt a 'trust-based' approach to volunteer recruitment, placing more emphasis on ethos and values than on academic expertise or qualifications. We have recently introduced accessible versions of our monthly action calendars and captioning for our live events. We have also refreshed our brand to be more accessible to the general public and worked with a wider range of influencers and thought leaders to ensure that our activities have greater appeal and reach for marginalised groups.

Inclusion

Valuing people's unique ideas and lived experiences and ensuring they feel involved, respected, connected, and have their voice heard.

Current challenges

The AfH focus on building a 'secular' movement may potentially alienate people from faith groups. We have also found that AfH can often struggle to engage younger people, in part due to not being available on all the latest social platforms – but also due to potential bias due to the age of our team members, volunteers and expert contributors. We also struggle to reach men as effectively as women. Our focus on scientific evidence may mean that we are less open to certain other forms of wisdom and knowledge. And as yet we don't have a regular/effective forum for seeking out ideas from marginalised people within our movement.

Our response

We continue to promote AfH as welcoming people from "all faiths and none" and actively seeking to include people with a wider range of viewpoints and backgrounds, including marginalised and disadvantaged groups. Our volunteer led groups are now available online in addition to in-person, ensuring they are more inclusive for people who live remotely or may be socially isolated or unable to attend in-person. Our range of speakers and contributors continues to expand to take a much broader idea of what it means to be an 'expert', valuing life experiences as well as academic credentials. We are also planning to create a new forum for including and listening to members of our community from more marginalised groups.

Belonging

Creating a culture where people can be themselves, have psychological safety, appreciate each other, and feel part of something bigger.

Current Situation

The previous lack of diversity in AfH activities has undermined our ability create a sense of belonging for certain groups. We recognise that we have various unconscious biases in the way that we deliver our activities and communicate. As a result some may feel that "this isn't for people like me" and as a result do not participate. We have also failed to provide sufficient opportunities for our members to connect and experience a sense of mutual support and psychological safety from belonging to this community.

Our Response

AfH is working to create a culture where everyone can be their authentic self, experience psychological safety, and feel they belong as they are. We are planning training around good DEIB practices and unconscious bias. We also aim to provide more opportunities for our members to connect and experience that sense of belonging (e.g. via the community chat in our live events or via the AfH app where many thousands of people support each other daily).

Promoting equality and avoiding discrimination

AfH aims to promote equality, fairness and respect for everyone.

Trustees, staff members and volunteers must all commit to ensuring that no-one involved in AfH activities is disadvantaged, discriminated against or receives less-favourable treatment because of any of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010:

- Ethnic origin, nationality (or statelessness) or race
- Age
- Disability, including mental health
- Religion or belief, including the absence of belief
- Marital or civil partnership status
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Gender reassignment
- Sex

And/or:-

- Class or socioeconomic status
- Political belief
- Being a carer

Unconscious Bias and Micro-Aggressions

Unconscious bias is when social stereotypes about certain groups of people unconsciously affect how we interact, make decisions and behave towards others. These biases may relate to the protected characteristics above and can negatively impact people's experience.

Microaggressions are everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target people based solely upon their marginalised group membership.

We ask all Trustees, staff members and volunteers to recognise and challenge unconscious biases and create a culture free from microaggressions. Through honest and open discussions, ongoing education and making DEIB a priority, we seek to reduce unconscious bias and ensure the AfH community is a welcoming place for everybody.

Becoming an anti-racist organisation

AfH is using the Mental Health First Aid [advice](#) on becoming an anti-racist organisation and using this as a template for creating a safer and more welcoming environment for everyone.

How we uphold this policy

Everyone who joins Action for Happiness and participates in our activities is asked to commit to a personal pledge: to create more happiness and less unhappiness in the world around me.

Our members and volunteers have an individual responsibility to uphold both the pledge and our commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging. We share our DEIB policy directly with all staff and volunteers, and we host it publicly on our website.

We provide 'Three Golden Rules' to all our members for how we behave together, as follows:

1. **We listen to what everyone has to offer.** *Everyone has something valuable to offer and we give them our full attention without judgment.*
2. **We speak from the heart, not just the head.** *When we share our lived-experiences and feelings, not just opinions or advice, we offer something really meaningful.*
3. **We are kind to ourselves and each other.** *We take care of own needs as well as the needs of others and commit to creating an inclusive, kind, and safe space for everyone.*

We ask our members to act with kindness and respect at all times and create a culture which supports psychological safety for everyone. No one should behave towards anyone else in a hostile, intimidating way or makes them feel unwelcome. Anyone who raises a concern or challenges discrimination will be supported. No one will be treated differently because they have sought to promote equality or challenge discrimination.

Our Trustees, staff members and volunteers will be provided with guidance that sets out expectations and boundaries around how they should carry out AfH activity in accordance with our DEIB policy. This helps us fulfil our legal obligations to ensure non-discrimination, foster good relations between people, and uphold the AfH pledge.

We will gather and hold information on the demographics of our Trustees, staff members, and volunteers to support our DEIB commitments, understand needs, and monitor progress. This policy is supported by our Trustees and management, including our Director, who has also undertaken an extensive period of one-to-one coaching with a DEIB professional.

How to Make a Complaint

We have a separate [Safeguarding Policy](#) that provides further detail about managing conflict or hostility in our activities and events. This process should be the first port of call for conflict resolution.

If you have a specific complaint about an Action for Happiness staff member or volunteer, please write to us at info@actionforhappiness.org. Ask for the contact details of one of our senior staff members then email details of your complaint directly to them.

If you have a complaint about a community member or volunteer that you think cannot be managed through the Safeguarding Policy, please contact info@actionforhappiness.org

If you see something on our website or in our materials that you think we have got wrong or could be improved, please let us know by emailing info@actionforhappiness.org

