



EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 We are committed to the promotion of equal opportunity and to combating discrimination, direct or indirect, in

- a. the provision of services
- b. our recruitment and employment practices.

1.2 We will seek to ensure that in carrying out the above activities we comply with the Equality Act 2010 and related guidance and that we do not discriminate against anyone on the grounds of:

- gender (sex)
- marriage or civil partnership status
- age
- ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality (race)
- religion or belief
- disability or health problem (provided that, in the case of recruiting and employing staff, the disability or health problem does not prevent them from carrying out their duties, with appropriate equipment or adaptations etc.)
- pregnancy or maternity status
- sexual orientation
- gender reassignment.

1.3 This policy has the following sections:

- Section 2 - Recruitment
- Section 3 - Employment
- Section 4 - Learning and development
- Section 5 - Advancement & promotion
- Section 6 - Harassment, victimisation & confidentiality
- Section 7 - Support
- Section 8 - Redundancy, discipline, dismissal
- Section 9 - Director and employee responsibilities
- Section 10 - Review

2.0 RECRUITMENT

- 2.1 **Recruitment Literature:** We will advertise internally and externally simultaneously except where internal promotion is wholly appropriate. Applicants will be given clear and accurate information about vacant posts through advertisements, recruitment information and interviewing in order to enable them to assess their own suitability for a post.
- 2.2 Recruitment literature will not imply there is a preference for one group of applicants (e.g. by the use of certain language) unless there is a 'genuine occupational qualification' which limits a post to a particular type of person, in which case this must be stated under relevant legislation, and indications given that preference will be given to such applicants.
- 2.3 **Job Outline:** For each vacant post we will produce an accurate Job Outline, including a Person Specification, to indicate the essential and/or desirable requirements for the job.
- 2.4 **Application Forms:** Application Forms will be in a standard format which will ask only questions relating to the necessary requirements for the post. Sections of the form that identify the applicant will be removed before short-listing takes place.
- 2.5 **Advertisements:** Advertisements and recruitment drives will be aimed at as wide a group of suitably qualified and experienced people as possible. Clear, concise and accurate information about vacancies will be promoted through advertising setting out our requirements.
- 2.6 **Shortlisting:** Shortlisting will be carried out by at least two people to reduce bias and will be based on the requirements listed in the Job Outline and Person Specification. All criteria will be applied to each application consistently.
- 2.7 **Interviews:** Each interview panel will consist of at least two people to reduce bias. Directors will be involved in interviews for senior positions. The interview panel will be clearly informed and agreed on the selection criteria before any interview is conducted, and will apply these criteria consistently.
- 2.8 Candidates will not meet any member of the panel before an interview, unless all are doing so on the same footing, so that all may be assessed objectively on the same criteria.
- 2.9 The interview panel will be given guidance and training on the effect which generalised assumptions and prejudices can have on selection decisions.

Interviews will be thorough, conducted on an objective basis and deal only with applicants' suitability for the job and ability to fulfill the job requirements. Applicants' potential will be taken into account.

Where it is necessary to assess whether personal circumstances will affect performance of the job (e.g. when it involves unsocial hours or regular physical activity) this will be discussed objectively avoiding assumptions about marital status, children and domestic obligations. Information necessary for personnel records will be collected after a job offer has been made.

If the applicant's capacity to undertake the duties of the post is in doubt because of disability or health problems, the opinion of medical and other relevant professionals with experience of the care and treatment of the particular problem (e.g. ME, HIV or AIDS) will be sought, with the prior consent of the applicant.

Candidates' performance at the interview will be formally measured and recorded, and the details will be kept for up to six months. This will enable the reasons for shortlisting or rejection to be justified if required.

- 2.11 **References:** References may be obtained after the interview stage and the successful candidate will be informed after these references have been obtained. This will enable the panel to clarify any items of concern with the nominated referees.

3.0 EMPLOYMENT

- 3.1 We will develop, implement and monitor good employment procedures and practices for all employees and will seek to ensure that we do not discriminate against any groups or individuals on any of the grounds listed in para. 1.2 above.
- 3.2 We will not discriminate against part-time employees. Conditions of service will apply equally to part-time employees on a pro-rata basis.
- 3.3 We will consider the institution of positive action programmes for particular groups if appropriate. Examples are:
- the physical adaptation or initial design of workplaces to suit the needs of employees with restricted mobility, if required;
 - recruitment and training for school leavers;
 - internal training programmes designed to aid career development.

4.0 LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 We will not discriminate on any of the grounds listed in para. 1.2 above in the provision of training or training courses. Appropriate training will be provided to enable employees to perform their duties effectively, in accordance with our objectives and budget provision.
- 4.2 We will ensure that all employees and Directors receive appropriate equality and diversity training, information and advice.

5.0 ADVANCEMENT AND PROMOTION

- 5.1 We recognise the benefit of using existing talents to the full, which is in the interests of both employee morale and our business, and will consider internal career promotion as appropriate.

6.0 HARASSMENT, VICTIMISATION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Service Users

- 6.1 We will respond promptly and sensitively to all reports of alleged discrimination and harassment received from users of our services. In dealing with reports of harassment we will seek to ensure that we do not discriminate against any groups or individuals on any of the grounds listed in para. 1.2 above.

Employees

- 6.2 We will deal sensitively and effectively with any complaints of discrimination and sexual or racial harassment involving employees. We will protect employees raising such grievances from victimisation.

Sexual harassment may be defined as;

- (a) unnecessary touching or unwanted physical contact;
- (b) suggestive remarks or other verbal abuse;
- (c) leering at a person's body;
- (d) compromising invitations;
- (e) demands for sexual favours;
- (f) physical assault.

- 6.3 Racial harassment may be defined as: "Violence which may be verbal or physical and which includes attacks on property as well as on the person, suffered by individuals or groups because of their colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins, when the victim believes that the perpetrator was acting on racial grounds and/or there is evidence of racism". (*Commission for Racial Equality definition.*)
- 6.4 If any employee considers that they are suffering from unequal treatment on the grounds of gender, marital status, etc., they will be encouraged to report this, and may make a complaint which will be dealt with through our grievance procedure. Alternatively, an employee may raise any concern by way of our Whistleblowing Policy.

7.0 SUPPORT

- 7.1 Employees with a disability or any serious, chronic or debilitating illness will not be automatically required to adopt different work practices or otherwise have their Job Outline altered or amended as a result of their condition, **provided that** they continue to be able to undertake their duties and/or do not pose any health and safety risk to themselves or their colleagues. The exception to this rule will be where the employee requests, and the Board approves a change.
- 7.2 Any employee who becomes disabled, or who contracts any serious, chronic or debilitating illness will be given every form of support to enable them to remain at work and reasonable arrangements will be made with other employees to facilitate this objective. Where appropriate or required, we will obtain specialist medical advice to assist in making informed decisions.

8.0 REDUNDANCY, DISCIPLINE, DISMISSAL

- 8.1 We will not discriminate unfairly or unlawfully in the application of disciplinary action, redundancy or dismissal.
- 8.2 We will ensure that policies and procedures do not have a disproportionate effect on any one group of employees. For example, it will not be assumed that part-time employees or employees 'last in' should be the first to be made redundant.
- 8.3 We will monitor the number and type of people terminating employment to establish why they are leaving and whether we need to take any action as a result of any trends etc. emerging.
- 8.4 We will ensure that Directors and employees responsible for discipline, redundancy or dismissal have received the necessary training in the objectives of the Equality & Diversity Policy and their legal obligations.

9.0 DIRECTOR AND EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

- 9.1 We recognise that the existence of a policy in itself does not guarantee or provide equality in access, opportunity or outcome, and that the success of the policy depends on the commitment in practice of all Directors and employees.
- 9.2 The Board of Directors has the overall responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented in every area of our activities.
- 9.3 The Manager is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of this policy and for ensuring that our policies, procedures, publications, information material, advertisements and application forms do not contain any statements or conditions which would breach this policy.
- 9.4 We expect all Directors and employees to:
- apply the policy in their activities and day-to-day work;
 - challenge any discriminating behaviour they become aware of;
 - report to the Manager or to a Director, as appropriate, any instances of actual discrimination.

10.0 REVIEW

- 10.1 Any action required to promote equal opportunities arising from a review or a particular incident will be incorporated in each year's Business Plan.
- 10.2 The Manager will ensure that this policy is reviewed by the Board at least every three years.

FIRST APPROVED IN	NOVEMBER 2007
CURRENT VERSION 6.0 APPROVED IN	AUGUST 2020
NEXT REVIEW DUE BY	AUGUST 2023