



Policies and Procedures

Equality Policy –

Version 2.0

2nd February 2023

Policy Revisions Record

| Version | Date | Review due | | | |
|---------|--------------|------------|--|--|--|
| 1 | April 2015 | Nov 2020 | | | |
| 2 | 2nd Feb 2023 | Feb 2025 | | | |
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1. INTRODUCTION

This policy affirms our commitment to equality, diversity and anti-discriminatory practice and promotion. Volunteering in Health is committed to the implementation and promotion of the Equality Act 2010 which brought together 116 different Acts of Parliament, regulations, codes of practice and guidance. The Act introduces an equality duty to:

- Eliminate conduct which the Act prohibits.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different to the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The law also states that having due regard to fostering good relations between different protected groups means having due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

There are nine protected characteristics within the Equality Act:

- age,
- disability,
- gender reassignment,
- race,
- religion or belief,
- pregnancy and maternity,
- sex,
- sexual orientation,
- marriage and civil partnership

Fair access, fair exit, diversity and inclusion are embedded within the culture of the services we provide.

Volunteering in Health recognises responsibilities to people who use its services, those who contract with us, staff and volunteers.

Diversity and equality issues arise throughout employment and Volunteering in Health recognises its responsibilities as an employer, particularly in recruitment, selection, training, conditions of service, promotion and reasons for termination of employment.

It is our aim to provide services which are representative of the communities from which we are drawn, therefore Volunteering in Health will not discriminate either directly or indirectly on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership.

Discrimination is unlawful and can take the form of direct, associative, perceptive or indirect discrimination.

2. STATEMENT OF INTENT

We will:

- Provide a working environment in which the individual differences and contributions of all our staff and volunteers are recognised and valued and which promotes dignity and respect for all.
- Provide equal opportunities to job applicants, employees, volunteers and people who use our services.
- Promote equality and diversity enabling clients the best possible access to all Volunteering in Health services.
- Assist and promote community cohesion and social inclusion.
- Not accept any form of harassment or bullying.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers are aware of their personal responsibilities for the application of this policy.
- Provide training and support to staff and volunteers to meet these objectives.
- Continuously monitor, evaluate and review our systems and practices.
- Consult with staff, volunteers and clients when reviewing our systems and practices in relation to this policy.
- Apply this policy consistently.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. The Board of Trustees will adopt and review the implementation of this policy.
- B. The General Manager is responsible for reviewing and updating this policy.
- C. Managers are responsible for the implementation of this policy within the workplace
- D. All staff and volunteers will comply with this policy.

4. PRACTICE AND PROMOTION

This policy seeks to ensure diversity and equality of opportunity in relation to our employment practices, the provision of our services and all aspects of volunteering. It should be read in conjunction with our Complaints Policy, GDPR Policy, Recruitment Policy and Whistleblowing Policy.

- Recruitment procedures for staff and volunteers will be continuously reviewed and developed to comply with legislation.
- Guidance and training will be provided to staff, who hold responsibility for recruitment, selection, training, conditions of service and promotion, to ensure that no discrimination occurs during these processes.
- Equality and diversity will be covered in all staff and volunteer induction processes and as part of Mandatory Training. The Induction Checklist, Management Handbook, Volunteer and Employment Handbook give further practice guidance.

- People who use our services will know what to expect from us and will be given equal access to all our services. Information and advice will be provided in a format appropriate to their needs.
- Clients will be provided with appropriate support to access services e.g. furniture and equipment and confidential spaces.
- Policies and procedures are communicated to:
 - Clients – By the provision of information in appropriate formats so that they are aware of our policies and procedures relating to Equality and Diversity. This may be by posters, leaflets and/ or with interpretation.
 - Staff and Volunteers – By the provision of induction, training and Employment and Volunteer Handbook.
 - Stakeholders – On request and shared in appropriate forums.
- Guidance and training will be provided for all staff and volunteers in Diversity and Equality.
- All volunteers will be provided with guidelines, which outline what they can expect from Volunteering in Health.
- We adhere to all aspects of employment law.
- In the workplace reasonable adjustments will be made to support a member of staff who becomes disabled during the course of their employment. In the case of a new employee the same will apply.
- Volunteers will, where possible, be supported to continue with their volunteering at Volunteering in Health, if they become disabled or if their disability deteriorates.
- All services will monitor and collect equality data in a format that meets the specification contained within a variety of service level agreements and contracts. This data will be provided to Commissioners, the Trustee Committee and the Management Team so that plans can be developed to address gaps or weaknesses and encourage good practice e.g. where monitoring of equality data highlights that there are certain groups or communities that are not accessing services where it might be expected that they would e.g. by comparing the characteristics of people accessing the service with wider population data or trends or where staff recruitment is not attracting applications from/employment of groups representative of the community.

5. TACKLING DISCRIMINATION

Employees

Employees who feel they have been discriminated against should, in the first instance, speak with their Line Manager or, if the issue is with that person, they should speak to the next senior Manager. The Grievance Procedure found in the Employment Handbook may be applied if the matter cannot be resolved.

Volunteers

Volunteers who feel they have been discriminated against should, in the first instance, talk to the person who provides them with support. If the issue is with that person, they should talk to the next senior person. Please refer to the Volunteer Handbook for further details.

People who use our services

People who use our services are encouraged to talk to the person who is assisting them but if the issue is with that

person, they should ask to speak to the Manager of the service. The Complaints Procedure will apply if the matter cannot be resolved.

6. TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION - as defined under the Equality Act 2010

Full explanations of the types of discrimination can be found on the Equality and Human Rights Commission web site: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com>.

The following examples are provided for guidance:

Direct Discrimination

James, a senior manager, turns down Sarah's application for promotion to a supervisor position. Sarah, who is a lesbian, learns that James did this because he believes that Sarah's sexual orientation would prevent her from gaining the Team's respect and managing them effectively. This is direct sexual orientation discrimination against Sarah.

Discrimination by association

Mary works as a project manager and is looking forward to a promised promotion. However, after she tells her boss that her Mother, who lives at home, has had a stroke, the promotion is withdrawn because the boss thinks that Mary will not have time to concentrate on her new job due to caring responsibilities for her Mother. This may be discrimination against Mary because of her association with a disabled person.

Perception Discrimination

Dave is 45 but looks much younger. Many people assume that he is in his mid 20's. He is not allowed to represent his company at an international meeting because the Managing Director thinks that he is too young. Dave has been discriminated against on the perception of a protected characteristic.

Indirect Discrimination

Collins Bookstore experiences a sudden increase in business and asks all staff to work on Saturdays. Steve, who is Jewish says he cannot break the Sabbath and requests to be excused Saturday shifts. Collins Bookstore tries unsuccessfully to accommodate Steve's request and finally dismiss him. If Collins Bookstore can show that it acted legitimately and proportionately, they would be judged not to have discriminated against Steve.

Harassment

George is disabled and is claiming harassment against his line manager after she frequently teased and humiliated him about his disability. Clive shares an office with George and he too is claiming harassment, even though he is not disabled, as the manager's behaviour has also created an offensive environment for him.

Peter is continually being called gay and other names by a group of employees at his work. Homophobic comments have been posted on the staff notice board about him by people from this group. Pete has recently been pushed to the floor by one member of the group but is too scared to act. Pete is not gay but heterosexual: furthermore, the group know he is not gay. This is harassment because of sexual orientation.

Third Party Harassment

Graham manages a Council Benefits Office. One of his staff, Keith, is gay. Keith mentions to Graham that he is feeling unhappy after a claimant made homophobic remarks in his hearing. Graham is concerned and monitors the situation. Within a few days the claimant makes further offensive remarks. Graham reacts by having a word with the claimant pointing out that this behaviour is unacceptable. He considers following it up with a letter to him pointing out that he will ban him if this happens again. Graham keeps Keith in the picture with the action he is taking and believes he is taking reasonable steps to protect Keith from third party harassment.

Victimisation

Amy makes a formal complaint against her manager because she feels she has been discriminated against because of marriage. Although the complaint is resolved through the organisation's grievance procedures, Amy is subsequently ostracised by her colleagues, including her manager. She could claim victimisation.

Pregnancy and Maternity

Ruth is pregnant and works at a call centre. The manager knows Ruth is pregnant but still disciplines her for taking too many toilet breaks as the manager would for any other member of staff. This is discrimination because of pregnancy and maternity as this characteristic does not require the normal comparison of treatment with other employees.

7. KEY LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS

The Equality Act 2010. This act harmonises and replaces previous legislation such as the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and ensures consistency in what we need to do to make our workplace a fair environment and to comply with the law.

8. USEFUL WEBSITES

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk> - is the Government Website. There is a specific section on Equalities.

<http://www.acas.org.uk/> - The home page for ACAS. It is a general menu driven site for all up to date Human Resources advice and information.

As part of the normal annual policy review process, the impact of this policy on our range of clients has been considered, ensuring its implementation does not discriminate against, or adversely affect, any of our clients. We will ensure equal access to all our policies, including this one. We will assess capability to understand the policy and provide support when it is required.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years.

In case of any queries or questions in relation to this policy please contact General Manager or Board of Trustees

Signed on behalf of the Board of Trustees by

Name: Manuela Grossmann

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'MG', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Date: 06th February 2023