



Her Centre Equal Opportunities policy

1. Statement of policy

The aim of this policy is to communicate the commitment of the Board of Trustees, staff and volunteers to the promotion of equality of opportunity in the Her Centre. Her Centre is committed to celebrating diversity, promoting equality, fostering equal opportunities and tackling discrimination to ensure that employees, clients and service users are treated with respect and valued equally. Her Centre is committed to ensuring that all its employees, potential employees, volunteers and service users are treated no less favourably and not unlawfully discriminated against on the grounds of possessing a protected characteristic as defined in The Equality Act 2010 as stated below:

- Marital or civil partnership status
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Religious belief or political opinion
- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, or being an Irish Traveller or Romany)
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Gender reassignment
- Sex

As a women-only service we do not provide a direct service to men but will give telephone advice and support and signpost men who contact us. We do not employ men to provide services as respect to the vulnerability of the women we work with and based on our aims and mission. We will occasionally contract office support services where men will provide IT or similar support. We are exempt under schedule 3 part 7, clause 27 under the Equality Act 2010.

2. Equalities and employment

Her Centre aims to ensure that its employees achieve their full potential and that all employment decisions are taken without reference to irrelevant or discriminatory criteria. Her Centre has adopted this policy as a means of helping to achieve these aims and should be read in conjunction with our policies on Bullying and Harassment, and Recruitment and Selection.

Her Centre will aim to create a working environment in which all people are encouraged to give their best, that all decisions are based on merit and that there is no bullying and harassment. We are opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. All job applicants, employees and volunteers who work for us will be treated fairly and will not be discriminated against on any of the above grounds.



Decisions about recruitment and selection, promotion, training or any other benefit will be made objectively and without unlawful discrimination.

We recognise that the provision of equal opportunities in the workplace is not only good management practice, it also makes sound business sense. Our equal opportunities policy will help all those who work for us to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be utilised fully to maximise the efficiency of the organisation. We will report annually on the demographics of our workforce.

2.1 What is discrimination?

There should be no discrimination on any of the grounds set out in point 1 above. The types of discrimination which are prohibited are defined below. Discrimination can occur in the following forms:

2.1.1 Direct discrimination occurs where someone is put at a disadvantage or treated less favourably because of their membership of a protected group in relation to his or her employment. Direct discrimination may occur even when unintentional.

Examples

- A woman with young children fails to obtain a job because it is feared that she might be an unreliable member of staff.
- A Sikh applicant for a senior post is not appointed because she might not 'fit in' with the existing (all white) team.

2.1.2 Indirect discrimination is putting a practice or condition for employment in place, which on the surface appears a 'neutral' requirement but in reality, one of the protected groups finds the requirement more difficult to comply with.

Example

- A requirement for GCSE English as a selection criterion. This would have a disparately adverse impact on people educated overseas and may not be justified if all that is needed is to demonstrate a reasonable level of literacy.

2.1.3 Disability discrimination occurs where an individual is unjustifiably disadvantaged in employment/recruitment for a reason connected with their disability unless the discrimination cannot be avoided by making reasonable adjustments.

Examples

- A requirement for employees to hold a valid driving licence for a job which involves little travelling.
- Failure to recruit a person who may have a mobility or sensory impairment without first considering whether the working arrangements or premises can reasonably be adapted to her needs.

2.1.4 **Victimisation** occurs where an individual is treated less favourably than colleagues because they have taken action to assert their statutory rights and/or asserted their right not to be discriminated against as a member of a protected group and/or assisted a colleague with information in that regard.

Example

- An employee claiming that she has been discriminated against on the grounds of her race and then her manager deciding not to give her a reference when she leaves their employment because she had complained that she had been discriminated against.

2.1.5 **Harassment** occurs when an individual is subject to unwanted conduct which has the effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for that individual or violating someone's dignity because they possess a protected characteristic.

Example

An employee who is subjected to verbal comments from a co- worker or group which they find offensive, degrading, humiliating or intimidating thus making their working environment intolerable.

2.1.6 **Associative discrimination** occurs when an individual is subject to Direct Discrimination because they associate with another person who possesses a Protected Characteristic.

Example

An employee is told that she is going to receive a promotion. Just before this promotion is made official the employee's husband is diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis and she is not given the promotion due to the expectation that she will not be able to dedicate herself to her job or concentrate properly as she will need to look after her husband.

2.1.7 **Discrimination by perception** occurs when an individual is subject to Direct Discrimination because others *think* that they possess a certain protected characteristic. This applies even if they do not possess this characteristic.

Example



An employee is often subject to jokes and insinuations that she is gay, which she is not. The discrimination that she is subject to is unlawful because of perception.

2.1.8 Harassment by a third party occurs when a third party who the organisation/business is not in control of and does not employ harasses an Employee. The Employer may be liable for the acts of the third party.

Example

An employee is subject to lewd comments by a partner of the organisation which makes her feel uncomfortable and intimidates her. She tells the Employer of the situation and the Employer refuses to intervene, telling her that she needs to toughen up. If the lewd comments continue and the Employer refuses to intervene then she may have a case against the Employer for harassment by a third party.

2.2 To whom does the policy apply?

All trustees, staff, and volunteers are given the Equal Opportunities Policy as part of their induction and expected to sign up to this. The policy also applies to:

- Job applicants and potential applicants
- Contract workers
- Agency workers
- Trainee workers and students on work experience or placements
- Volunteers

Details of how the policy applies to those using our services and the wider public is under section 3.

2.3 Implementing equalities in employment

Her Centre is particularly concerned that equality of opportunity is maintained in the following areas:

- recruitment and selection
- promotion, appraisal, transfer, and training
- terms of employment, benefits, facilities, and services
- grievance and disciplinary procedures
- dismissals, resignations, and redundancies

2.3.1 Her Centre is therefore, committed to promote equality of opportunity by ensuring that:

- Recruitment and employment decisions are made based on fair and objective criteria. Individuals will be assessed according to their capability to carry out a given job and assumptions will not be made that



only certain types of people will be able to perform certain types of work. Job descriptions and person specifications will form part of the recruitment process. Our selection procedures are reviewed periodically to ensure that they are appropriate for achieving our objectives and for avoiding unlawful discrimination;

- The requirements of job applicants and existing members of staff who have or have had a disability are reviewed to ensure that whatever possible reasonable adjustments are made to enable them to enter into or remain employed by us. Promotion opportunities, benefits and facilities of employment will not be unreasonably limited, and every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that disabled staff can participate fully in the workplace;
- Person specifications are limited to those requirements which are necessary for the effective performance of the job. Interviews are conducted on an objective basis and personal or home commitments will not form the basis of employment decisions except where necessary. The use of experience, age requirements, gender, and qualifications in the job specification will only be used if they can be objectively justified;
- Appropriate training is provided, where possible, to enable staff to implement and uphold our commitment to equality of opportunity. In certain circumstances an employee can be personally liable for discrimination against a fellow employee or job applicant;
- All staff have a right to equality of opportunity and a duty to implement this policy. Breach of the equal opportunity policy is potentially a serious disciplinary matter. Anyone who believes that he or she may have been disadvantaged on discriminatory grounds which breaches this policy is entitled to raise the matter through the Her Centre Grievance Procedure;
- It monitors its use of fixed term, part time employees and agency workers, and their conditions of service, to ensure they are being offered appropriate access to benefits, training, promotion and permanent employment opportunities. Her Centre will monitor their progress to ensure they are accessing permanent vacancies and will ensure that the requests to alter working hours from all staff are dealt with appropriately;

Any redundancy criteria and procedures are monitored to ensure that they are fair and objective and do not directly or indirectly

2.4 Manager Training

Her Centre will ensure that all managers and supervisors with responsibility for any staff and their development are provided with the appropriate equality and diversity training where necessary which may be updated on a regular basis as required. Other staff may also be required to attend equality and diversity



training. Attendance at training is compulsory if you are notified that you should attend a course. Her Centre will ensure that all trustees and others involved in recruitment have been trained in equalities.

2.5 Monitoring employment

Her Centre has designated the Office & Finance Manager as the person who will have responsibility for ensuring that the Equality and Diversity Policy and the action plan are regularly reviewed. All policies and procedures will be implemented and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure legal compliance and best practice with regard to equality.

Her Centre may consider setting targets within their action plan as a result of the findings from the monitoring process and may look at a number of options for example;

- Consider if positive action is appropriate when reviewing current policies and practices
- Interviewing more disabled people
- Reviewing the way that vacancies are advertised in order to attract applicants from minority ethnic groups
- Increasing the number of management jobs open to job sharing in order to encourage more applications from women with children
- Consider more flexible working options – such as flexible hours, job-sharing, homeworking, part-time working, etc.

The Office & Finance Manager will also be responsible for monitoring how the policy is working in practice as this is critical to ensure that equality is being delivered in the workplace.

The purpose of monitoring is to review the effectiveness of the policies and action plan. Monitoring involves;

- Gathering individual personal information on the diversity of our existing staff and any potential recruits.
- It also allows Her Centre to be able to compare and analyse this information against jobseekers in the local community, the broader national labour market and other groups of employees within the organisation.

The type of information that Her Centre will collect, shall be based around the current UK equality legislation.

Her Centre will not tolerate acts which breach this policy and all instances of such behaviour or alleged behaviour will be taken seriously, fully investigated and may be subject to the disciplinary procedures.

2.6 Complaints



Employees who believe that they have suffered any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation are entitled to raise the matter through the agreed grievance procedures. A copy of these procedures is available from the policy folder in the group network folder.

3. Equality commitments to service delivery

Her Centre is committed to ensuring equality of access to all its services. All Her Centre staff, trustees and volunteers will take action to provide genuine equality of opportunity for everyone who wishes to access its services and equality in the provision of services to all its entitled service users.

We are committed to:

- Promoting equality of opportunity for all persons
- Providing services in which all persons are treated with respect
- Preventing occurrences of unlawful direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment, and victimisation
- Fulfilling all our legal obligations under the equality legislation and associated codes of practice
- Complying with our own equal opportunities policy and associated policies
- Taking lawful affirmative or positive action, where appropriate

Her Centre values and actively promotes the diversity of Greenwich & the surrounding boroughs' communities and aims to bring communities together through its services.

Her Centre is committed to identifying and eliminating discriminatory practices, procedures, and attitudes throughout the charity. Her Centre expects employees, service delivery partners and other stakeholders that influence Her Centre's service delivery to support this commitment and to assist in its realisation in all possible ways.

This commitment applies to all aspects of service delivery, including:

- Domestic abuse advocacy
- Sexual abuse advocacy
- Young people's awareness support
- Counselling and motivational groups
- All classes run by or on behalf of Her Centre
- All events run by Her Centre
- Development and support of the Greenwich User Steering Group
- Running of the One Stop Shop

All breaches of equal opportunities policy by staff are treated as misconduct which could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

4. Implementation



The CEO has specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy throughout our service provision. Each employee also has responsibilities and we expect all our employees to abide by the policy and help create the equality environment which is its objective.

In order to promote equality of access Her Centre will aim to ensure the following:

- Services are based on consultation with those who receive the services and positive steps are taken to involve excluded groups in decision making;
- Services are flexible and responsive to the changing needs and aspirations in the community;
- Information on services is widely available and where necessary targeted to ensure maximum awareness of provision;
- Systems are developed to audit and monitor service delivery and customer satisfaction;
- Our complaints procedure is accessible for all;
- Positive action programmes will be developed to target the needs of usually excluded groups;
- In advertising and publicity, Her Centre will be presented as an organisation committed to promoting equality of access to services; displaying positive images of groups traditionally excluded;
- Services are physically equally accessible to all, meaning Her Centre's office as well as all venues for trainings, events etc. have full disabled access;

In order to implement this policy, we shall:

- Communicate the policy to employees, board of trustee members, job applicants, user steering group members, and relevant others (such as contract or agency workers and volunteers), to ensure all our service users are treated fairly and with respect
- Incorporate specific and appropriate duties in respect of implementing the equal opportunities policy into job descriptions and work objectives of all staff
- Provide equalities training to the public to raise awareness of how discrimination impacts on women, addressing intersectionality of protected characteristics
- Incorporate equal opportunities notices into general service and communications practices
- Obtain commitments from other persons or organisations such as subcontractors or agencies that they too will comply with the policy in their dealings with our organisation and our service users
- Ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfil the objectives of the policy, and equalities information and promotion is a key aspect of service planning and delivery.

5. Training



New and existing staff members will be briefed on the Equal Opportunity Policy. This will be a regular ongoing process and any amendments made to the policy will be conveyed to all staff.

Training and guidance will be provided to all staff to ensure that they fully understand the Equal Opportunity Policy and that they are working in accordance with it. Training and guidance will be available to committee members and to volunteers to increase awareness and ensure best practice in service development and delivery and in recruitment practices.

As part of service provision, equalities issues will be focused on at Open Forums and covered in training for service users as part of inclusion work.

6. Monitoring and review

We will gather information from our monitoring systems to assist the effective implementation of our equal opportunities policy, using targets where necessary to better identify and meet local women's needs. The effectiveness of our equal opportunities policy will be reviewed regularly, at least annually. Where monitoring identifies an under-representation of a particular group or groups, we shall develop an action plan to address the imbalance.

7. Complaints

Any service user who feels they have suffered from any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation should be informed of the complaints procedure and given a copy of this procedure by the staff member the complaint was raised with.

All complaints of discrimination will be dealt with seriously, promptly, and confidentially.

Reviewed and approved: May 2023

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