

## **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY**

### **Introduction**

DARTS FOR ALL, hereinafter referred to as the Community Group, strives for high standards both as a Community Group and as a provider of services. In so doing, we recognise the need for encouraging diversity and wholeheartedly support a policy of equal opportunities in all areas of our work and responsibilities.

This policy provides guidance to enable all who work with or for the Community Group to comply with anti-discrimination legislation. The policy will also address anti-discrimination issues involving areas that currently fall outside any legislation. Failure to follow the procedures in the policy may lead to disciplinary or other appropriate action.

The Community Group's aims and objectives will be achieved through action planning, effective monitoring and a willingness to tackle problems where they arise. The Community Group is committed to reviewing this policy on an annual basis. Through our training, publications, interaction with members and other activities, the Community Group will ensure those we work with know our statements of policy.

The Community Group will regularly review the implementation of its Equality and Diversity Policy and strategy. Where evidence is found of ineffectiveness, immediate remedial action will be taken to ensure implementation.

The Community Group urges staff, trustees, volunteers and members to be aware of the less obvious types of discrimination which result from general assumptions and pre-conceptions about the capabilities, interests and characteristics of individuals.

## **Policy Statements**

### **Diversity**

The Community Group will actively encourage diversity to maximise achievement, creativity and good practice and to bring benefit to individuals and communities. The Community Group encourages all people it works with, and for, to contribute to an environment in which people feel comfortable expressing how they feel and what they need, knowing they will be treated with respect and that their contribution will be valued.

The way we work, train and learn within the Community Group reflects both the Mission and Objectives of the Community Group and the spirit and intentions of legislation that outlaws discrimination and promotes equality and diversity.

The Community Group will make reasonable adjustments to working practices, equipment and premises and offer, where appropriate, additional support to trustees, staff and volunteers to ensure they are able to take a full and active part in the Community Group's work.

The Community Group will endeavour to deliver services in a way that genuinely recognises the importance of an inclusive society that brings opportunities and access, not barriers to individuals.

### **Equal Opportunities**

The Community Group is an equal opportunities provider of services. No volunteer, trustee, member or service user should receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity (known in legislation as the protected characteristics).

In addition the organisation also seeks to promote equal opportunities in terms of class, HIV status, nationality, employment status, unrelated criminal convictions or union activities, political, mental health or caring responsibilities.

Nor will such person's age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity, class, HIV status, nationality, employment status, unrelated criminal convictions or union activities, political, mental health or caring responsibilities, be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable.

This principle applies to all aspects of the Community Group's activities as an employer and provider of services, including recruitment, promotion, transfer,

training, benefits, facilities, procedures and all terms and conditions of employment.

### **Aims and Objectives**

The aims and objectives of the Equality and Diversity Policy are:

- To encourage, promote and celebrate diversity in all our activities and services
- To ensure equal access to jobs, volunteer opportunities, services
- To ensure compliance with legislation on discrimination and equality including Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation currently in force
- To promote equal opportunities in other areas not currently covered by legislation
- To create environments free from harassment and discrimination
- To maximise the use of resources in the best interests of staff, volunteers and service users
- To confront and challenge discrimination where and whenever it arises, whether it is between colleagues, or in any other area relating to the Community Group's work
- To make a willingness to accept and implement this policy to be a necessary qualification for any position in the Community Group
- To ensure, through positive action and so far as is practicable, that all the Community Group premises and services are accessible to all people
- To ensure that employment and advancement within the Community Group is determined by objective criteria and personal merit

### **Policy Implementation: Expectations**

The Community Group recognises that passive policies do not provide equality and encourage diversity in employment/training/services. The Community Group will seek to promote equality and diversity within the following framework of responsibilities.

Responsibility for implementing and developing the policy rests with the Trustees. The overall co-coordinating responsibility for equal opportunities and management of diversity is delegated to the Chairman.

However, the Community Group believes that all who work with or for the Community Group have an individual responsibility: to accept the policy and ensure a personal involvement in its application; to co-operate actively to ensure that the environment we desire is a reality. Therefore the Community Group requires individuals:

- To implement measures introduced by the Community Group to ensure equality of opportunity, diversity and non-discrimination.
- Not to harass, abuse or intimidate any other employee or participant on the grounds of the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and

civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity, or in relation to class, HIV status, nationality, employment status, unrelated criminal convictions or union activities, political, mental health or caring responsibilities.

- To inform management if they suspect discrimination is taking place.

The Community Group requires its Volunteers and Committee Members:

- To ensure that proper records of employment decisions are maintained and regular reviews of employment practices are carried out.

- To ensure that grievances are dealt with in a fair and consistent manner and in line with the Community Group's Grievance Policy and Procedure.

- To ensure that individuals within their area are aware of their legal responsibilities, and the Community Group's Equality and Diversity Policy.

- To promote actively the benefits of employee and participant diversity, in employment, services and training.

The Community Group will appoint and support Equality and Diversity Advisers who will:

- To support Volunteers and Committee Members, offer advice and make recommendations in relation to Equal Opportunities and Diversity and implementing relevant policies and procedures.

- To ensure that the highest standards of Equality Opportunities practice are observed in the delivery of the Community Group's services and to undertake training and development opportunities to ensure that competence is maintained.

- To collate and discuss relevant Community Group information and make recommendations to the Chairman.

- To offer advice and guidance to members of staff, volunteers and Community Groups in the Community Group's Equality and Diversity Policy and Procedures.

- To seek the views and opinions of volunteers, customers and clients on the operation of the policy in his/ her locality/ area of responsibility, in particular to meet the diverse needs of the users.

- To facilitate training and discussion on Equal Opportunities and Diversity issues as appropriate.

The person with overall responsibility for Equality and Diversity will:

- Ensure that Managers and Equality and Diversity Advisers are supported in their roles in regard to the Equality and Diversity Policy and Procedures.

- Ensure Trustees and Managers are appraised regularly on the state of equal opportunities and diversity within the Community Group.

- Ensure that the Equality and Diversity Policy and associated documents are reviewed on an annual basis.

- Review and approve policies, procedures and practices that impact on equal opportunities and diversity practice.

- Co-ordinate the delivery of an equality and diversity strategy and action plan.

## **Policy Implementation: Recruitment and Promotion**

The Community Group strives to ensure that our trustees and volunteers reflect the wider community.

Clear and accurate information on vacant posts should be available through advertisement, job descriptions, person specifications and interview. Vacancies should be advertised sufficiently widely to reach the widest possible range of candidates, either internal and/or external.

All recruitment material should not imply any preferred group, unless a genuine occupational qualification exists limiting a post to a particular group. Applicants will be informed, through all recruitment material of the Community Group's commitment to Equal Opportunities and Diversity.

Person specifications may include 'essential' and 'desirable' requirements that are necessary and justifiable. Care, and advice where necessary, is needed to ensure these are not discriminatory.

No questions regarding health and/or disability will be asked until a person is offered a job other than in line with the limited number of exceptions outlined in the Equality Act 2010 (which includes monitoring and exceptions for certain kinds of jobs amongst others).

Staff and volunteers should be encouraged to discuss their development and training needs through a process of regular support and annual appraisals. Job titles that are discriminatory must be avoided.

## **Policy Implementation: Interviews and Selection**

In line with the intentions of this policy, efforts must be made to select a recruitment panel, which is inclusive in terms of gender, disability and ethnicity. Recruiting staff should have received relevant training.

The shortlisting panel will select candidates on the basis of an objective assessment of their match with the skills and competencies as described in the job description and person specification and will ensure that all candidates have equal opportunity to give examples of how they meet these.

The interview panel must take extreme care not to ask discriminatory questions which do not comply with the Community Group's Equality and Diversity Policy Statements, e.g. age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity, class, HIV status, nationality, employment status, unrelated criminal convictions or union activities, political, mental health or caring responsibilities,

## **Policy Implementation: Training**

In line with the intentions of this policy, the Community Group will not discriminate in the provision of training courses/ opportunities wherever possible.

Appropriate training will be provided to enable trustees, volunteers and committee members to perform their jobs effectively. The training offered will take into account the needs of all people.

Briefing on this policy will form part of the Induction Procedure for trustees, staff, volunteers and committee members.

## **Enforcement**

The Community Group recognises the need for a continuing commitment to genuine equal opportunities and diversity within the Community Group. The effectiveness of the policy's aims and objectives can only be judged by how the policy operates in practice.

### **Policy Enforcement - Grievances**

Any member or volunteer who feels they have been a victim of discrimination or unfairly treated in a way contrary to the intention of this policy should raise the issue through the Community Group's established Grievance Procedure.

Any service user who feels he/she has been unfairly treated in a way contrary to the intention of this policy should make a complaint through the Community Group's Chairman, who must report any such complaint to the Committee. If the complaint is about the Chairman, this should be made through the Vice Chairman.

Any applicant who believes that he/she has been treated unfairly and contrary to the intention of this policy should raise the issue with the Chairman.

Incidents of victimisation or harassment will be dealt with in accordance with the Community Group's Harassment Procedure. Where incidents of victimisation and harassment are proven, the issue will be dealt with under the Community Group's Disciplinary Procedure.

The Community Group will not treat lightly or ignore grievances from members of disadvantaged groups on the assumption that they are over-sensitive about discrimination.

### **Policy Enforcement - Disciplinary Procedure**

All incidents of **direct discrimination** are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure.

Incidents of **indirect discrimination** will be investigated to determine whether they should be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure.

Incidents of **victimisation** or **harassment** will be dealt with in accordance

with the Community Group's Harassment Procedure. Where incidents of victimisation and harassment are proven, the issue will be dealt with under the Community Group's Disciplinary Procedure.

Any volunteer, including Trustees or members of any committee, found to be in breach of this policy will be counselled on his/her actions and may, where necessary, be removed from the Community Group's volunteer register.

Any member of any Committee or working group of the Community Group found in breach of this policy will be counselled on his/her actions and may, where necessary, be asked to leave the Community Group.

Any service user found in breach of this policy will, where appropriate, be counselled on his/her actions and may, where necessary, be referred back to their Community Group or refused future services from the Community Group.

### **Monitoring**

The Community Group regards the collection/analysis of data as vital in informing change and improving performance. Where appropriate, statistics on the Community Group's services will be collected and analysed in relation to equality and diversity matters. We will review employee turnover and seek information on reasons for leaving. Local and national data or statistics will be used to benchmark our performance.

The Trustees will review annually equality of opportunity relating to the Community Group services. Recruitment and selection procedures will be monitored and reviewed annually by the Chairman who will report to the Committee. All aspects of personnel policies and procedures shall be kept under review to ensure that they do not operate against the Equal and Diversity Policy.

If appropriate action will be taken to encourage wider take up of employment, volunteering, trusteeship, membership and services.

In order to determine the impact of this policy it is important that a monitoring system be developed which will measure commitment, progress and effectiveness. The Diversity and Equality Policy will be monitored and reviewed as follows:

- The equality and diversity will be an agenda item at the Community Group team meetings.
- The Chairman will undertake an annual policy review. All relevant parties will be encouraged to submit comments for consideration.
- The review recommendations will be presented to the next Trustee meeting for their comments and ratification.

Where it appears that there may have been or there is a breach of the policy, the Chairman will investigate the circumstances and action will be taken to counter any proven breach of policy.

If it is found that the policy is excluding or discouraging the development of trustees, staff or volunteers or restricting service users, the Chairman should take action to re-adjust the policy.

Approved on

Signed:

Position: Chairman

Date:

Review

Date:





## Definitions

**Equal Opportunities** ensures that policies, procedures and practice within the Community Group do not discriminate against its employees, volunteers and stakeholders. It is about treating people fairly and equally regardless of whom they are, their background or their lifestyle.

**Diversity** ensures that all people are valued as individuals and are able to maximise their potential and contribution to the Community Group and to the community. It recognises that people from different backgrounds can bring fresh ideas and a different approach, which can make the way we work and learn more fun, more creative, more efficient and more innovative.

**Direct Discrimination**, as defined in law, occurs when an individual is dealt with less favorably than other people on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity.

The Community Group also seeks to promote equal opportunities in terms of class, HIV status, nationality, employment status, unrelated criminal convictions or union activities, political, mental health or caring responsibilities.

**Discrimination by association** - applies to race, religion or belief and sexual orientation, age, disability, gender reassignment and sex. This is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic (race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, disability, gender reassignment and sex).

**Discrimination by Perception** – direct discrimination against someone because others think they possess a particular characteristic of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity.

**Indirect Discrimination** occurs when a provision, criterion or practice puts people of a particular group at a disadvantage and is not justified in relation to the job, for example a rule about clothing that disproportionately disadvantages a racial group cannot be justified.

**Harassment** means unwanted conduct based on a protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person.

Harassment applies to all protected characteristics except for pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnership. Employees will now be able to complain of behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at them, and the complainant need not possess the relevant characteristic themselves. Employees are also protected from harassment because of perception and association

**Positive Action** refers to measures taken to assist employees, or learners who have been under-represented in specific areas, to reach a level of workplace knowledge and competencies that is comparable with 'representative' employees. These

measures could take the form of additional training or providing the job application form in other languages to encourage applicants from these communities.

**Protected characteristics** - The Equality Act 2010 covers exactly the same groups of individuals that were protected by the previous legislation. However, the headings of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity are now to be known as '**protected characteristics**'.

**Victimisation** means that if a person has made or is making an accusation of discrimination in good faith, it is unlawful to discriminate against them for having done so, or because they intend to do so or it is suspected that they intend to do so. People must be able to act against unlawful discrimination without fear of reprisals.

#### **Further sources of support and advice:**

ACAS – provides a range of support and advice, guidance booklets, information on employment, and sample policies. <http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1363>

NCVO – has a bank of human resources related policies and procedures including equality policies, Grievance and Harassment. <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/hrbank-policies>

Equality Advisory Support Service (formerly the Equality and Human Rights Commission): <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/new-equality-act-guidance/>

Voluntary Action Leicestershire can provide help and support with policies and procedures, please call 0116 257 5050 or email the Helpline at [helpline@valonline.org.uk](mailto:helpline@valonline.org.uk)