



EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

October 2018

INTRODUCTION

The development of a meaningful Equality & Diversity Policy represents an essential part of our organisational culture. It has been produced to enable all who are part of Choices Domestic Violence & Abuse Service to understand their rights and responsibilities with regard to the elimination of unfair or discriminatory practice.

We aim to be excellent in promoting equality and valuing diversity in the way we deliver our services and manage our employees. We strive to be inclusive though respecting one another, promoting and achieving equality of opportunity, valuing diversity, and providing an accessible, responsive service to our clients.

This Equality Act 2010 brings together for the first time all the legal requirements on equality that the private, public and voluntary sectors need to follow in both employment and service delivery. As a minimum, Choices will ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

The challenge for us is to create a talented and diverse workforce which properly reflect the individual needs of our service users and the wider community we serve. The strategy will lead to a positive effect on our performance and providing an accessible and responsive service to all who need it.

We shall incorporate the principles of equal opportunities into our recruitment and selection practices, training and development programmes and all our business processes, in order to shape thinking, raise awareness and achieve goals.

Putting policy into practice. We recognise that to be successful, a policy has to be more than just a piece of paper. The commitment to fair practice is an integral part of all daily activities and is therefore integrated into all Choices practices and policies. The impact of this Equality and Diversity Policy across Choices is managed under review via the Choices Action plan

AIMS OF THE POLICY

To ensure that no one individual or group receives less or more favourable treatment than another by reason of their gender, colour, race, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief.

What does Equality & Diversity mean to us:

Equality and diversity is about treating people fairly and equally. People with the same needs should be treated equally, regardless of their appearance, beliefs, age, background or lifestyle.

Diversity is about recognising that there are differences between people and taking these into account when we relate to them. It is about not treating everyone as if they were the same, or expecting everyone to react to situations in the same way. It is about learning to recognise that people are different and working to overcome our own personal preferences and prejudices to make sure that everyone's views are heard and taken into account, and that everyone is treated appropriately.

We are committed to providing equality of opportunity for our staff, clients and other people that we work with, to meet the needs of the diverse community that we serve, and to creating a work culture which values diversity, inclusiveness and respect.

WHO IS THE GUIDE FOR?

The Policy applies to all members of Choices including our Board of Trustees, Workers, Volunteers, service users and contractors.

To ensure commitment from all, it is essential that everyone has a duty and responsibility to respect the Policy.

EMPLOYMENT

Choices has a legal duty not to discriminate (intentionally or otherwise) in its employment practices. Choices will ensure that no job applicant is disadvantaged by questions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable in relation to the job. Selection criteria and procedures are chosen to ensure individuals are selected and treated on the basis of their merits, skills and abilities.

All applicants will be informed that –

- Choices endeavours to be equal opportunities employer
- Choices is willing to accommodate applicants with special needs wherever possible

Choices will promote equality in the workplace and will ensure fairness in the manner in which decisions are carried out in order to maintain a good working relationship with all staff irrespectively of their gender, colour, race, disability, sexual orientation, age religion or belief.

Choices has a legal duty not to intentionally or otherwise in its employment practises although it should be recognised that under Section 7 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 However, Choices will only claim a Genuine Occupational Qualification (GOQ) where it is necessary for the relevant duties to be carried out by a female and not merely because it is preferable. Each job for which a GOQ may apply will be considered individually and reassessed on each occasion the post becomes vacant to ensure that it can still be validly claimed.

Harassment of any kind will be treated very seriously and any person (employee or service user) found to be perpetrating such behaviour will be dealt with under Choices Bullying and Harassment Policy.

ACCESS TO CHOICES

Choices is committed to ensuring that no individual or group has less or more favourable access to its resources.

Choices recognises that service users or potential service users are individuals with individual needs and where possible Choices will endeavour to access aids and support services to ensure people with special needs are not disadvantaged in terms of accessing Choices services. Choices will at all times try to respond flexibly and creatively to people's individual needs.

GOODS AND SERVICES

Choices expects all contractors, consultants and other partners to be aware of equality and diversity issues and treat all members of Choices with respect, offering an equal service to all. Choices will take action against any contractor or third party who discriminates or harasses any of Choices staff or service users.

Contractors are expected to operate their own equal opportunities policy and Choices will ask for evidence of such a policy before appointing them. Should a contractor not have such a policy they will be required to sign an undertaking that they will be governed by the policies and procedures of Choices.

Monitoring and Review of Equality

A continual process of monitoring and review of data relating to equal opportunities has been set up for internal employees and external applicants in relation to recruitment and selection, training and development, and benefits. This information is collated and provided to the Board annually to determine if our recruitment and development methods are fair and inclusive.

There will be an annual equality report analysing the service user data from the previous year reflecting local demographics. This report will have the purpose of collating data from the 9 equality strands and determine meaning from that data in terms of the support provided, gaps to be filled and questions to be attended to.

There will also be produced an Equality Impact Assessment (AqIA) for any new service or delivery mechanism that the Board are considering. This will serve the purpose of ensuring that new delivery methods are fully inclusive.

Grievances

Any member of staff or service user may use the Grievance Procedure to complain about harassment and/or discriminatory conduct.

The procedure for dealing with complaints is detailed in Choices Bullying and Harassment Policy and in the Grievance Procedure.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT

Choices wishes it to be known that it strives to be an Equal Opportunities organisation. This means that:

1. In employment, training and development of staff, Choices seek to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment for all persons, to comply with the statutory prohibitions on discrimination and to avoid unlawful practices.
2. In the provision of temporary housing to service users and employment of staff to provide this service, the organisation will seek to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment for all persons, to comply with the statutory prohibitions on discrimination and to avoid unlawful practices.
3. No person or group of persons applying for housing or for a job or for contracts with the organisation will be treated more or less favourably than any other person or group of persons because of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin or because of their religion, sex, sexual orientation, physical disability, appearance, age or marital status.
4. In hiring contractors and other agencies to work for it, Choices will be mindful of its commitment to equality of opportunity.
5. In the composition and operation of its Board of Trustees, Choices will be mindful of its commitment to equality of opportunity.

It is important to note that this policy will be reviewed on a regular basis to reflect any new legislation which we are able to introduce for the benefits of all our members. (see Choices action plan)

Review: June 2019

Signed:



Date: 19/11/18

Andrea Kilivington