

Equal Opportunities Policy

Policy Statement

As a counselling and psychotherapy service working with a wide range of people and families all with differing backgrounds we value and respect the differences our community brings and the opportunities of such diversity and difference. Therefore, we are committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all employees and job applicants, volunteers and the clients we work with daily who need our support. We aim to create a working environment in where everyone can make best use of their skills, free from discrimination or harassment, and in which all decisions are based on merit.

This policy covers all employees, consultants, contractors, casual workers and agency workers. It does not form part of any employees Contract of Employment and we may amend it at any time.

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Clinic Director/Line Manager to ensure that all staff are informed of this policy and that the content of this policy is monitored.

Part time and fixed term employees and independent practitioners should be treated the same as comparable full time or permanent employees and enjoy no less favourable terms and conditions (on a pro-rata basis where appropriate) unless different treatment is justified.

We do not discriminate against employees on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation (protected characteristics).

The principles of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity also apply to the way in which employees treat visitors, clients, customers, suppliers and former employees.

All employees have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and treat others with dignity at all times, and not to discriminate against or harass other employees, regardless of their status.

This policy applies to all aspects of our relationship with employees and to relations between employees at all levels. This includes job advertisements, recruitment and selection, training and development, opportunities for promotion, conditions of service, pay and benefits, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment.

Discrimination by or against an employee is generally prohibited unless there is a specific legal exemption. Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics set out above. For example, rejecting an applicant on the grounds of their race because they would not "fit in" would be direct discrimination.

Indirect discrimination occurs where someone is disadvantaged by an unjustified provision, criterion or practice that also puts other people with the same protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage. For example, a requirement to work full time puts women at a particular disadvantage because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement will need to be objectively justified.

Harassment related to any of the protected characteristics is prohibited. Harassment is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

Victimisation is also prohibited. This is less favourable treatment of someone who has complained or given information about discrimination or harassment or supported someone else's complaint.

Recruitment and selection

Our aim is to manage all employees/volunteers openly, honestly and fairly. To help us to achieve this we will ensure that our Managers are continually made aware of their responsibilities regarding equal opportunities and ensure that they are prepared to manage recruitment of new employees justly and effectively.

We aim to ensure that no job applicant suffers discrimination because of any of the protected characteristics above. Our recruitment procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that employees are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities.

Job advertisements should avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage particular groups from applying.

Applicants should not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made. There are limited exceptions which should only be used with HR approval. For example:

(a) Questions necessary to establish if an applicant can perform an intrinsic part of the job (subject to any reasonable adjustments). For example, what experience they have as a therapist and have they worked with Children and Young People before. This support the competency of the BACP ethical framework that we abide to.

(b) Questions to establish if an applicant is fit to attend an assessment or any reasonable adjustments that may be needed at interview or assessment.

(c) Positive action to recruit disabled persons.

(d) Equal opportunities monitoring (which will not form part of the decision-making process).

Applicants should not be asked about past or current pregnancy or future intentions related to pregnancy. Applicants should not be asked about matters concerning age, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or gender reassignment. If there are any genuine concerns with a protected characteristic then please contact the HR Department for further advise.

We are required by law to ensure that all employees are entitled to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status should not be made based on appearance or apparent nationality. All prospective employees, regardless of nationality, must be able to produce original documents before employment starts, to satisfy current immigration legislation. To ensure that this policy is operating effectively, and to identify groups that may be underrepresented or disadvantaged in our organisation, we monitor applicants' ethnic group, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion and age as part of the recruitment procedure. Provision of this information is voluntary, and it will not adversely affect an individual's chances of recruitment or any other decision related to their employment.

Termination of employment

We will ensure that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory.

We will also ensure that disciplinary procedures and penalties are applied without discrimination, whether they result in disciplinary warnings, dismissal or other disciplinary action.

Disability discrimination

If you are disabled or become disabled, we encourage you to tell us about your condition so that we can support you as appropriate.

If you experience difficulties at work because of your disability, you may wish to contact the Clinic Director to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. We may wish to consult with you and your medical adviser(s) about possible adjustments. We will consider the matter carefully and try to accommodate your needs within reason. If we consider an adjustment would not be reasonable, we will explain our reasons and try to find an alternative solution where possible. For example, carrying out counselling via the online platform rather than coming to the clinic.

Breaches of the policy

If you believe that you may have been discriminated against you are encouraged to raise the matter through our Grievance Procedure.

Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. Employees who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False allegations which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

Any employees who are found to have committed an act of discrimination or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. We take a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.

Monitoring and Review

This policy has been approved for issue by the Directors and will be reviewed on an annual basis or as procedures/legislation changes.

Reviewed April 2020