

Equality and Diversity Policy

1. Background

Visyon is committed to the achievement of equality, of opportunity and diversity as a key feature within all its services and activities, as it believes this to be ethically right and socially responsible.

Visyon believes that excellence of service will be achieved through recognising the value of every individual and aims to create an environment that respects the diversity of staff, volunteers, service users and other stakeholders, to enable them to achieve their full potential and to contribute fully, where appropriate.

To this end, Visyon acknowledges the following basic rights for all stakeholders and prospective stakeholders of the community:

- to be treated with respect and dignity
- to be treated fairly with regard to all procedures, assessments and choices
- to receive encouragement to reach their full potential

2. Policy Statement

Visyon recognises and accepts its responsibilities under the law. We believe that discrimination, either direct or indirect, harassment or victimisation, as defined in law, is unacceptable.

Everyone who is, or seeks to be an employee, volunteer or service user of Visyon is entitled to receive equality of opportunity and treatment that is appropriate and fair in respect of:

- Age
- Caring responsibilities
- Disability
- English being a second language
- Trans Gender reassignment
- Nationality or ethnic origin
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Socio-economic status
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Part time employees
- Pregnancy, maternity or adoption
- Any other unjustifiable factors

This list is not exhaustive.

Visyon will be proactive in all matters relating to equality of opportunity and diversity, and is committed to ensuring that all employees, volunteers and service users understand his or her responsibilities. We value and celebrate the diversity of all those connected with Visyon, due to the enrichment of experience brought into the organisation.

This policy applies to the advertisement of jobs, recruitment and appointment of them, training, appraisals, promotion, conditions of work, pay and to every other aspect of employment.

Failure to comply with this Equality and Diversity Policy or evidence of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation will result in appropriate action being taken, including disciplinary action, where appropriate.

Visyon recognises that despite our best intentions and positive actions, circumstances may arise where there is a failing to provide an appropriate service to people that is consistent with the aims of this policy. We are therefore committed to take action in such circumstances.

3. Policy Commitments

Visyon will:

- Comply with the requirements of The Equality Act 2010, The Human Rights Act 1998 and any subsequent amendments
- Observe, as far as possible, the Equality and Human Rights Commission's (EHRC):
 - Code of Practice for Employment
 - Code of Practice on Equal Pay
 - Code of Practice on Services, Public Functions and Associations
- Observe the principles set out within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child within all our activities
- Promote equality of opportunity as an underlying principle in all our activities
- Promote good relations between people of different age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or any other characteristic, whether protected or otherwise
- Have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination on grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and all other grounds which are not reasonably justifiable
- Meet the requirements of The Equality Act 2010, specifically in terms of making 'reasonable adjustments'. If an existing employee becomes disabled, Visyon will make every effort to retain him or her within the organisation, whenever reasonable and practicable
- Ensure that during the recruitment process we employ a diverse workforce that reflects the community at large as well as the needs of the organisation

- Monitoring the progress and development of staff to guarantee that there are equal opportunities for all
- Treat everyone with dignity and respect, making our best endeavours to provide a working environment free from unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation
- Monitor rates of pay and grading so that no discrimination, direct or indirect occurs on grounds of gender, race or any other justifiable reason
- Promote an inclusive culture including good management practices, through the development of codes of conduct, policies and training. Taking positive action, wherever appropriate, to support this policy and its aims.
- Communicate this policy widely amongst employees, volunteers, service users and other stakeholders

4. Responsibility

Everyone associated with Visyon has a responsibility to uphold equal opportunities and diversity, specifically:

- The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for ensuring that Visyon operates within a framework of equality of opportunity and diversity.
- The Chief Executive Officer will be charged specifically with the overall managerial responsibility relating to equality and diversity. This person will also be responsible for keeping the Board of Trustees informed of all developments made in this area.
- All service managers are responsible for ensuring that this Equality and Diversity Policy is implemented in their area of responsibility
- All members of the Board of Trustees, employees, volunteers and service users have a duty to support and uphold the principles contained in the Equality and Diversity Policy, and to act at all times in a way that is consistent with this policy. Individuals may be held personally accountable should any complaint arise or in respect of breaches of this policy.
- People not employed by Visyon who have a role in delivering its services e.g. self employed contractors, will be made aware of the expectation that they operate within the scope of this policy. Individuals may be held personally accountable should any complaint arise or in respect of breaches of this policy.

5. Implementation and Communication

Visyon has a range of policies and procedures that support and uphold this equal opportunities policy. As a result, everyone who comes into contact with Visyon can be expected to be treated with fairness and with respect as regards their human rights, in accordance with the Human Rights Act 1998. Decisions will be made that uphold these principles and will be made in a transparent manner.

Visyon will make every effort to make its service available to all sections of the community, through positive action where necessary.

Visyon will employ staff and recruit volunteers purely on the basis of their ability to carry out the job required.

Visyon will discourage and take appropriate action against any discriminatory practice in its activities that may be prompted by prejudice, is unfair or unreasonable.

Visyon will actively seek to promote equality of opportunity at all levels in the fullest sense and will monitor its implementation through the collection of statistical data.

Visyon will involve service users in the evaluation procedure.

This Equality and Diversity Policy will be available to all employees, volunteers, service users and others e.g. Commissioners, visitors, suppliers and contractors.

Periodic training will provide a means by which the Policy is communicated to employees and volunteers so that its ethos is embedded in their working practices and in the culture of the organisation. All employees and volunteers will be expected to attend training in equality and diversity as organised by Visyon, which will enable them to fulfil their responsibilities under this policy.

6. Assistance for Disabled Employees

Employees who are disabled or become disabled in the course of their employment should inform their line manager.

They may also wish to advise the organisation of any 'reasonable adjustments' to their employment or working conditions which they consider to be necessary or which they consider would assist them in the performance of their duties. Careful consideration will be given to any proposals of this nature and, where reasonable and reasonably practicable, such adjustments will be made.

There may be circumstances where it will not be reasonable or reasonably practicable for Visyon to accommodate those proposals and where less favourable treatment may be justified in accordance with the Statutory Provisions

7. Complaints

Visyon is committed to responding in a timely and positive manner to any comment, constructive criticism or complaint in relation to equal opportunities.

We will take appropriate action to protect service users, employees and volunteers from discriminatory behaviour by any individual or groups within the organisation, or in the course of their duties or access to services. Allegations of discriminatory behaviour, harassment or victimisation on the part of service users, employees or volunteers will be dealt with under the relevant procedure.

Any complaints arising within the course of employment, volunteering or through access to Visyon's services will be dealt with under the appropriate procedure e.g.:

- Complaints Procedure
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Grievance Procedure
- Whistle Blowing Procedure.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

The HR sub-committee, or other nominated group, will periodically review and report annually on this policy to the Visyon Board of Trustees, with recommendations for development, where appropriate

9. References

The Equality Act 2010
The Human Rights Act 1998
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989
OP.04 Disciplinary Procedure,
OP.05 Complaints Procedure
OP.17 Grievance Procedure
O.12 Whistle Blowing Procedure

THE EQUALITY ACT 2010: A SUMMARY

For a summary and up to date information additional information of the equality act visit:
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/equalities/equality-act/>