

Children North East
General
Equal Opportunities Policy

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

1. AIM

- 1.1 Children North East is committed in its pursuit of equal opportunities and to a proactive and inclusive approach to equality, which supports and encourages all under-represented groups, promotes an inclusive culture, and values diversity; the organisation is also committed to maintaining and developing policies which will translate the commitment into practice. This commitment is under-pinned by Children North East's values and behaviours. The aim of our Equal Opportunities Policy is to ensure that no individual is treated less favourably than another in compliance with the Equality Act 2010.
- 1.2 Within the Equality Act (2010) there are nine protected groups, these are:
- sex
 - sexual orientation
 - gender reassignment
 - race/ethnicity
 - marriage/civil partnership
 - pregnancy/maternity
 - disability
 - age
 - religion or belief.
- 1.3 Children North East recognises and embraces its responsibilities in line with the Equality Act 2010 and will ensure that Children North East will not treat anyone less favourably than another because they belong to a protected group.
- 1.4 Children North East seeks to fulfil its commitments by recognising the expertise, abilities and needs of every individual and by acknowledging the right to dignity and respect of every human being.
- 1.5 Children North East recognises that equal opportunity is central to its organisational effectiveness. Children North East has in place a range of policies and procedures, which all need to be viewed alongside its Equal Opportunities Policy. All Children North East policies are intended to reinforce the basic precepts of equal opportunities.

2. PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 The key principles of the equal opportunities policy are to:
- provide equality for all
 - promote an inclusive culture
 - respect and value differences of everyone
 - prevent discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - promote and foster good relations both internally and externally.

2.2 This means being aware of the impact of our behaviour and taking into consideration the impact of employment policies and practices.

3. UNLAWFUL DISCRIMINATION

3.1 Children North East recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of staff, students, volunteers and service users and to promote a working environment free from discrimination, victimisation, harassment and bullying.

3.2 **Victimisation** – is when someone ‘subjects or threatens to subject the other person to any detriment’.

3.3 **Harassment** - is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of an individual, or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the individual.

3.4 **Bullying** – there is no legal definition of bullying. Acas, however, defines workplace bullying as “offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the person being bullied”. The Health and Safety Executive emphasises this is a pattern of behaviour rather than isolated instances, happening “repeatedly and persistently over time”.

3.5 **Direct discrimination** – this applies if you treat someone less favourably than someone else has been treated (or would be treated) because the person belongs to one of the protected groups. Unless there is a statutory exception, direct discrimination cannot be excused or defended. An example of an exception is the ability to treat a disabled person more favourable than a non-disabled person, for example when making reasonable adjustments to support the disabled person in either working or studying.

3.6 **Indirect discrimination** – occurs when a organisations policies, procedures or rules which apply to everyone has the effect that people with a certain protected characteristic are put at a disadvantage when compared with those who do not share it.

3.7 Any individual who feels that they or someone else are being discriminated against, victimised, harassed or bullied by anyone associated with Children North East is actively encouraged to report this to Children North East management without fear of reprisal. Harassment, bullying, victimisation or discrimination in any form are contrary to this Policy, and are viewed as serious disciplinary offences. These behaviours will not be tolerated within Children North East.

4. EMPLOYMENT

4.1 Recruitment & Selection

- 4.1.1. Children North East will conduct its recruitment and selection procedures openly and fairly and these procedures will be kept under review. All roles with Children North East will have a job description and person specification, which relate specifically to that role. Job descriptions will be reviewed as and when necessary to ensure they remain relevant and that they do not impose any unjustifiable or non-essential experience, qualifications, or conditions, which may be discriminatory.
- 4.1.2. Job advertisements will be written in non-discriminatory language and will be circulated widely through publications, websites and other organisations to ensure maximum coverage. The exception to this would relate to Children North East redundancy procedures. (see Redundancy Policy)
- 4.1.3. Children North East's equal opportunity information will be made available to all potential applicants as part of the recruitment and selection procedure. Children North East will endeavour to provide recruitment and selection information in formats appropriate to applicants needs.
- 4.1.4. Children North East will take into consideration the different requirements of applicants during the recruitment and selection process and will endeavour to meet individual needs.
- 4.1.5. External job applicants who wish to complain about Children North East's recruitment and/or selection procedure, or about their experience of applying for a specific post should follow the complaints procedure as soon as possible. Internal applicants should follow the grievance procedure.

4.2 Terms & Conditions

- 4.2.1 Children North East will seek to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment for all individuals and will not discriminate in the setting or provision of its terms and conditions of employment including facilities, pay and benefits for any individuals with the protected characteristics listed in 1.2 of this Policy.
- 4.2.2 Where compatible with the effective functioning of the organisation, Children North East will endeavour to meet all reasonable flexible working requests. (see Flexible Working Policy)
- 4.2.3 In the event where a member of staff, sessional worker, student or volunteer acquires a disability during their employment with Children North East, provision will be made wherever possible for them to continue their normal duties through provision of equipment/aids, or changed working patterns, or redeployment if available.

4.2.4 The Equality Act also makes it unlawful to fail to try to make reasonable adjustments in response to the needs of an individual with a disability. This is to try to overcome barriers in employment or to using services. The duty to make reasonable adjustments includes the removal, adaptation or alteration of physical features, if the physical feature makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of services. In addition, employers and employees have an obligation to think ahead and address any barriers that may impede people with a disability from accessing a service.

4.3 **Leave Entitlement**

4.3.1 Children North East recognises that leave entitlement and the way this is organised may be of particular concern to certain groups of individuals and will therefore endeavour to ensure that all leave requests received are dealt with both appropriately under the relevant policy/procedure and in accordance with the spirit of its Equal Opportunities Policy.

5. **SERVICE PROVISION**

5.1 Children North East is committed to equality of opportunity for everyone using its service and it is also committed to prioritising its services and targeting its resources and being responsive to communities and groups in greatest need. Services are designed and publicised to reflect these commitments, and are monitored accordingly. As far as reasonably practicable given its resources, Children North East will endeavour to provide its services in ways and in venues and at times which are accessible to the communities it seeks to serve.

5.2 Any individual or group wishing to make a complaint about any aspect of service provision by Children North East should follow the procedure outlined in Children North East's Complaints Policy.

6. **RESPONSIBILITY**

6.1 Children North East is committed to being an equal opportunities organisation and recognises and accepts its ultimate responsibility for the implementation of this Equal Opportunities Policy.

6.2 This Policy applies to the Board of Trustees, all staff, sessional workers, volunteers, trainees, students, service users, contractors and sub-contractors. All of which have a responsibility to accept, adhere to and promote this policy at all times. Responsibility for the day-to-day implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this Policy rests with the Leadership Team of Children North East, who are answerable to the Board of Trustees.

6.3 All new staff, sessional workers, volunteers and students will be made aware of this Policy and its implications for their role as part of their induction into the organisation.

6.4 Anyone with management responsibility will ensure that all allegations of discrimination, victimisation, harassment and/or bullying are taken seriously and fully investigated.

6.5 All Children North East staff, sessional workers, volunteers and students are encouraged to challenge unacceptable behaviour whenever this occurs, promoting the implementation of the Equal Opportunities Policy.

7. MONITORING

7.1 This Policy will be reviewed regularly and any need for amendment to reflect new legislation/good practice issues will be updated. As part of this process, specific monitoring data will be collected, collated, analysed and reported to the Board of Trustees for evaluation.

8. STATUTORY RIGHTS

8.1 Any action taken under any of the above options is without prejudice to any statutory right to complain to an appropriate external statutory body.

9. STATUS OF THE POLICY

9.1 This Policy does not give contractual rights to individual members of staff. Children North East reserves the right to amend this Policy at any time and the organisation will publicise any changes to policies or procedures through the management systems.