



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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1. Policy Statement

The principles of equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of Positive Life business.

We value diversity, and recognise the benefits of employing a diverse workforce in relation to our service delivery and growth as an organisation.

We will not tolerate any form of discrimination and will challenge all acts of discrimination, prejudice, harassment and victimisation which occur within the workplace or within the communities in which we work. Our approach is based on three key principles -

Equality

Removing barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity and access.

Diversity

Accepting each person as an individual.

Inclusion

Creating a working culture where differences are valued.

The management and the Board of Directors are fully committed to the policy and will endeavour to ensure its full implementation. It is the responsibility of all staff to be aware of, and to apply, this policy.

2. Policy aims

Positive Life is committed to treating people fairly, promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. We respect, welcome and value diversity and aim to ensure that our services are accessible to all sections of the community.

We aim to embed equality and diversity in everything we do, to ensure the delivery of excellent services to our service users and to promote Positive Life as an employer of choice.

We will;

- treat all service users, potential service users, staff, volunteers and associates, fairly and with respect,
- value, understand and respond to the diverse needs of individuals and communities,
- foster effective community relations,
- take proactive and reasonable steps to eliminate all forms of harassment, hate crime and discrimination, and
- ensure compliance with the relevant legislation and best practice standards both as a service provider and employer.

3. Scope and objectives

We aim to move beyond compliance to delivering excellence in equality, diversity and inclusion. Our commitments apply to our work as a service provider and an employer.

We will embed Equality and Diversity across the organisation in every aspect of our work as follows.

3.1 Employment

3.1.1 Overview

Positive Life is committed to a policy of promoting equality of opportunity, providing an inclusive workplace and eliminating any unfair treatment or unlawful discrimination.

A brief outline of Equality Legislation is set out in Appendix 1.

There must be no discrimination or victimisation against any applicant, potential applicant or employee on grounds of their sex, marital/civil partnership status, sexual orientation, community background, political opinion, religious belief, race, age, disability, family status or if they have dependents and persons who have undergone, are undergoing or intend to undergo gender reassignment.

Care must be taken to guard against more subtle and unconscious forms of discrimination which may not be immediately obvious. This may result from generalisations about the capabilities, characteristics or interests of particular groups which influence their treatment e.g. preconceptions about their suitability for a post, level of management, location, training course or other development opportunity etc.

There must be no discrimination in the form of harassment of any individual or group. This may constitute unlawful discrimination.

Appendix 2 provides definitions of discrimination, victimisation and harassment.

3.1.2 Recruitment and Promotion

- Positive Life will ensure that advertisements do not indicate, or appear to indicate, an intention to discriminate in selection for recruitment, promotion or training.
- Eligibility criteria for recruitment or advancement will be related to the ability to do the job and will be non-discriminatory.
- Applications must be submitted on official application forms and appointments will be made following a selection process which provides for short-listing and interview panels.
- Decisions relating to the selection process and the reasons for any decisions will be recorded at each stage of the selection and promotion process. These will be kept for a minimum of 12 months after appointments have been made.
- Where this process is unsuccessful, Positive Life will follow appropriate alternative means to secure sufficient resources to maintain service delivery.

3.1.3 Training

All staff will participate in mandatory training and take advantage of career development and other opportunities available to enable them to develop the necessary skills and provide the opportunity for them to achieve their full potential.

3.1.4 Performance Review

- Performance review will be based solely on an objective assessment of the

individual's performance against agreed objectives.

- All staff will have a Personal Development Plan (PDP).
- Reviews must not reflect an assumption or prejudice of the reviewer about the individual being reviewed.

3.1.5 Domestic Responsibilities

Positive Life, where possible, and with due consideration to organisational needs, will give reasonable consideration to ways to enable staff to balance their work with their domestic responsibilities.

3.2 Service Delivery

Positive Life aims to be welcoming, open and inclusive to a diverse range of service users. We provide services that are accessible to all our service users and that are shaped by their views. We will do this by;

- ensuring we are meeting the needs of our service users,
- actively consulting and engaging with our staff and service users to help shape our policies and improve the services we provide, and
- challenging all forms of discrimination and supporting victims of hate crime, domestic abuse, bullying, harassment and discrimination.

We will achieve this by –

3.2.1 Meeting needs

- regularly reviewing how we can contribute to meeting the needs of our service users,
- consider working in partnership with specialist agencies where we feel they are better equipped than ourselves to meet the needs of our service users,
- ensure that the design and development of new services meets the diverse needs of current and future service users, and
- ensuring that we follow guidance for people with disabilities.

3.2.2 Access to services

- monitoring the allocation of services, including the quality of services, to ensure that discrimination does not occur, and
- ensuring that our processes for assessing the services needs of our own service users reflect equality principles.

3.2.3 Service User inclusion

- consulting with service users effectively to ensure that the services meet their needs,
- promoting active involvement of service users and challenging anyone voicing discriminatory views,

- ensuring that our complaints procedure is accessible to all, and feedback about the service is given proper consideration,
- not tolerating harassment of or by service users and proactively co-operating with other agencies in dealing with all forms of harassment,
- providing appropriate means of communication, and
- ensuring that Positive Life responds sensitively to the needs of vulnerable service users.

3.2.4 Strategic Planning and Governance

Positive Life will work to ensure that the Board of Directors is fully representative of our client group by aiming to recruit members from under-represented groups.

The Board of Directors commit to;

- providing leadership and strong commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion,
- ensuring policies, procedures and strategies recognise the diverse needs of our service users, staff and other stakeholders,
- continually improving our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, and
- effective equality, diversity and inclusion training for all staff.

3.3 Support Services

Positive Life aims to help eliminate prejudice, discrimination and disadvantage in delivery of services.

We will achieve this by;

- ensuring that our selection of partner agencies, volunteers and associates is fair and non-discriminatory,
- considering the equality and diversity commitment of partner agencies, volunteers and associates in any tendering and selection processes, and
- only using partner agencies, volunteers and associates who are prepared to sign up to our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and will not give them any more work if there is a substantial and unresolved breach of the guidelines.

4. Responsibilities

Positive Life liaises with statutory bodies, including the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, to ensure that it continues to adhere to the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion.

The Board of Directors has corporate responsibility for ensuring that this Policy underpins all aspects of Positive Life's work. Annual reviews to the Board of Directors will include an update on equality, diversity and inclusion issues, including relevant performance information.

Operational responsibility for implementing the policy and procedures lies with the **Chief Executive Officer** through

- developing the organisational culture in which this Policy can operate effectively; and

- ensuring that it is implemented and is responsible for the operation, monitoring and review of this Policy in relation to employment and training.

Managers have a duty to implement this policy, ensuring that they treat staff fairly and objectively in all areas including allocation of duties, performance appraisal, temporary promotion, training and development and the handling of grievances and complaints. They must take appropriate action to deal with any difficulties arising from a lack of impartiality by any member of their staff and any other breaches of this policy within their area of responsibility and including service delivery.

We expect a personal commitment from all employees in making it effective, and in setting an exemplary standard for others to follow. Additional and specific responsibilities apply to those who manage staff and to those who are involved in recruitment, training and development.

Behaviours, actions or words that breach this policy will not be tolerated and will be addressed through Positive Life's disciplinary policy.

All members of staff have a contractual responsibility to;

- ensure that they understand the values and benefits of equality, diversity and inclusion,
- familiarise themselves with this policy, follow it, and ensure that any staff for whom they are responsible do so as well, and
- draw to the attention of their line manager any instances of apparent discrimination or harassment, or any perceived problem in relation to employment or to the provision of services.

5. Complaints of Discrimination

Positive Life will take prompt action on any grievance concerning discrimination or harassment raised under the Grievance Procedure or Dignity at Work Policy as appropriate. Every effort will be made to resolve issues, e.g. mediation, without affecting an individual's right to lodge proceedings.

Those who think they have been discriminated against may seek help and advice from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. Staff who make a complaint in respect of alleged discrimination or harassment will be protected from victimization. Acts of discrimination, victimisation or harassment perpetrated by a Positive Life employee against any other employee, service user or volunteer or associate will result in disciplinary action.

6. Communicating the Policy

This policy will be available to existing staff and issued to new recruits. It will be reflected, as appropriate, in training courses and included as guidance to selection and appointment panels. An equal opportunities policy statement will be included in careers literature, job advertisements and application forms.

7. Review

This policy will be reviewed on an bi-annual basis by the date shown on the front cover.

Appendix 1 Equality Legislation

Equal Pay Act (NI) 1970

Prohibits any less favourable treatment between men and women in terms of pay and conditions of employment.

Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976

Prohibits discrimination and harassment on the grounds of sex; pregnancy and maternity leave; gender reassignment; being married or being a civil partner.

Race Relations (NI) Order 1997

This law prohibits discrimination and harassment on grounds of race; colour; ethnic or national origins; nationality; belonging to the Irish Traveller community.

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Prohibits discrimination and harassment against disabled persons. It also requires employers and service providers to make reasonable adjustments in the workplace and in recruitment/promotion.

Employment Rights (NI) Order 1997

Outlaws discrimination on the grounds of trade union membership.

Protection from Harassment (NI) Order 1997

Outlaws stalking, but may also apply to harassment in the workplace.

Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998

This law prohibits discrimination and harassment on grounds of religious belief and political opinion.

Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2003,

This law prohibits discrimination and harassment on grounds of sexual orientation.

Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006

Increases the scope of legislation to include more people with disabilities eg people diagnosed with cancer, HIV and multiple sclerosis (MS), but not yet showing signs of their illness. The Order also imposes a new duty to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage their participation in public life.

Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2006

Outlaws discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of goods, facilities and services, education and public functions.

Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (NI) 2006

This law prohibits discrimination and harassment on grounds of age.

Appendix 2 Types of Discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs where one person treats another person less favourably than others in the same or similar circumstances and the reason for that treatment is based on one of the statutory equality grounds.

Indirect Discrimination occurs where a provision, criterion or practice is applied which has the effect of putting people of a particular [protected] group at a disadvantage and which cannot be seen to be a proportionate means of meeting a legitimate aim.

Harassment occurs where one person or persons engage in unwanted conduct in relation to another person which has the purpose or effect of violating that person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.

Victimisation occurs where one person treats another person less favourably than another person is, or would be, treated because the person has exercised, or sought to exercise, his or her rights under the equality laws, or has assisted another person to do so.

Disability-Related Discrimination occurs where, for a reason related to a disabled person's disability, a person treats the disabled person less favourably than he treats, or would treat, other persons to whom that reason does not apply, and he cannot show that the treatment in question is justified.

Failure to Comply with the Reasonable Adjustment Duty

Disability discrimination in employment can also occur where an employer fails to comply with a duty to make reasonable adjustments in respect of a disabled job applicant or employee.

The reasonable adjustment duty is imposed on an employer where –

- a provision, criterion or practice is applied by the employer, or
- the physical features of the employer's premises, places the disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared to persons who are not disabled.