



Equal Opportunities & Diversity Policy

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1. Equal Opportunity and Diversity Statement

The Dorcas Befriending Project (DBP) aims to be an inclusive organisation where everyone is treated with respect and dignity, and where there is equal opportunity for all. This commitment extends to our members, volunteers, staff and clients and we welcome everyone from our community as a client and/or volunteer. The aim of this policy document is to communicate the commitment of the Executive Committee and all members of the charity to promoting equality of opportunity and diversity within the DBP.

It is our policy to provide equality of membership to all, irrespective of:

- Age
- Disability or impairment
- Gender, including gender reassignment
- Marital or civil partnership status
- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins)
- Religion or belief
- Ethnic origin
- Sexual orientation

We believe that we have much to learn and benefit from different cultures and perspectives and that diversity will make our charity more effective in meeting the needs of everyone involved.

We are committed to developing and maintaining an organisation in which differing ideas, abilities, backgrounds and needs are fostered and valued, and where those with diverse backgrounds and experiences are able to participate and contribute. We are opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. All members of the DBP will be treated fairly and will not be discriminated against on any of the above grounds. Decisions on membership, employment, training or any other benefit will be made objectively and without unlawful discrimination.

We recognise that the provision of equal opportunities in all our activities will benefit the organisation and our community. Our equal opportunities policy will help members to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the members will be utilised fully to maximise the effectiveness of the organisation.

We want our services and resources to be accessible and useful to every citizen regardless of age, disability, gender, marital status, race, religious belief, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, or any other individual characteristic which may unfairly affect a person.

Equality Commitments

We are committed to:

- promoting equality of opportunity for all persons
- promoting a harmonious environment in which all men and women are treated with respect and dignity and in which no form of intimidation or harassment is tolerated
- preventing occurrences of unlawful direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- fulfilling all our legal obligations under the equality legislation and associated codes of practice
- complying with our own equal opportunities policy and associated policies
- taking lawful affirmative or positive action, where appropriate
- breaches of our equal opportunities policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to termination of membership

Management Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Executive Committee to:

- Ensure that the standards established within this policy are adhered to
- Familiarise themselves with the procedures in all equal opportunities documentation

- Ensure that they encourage employees and/or volunteers to act in a non-discriminatory manner
- Bring the details of the policy and procedure documents to the attention of all staff, volunteers and clients
- Ensure that information on equal opportunities is incorporated in all induction processes for new or temporary staff and/or volunteers and is supported by on-going training

Management, Staff and Volunteer Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of Executive Committee, employees and volunteers at all levels to:

- Co-operate with any measures introduced to ensure equality of opportunity
- Report any discriminatory acts or practices
- Not induce or attempt to induce others to practice unlawful discrimination
- Not victimise anyone as a result of them having reported or provided evidence of discrimination
- Not harass, abuse, bully or intimidate others

Additional information

This Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy explains in detail where individuals can get help and how to complain about discrimination and harassment. The DBP undertakes to assure individuals that allegations will be taken seriously, treated confidentially and investigated quickly. Employees and volunteers will be protected against victimisation for making a complaint or supporting a complainant in making a complaint.

This policy will be available on our website. Any queries about the policy or associated procedures should be made to the Executive Committee. This policy will be reviewed by the Executive Committee every three years or as required .

2. Useful Definitions

What is Discrimination?

Discrimination happens as a result of prejudice, misconception and stereotyping which in turn hinders the proper consideration of an individual's talents, skills, abilities, potential and experience. It can be direct or indirect, intentional or unintentional. What is most important is that certain forms of discrimination are not just unfair - they are illegal.

The following are terms that may be used when discussing matters of equal opportunities:

Direct Discrimination

Direct discrimination takes place when a person is treated less favourably than others in the same circumstances on the grounds of their race, sex, disability, etc.

Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination means applying a condition, or requirement, which adversely affects one particular group more than another, and cannot be justified in terms of the requirements for performing a job, task or assignment.

3. Legal Responsibilities

Over and above the provisions set out in its own policy and procedures, the DBP is also bound by certain legal responsibilities in the field of equal opportunities. The key areas of these are as follows:

Equality Act 2010:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

(you may also wish to consult the Equality Act 2010 Explanatory Notes:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/notes/contents>)

European Law:

Legislation relevant to equality of opportunity (and human rights) has emanated from Brussels and is applicable to the United Kingdom as well.

4. The Dorcas Befriending Project Codes of Practice

The following are a number of specific areas that everyone should be aware of:

Attracting Suitable Applicants

The DBP will:

- Ensure that DBP literature does not contain any potentially discriminatory material
- Advertise vacancies so that they are likely to reach all potential applicants
- Ensure that all literature and advertisements make it clear that applications are welcome from all suitably qualified candidates and that they avoid stereotypical images

Learning and Development

The DBP will:

- Ensure equal opportunity of access to, and benefit from, all forms of learning and development activity
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers receive induction training which covers their rights and responsibilities under the Diversity and Equal Opportunity Policy
- Ensure that diversity and equal opportunities issues are addressed fairly and equitably in all instances
- Provide flexibility to accommodate the needs of employees and volunteers for: flexible working patterns, cultural or religious needs, any special arrangements e.g. wheelchair access, signing etc. as much as reasonably possible
- Monitor who takes part in training

Recruitment and Selection

The DBP will:

- Ensure that selection decisions are based on objective, non-discriminatory, job related criteria and consistently applied to all candidates
- Ensure that nationality requirements are applied correctly
- Invite applicants to identify any special arrangements they may need at interview
- Ensure that all those involved in recruitment and selection have had appropriate training/experience in recruitment interviewing, diversity and equal opportunities or receive the appropriate guidance
- Ensure that selection decisions for any position are taken by more than one person
- Ensure that selection criteria and reasons for the selection or rejection of individual candidates are recorded
- Monitor the results of recruitment processes with particular regard for decisions which appear to be inconsistent

Dorcas Befriending Project Processes

The DBP will:

- Ensure that any written communications are produced in a clear and accessible format
- Endeavour to ensure that oral communications are produced in a form which is supported for those with hearing impairments
- Ensure that access to work requirements for those with any form of disability is considered in a fair and open manner

5. Harassment and Bullying

What is Harassment?

Harassment is any behaviour which is unwelcome, unreciprocated or offensive to the individual receiving it. It can include comments, actions, jokes and suggestions. It is often

intimidating and threatening. Sometimes it can be persistent and sometimes it can take the form of an isolated incident. It can be directed to one person or a group of people. It can involve physical contact or be verbal, written or silent. Most forms of harassment are based on race or sex but it can also occur because one individual takes a dislike to another.

What is Bullying?

Bullying is often a form of harassment and may manifest itself in many ways. It is usually persistent and can be done by a manager, colleague or group of people to another individual. It is insidious and often undermines the ability and confidence of the person who is suffering it. It can lead to fear, demotivation, isolation, poor concentration, reduced output, symptoms of stress and high sickness absence levels.

Both harassment and bullying are about an abuse of power whether by physical strength, force of personality or position of authority. If bullying involves issues of gender, race or disability then legislation may apply. As with any form of harassment, it is contrary to The DBP's Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy and where evidence of it's taking place is found, the disciplinary action will be taken.

6. How to deal with complaints

It is important to recognise that many victims of discrimination, harassment and bullying do not complain. Any complaints about such behaviour must be treated seriously. Individuals who are suffering harassment or bullying but who do not wish to make any formal complaints initially should consider speaking to the Project Coordinator or a member of the Executive Committee who they feel they can trust. This may help them to gain some perspective of the problem they are facing. Those who wish to make a formal complaint should use the DBP's Grievance Procedure, a copy of which will be available in our policies and procedures manuals, induction material and on our website. All complaints of discrimination will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially. Complaints from members of the public will be dealt with under the appropriate DBP procedures.

7. Implementation

The Executive Committee have specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy. We expect all members to abide by the policy and help to create the equality environment which is its objective. In order to implement this policy we shall:

- Communicate the policy to members during the induction of all new members
- Communicate the policy to all current members, and make the policy fully available on our website

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