

# VOYC Devon Equality and Diversity Policy

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## Statement of Intent

We wish to encourage people from all sections of the community to participate in our activities, whether as a member of staff, trustee, volunteer or user of our services. No-one should be discriminated against because of race, colour, nationality, ethnicity, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, physical/sensory/mental disability or mental health, marital status, offending background, caring responsibility, union membership, class, HIV positive, employment status, unrelated conviction or receive any other form of discrimination that hinders the promotion of equal opportunities (please note that this is not a definitive list).

The responsibility for following these policies lies with all employees and volunteers at VOYC Devon, under the Guidance of the Chief Executive. Trustees are also subject to this policy. We will make sure the equality and diversity policy applies to all our activities.

VOYC Devon expects its members, potential members and registered organisations to comply with this approach in their work with VOYC Devon and its volunteers.

## Legislation

VOYC Devon recognises its obligations under the relevant legislation and all subsequent amendments:

- Sex Discrimination Acts 1975 and 1986, 1999
- Race Relations Act 1976 (amendment 2000)
- Equal Pay Act 1970 & 1983
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Race Relations Amendment Act 1999
- EU Employment Directives 2003 (Religion/Sexuality)
- Gender Recognition Act 2004
- Equality Act 2010
- EU Employment Directives 2006 (Age)
- Employment Act 2003

This legislation makes it unlawful to discriminate in employment under the grounds of race, sex, age, gender reassignment, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity and disability.

We recognise that, while we cannot solve the problems of discrimination within wider society, we can take practical steps to minimise this potential within our own organisation, and can provide advice on good practice to the organisations we support and work with.

## **Implementation**

This policy will be demonstrated as follows:

- Adherence to the policy throughout the whole recruitment process.
- Respect for individual religious and cultural obligations of employees and volunteers, eg sympathetic consideration to annual leave at times of religious or cultural significance.
- Ensure the Volunteer Policy adheres to these guidelines.
- Training and guidance will be provided to staff on how to carry out this policy, and where applicable, to Board members.
- Review staff and volunteer statistics in relation to gender, ethnicity and disability, on a regular basis.
- Adopt a Communications Policy to ensure that all published material is compliant with this policy.
- Treat complaints or grievances related to discrimination seriously.
- Continually review the work of VOYC Devon to ensure that it is in line with this policy.
- Review this policy every three years, via the Executive Committee.
- We will consider the use of Equality Impact Assessments when appropriate or necessary to ensure fairness.

## **Employment Issues**

### **a) Recruitment**

Our policy is to select people on the basis of their suitability for the role, as defined by a properly constructed job description and person specification. All such job descriptions will be reviewed to ensure that they are still relevant prior to advertising a vacancy and any criteria that are no longer applicable or which may be indirectly discriminatory will be removed.

Vacancies will be advertised to the widest possible audience and will utilise sources that ensure that all sections of the community have the opportunity to apply. However this does not stop us from restricting recruitment advertising in certain situations: (e.g. in a redundancy situation; where the role requires particular specialist skills which can only be found from a specific source; or where the same or similar position has been advertised in the immediate past).

We will circulate our Equality and Diversity policy to job applicants and all workers, and their representatives, by enclosing copies in induction material and application packs, and by placing those on our website and on company notice boards.

Shortlisting for interview will be done in accordance with the defined criteria and all line managers and board members (if appropriate) will be offered training in interviewing skills and recruitment legislation before undertaking interviews. Notes will be taken for all interviews and retained for a period of 6 months after the selection process.

We will consider flexible working arrangements to allow as many people as possible the opportunity to work for us.

VOYC Devon actively pursues the inclusion of all individuals on the basis of their individual skills and abilities both through our services and employment opportunities. To this end we are registered with Employment Service two ticks standard. The detail of how we implement can be found in Annex A. We also comply with this in relation to all our quality standards requirements.

## **b) Training and Promotion**

Decisions on training, promotion and other employment matters will be based on organisational need and non-discriminatory procedures. Staff, trustees and volunteers will receive appropriate and relevant training in Equality and Diversity issues.

## **c) General conduct at work**

All staff and volunteers will be expected to ensure that they comply with the principles of this policy. We will strive to ensure that the organisation has a harmonious working atmosphere where no member of staff, trustee, volunteer or service user is the subject of belittlement, insult or offensive remarks.

## **Volunteers**

We wish to encourage people from all sections of the community to consider voluntary work. No-one should be discriminated against because of race, colour, nationality, ethnicity, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, physical/sensory/mental disability or mental health, marital status, offending background, caring responsibility, union membership, class, HIV positive, employment status, unrelated conviction or receive any other form of discrimination that hinders the promotion of equal opportunities (please note that this is not a definitive list).

Clearly not everyone is suited to every opportunity and it is necessary to have a selection procedure. Relevant criteria (such as skills, experience, aptitude and willingness to learn) are taken into account when deciding a person's suitability for a particular voluntary opportunity.

## **Membership**

VOYC Devon is working towards creating specific campaigns to promote its services and aims amongst groups who are under-represented either as service users or as contributors to the work of VOYC. VOYC Devon will annually monitor the VOYC membership and actively seek to encourage those groups who are under-represented to become members.

## **Services**

The services that we provide are open to all, in accordance with the general principles of this policy. However, in accordance with our overall objectives and the requirements of funders, we may run

services specifically designed for particular groups (for example younger people; disabled people or those from a specific ethnic minority).

Our services are responsive to needs and flexible and we aim to remove barriers to participation. We welcome feedback on how to improve/make services more accessible. Where possible our activities will be held in accessible venues.

We will also include regular training events and awareness-raising sessions relating to equal opportunities in our training programme for voluntary organisations and community groups. It is the aim of this training to help groups and individuals think about the issues and work at their own possible solutions.

It is a major part of our work to raise issues in meetings, forums and with our partner organisations, which address discrimination.

If a significant issue relating to equal opportunities or discrimination becomes apparent in our work with the wider community, then the advice of the Chief Executive Officer or Board will be sought to work out the next steps and 'fit' this activity into our work plan.

We will also aim to encourage other organisations and groups to adopt similar equal opportunities policies. To this end we will hold information, resources and facilitate events to support groups to write their own policies, which are valuable and specific to their own group or organisation.

## **Publicity/Advertising**

Publicity materials will not only emphasise that our services and job opportunities are available to all, but will utilise all appropriate media to ensure that all sections of our community can access the information. In particular we will seek to provide information in a variety of formats, such as Braille, audio etc on request. Our Communication Policy will ensure that all published material is compliant to this policy.

## **Monitoring and Review**

- We will monitor the Equality and Diversity policy, for example, by collecting and analysing information about the age, disability, gender and ethnic background (an equality profile) of job applicants and all workers, at each level in the charity.
- If we find under-representation of any particular group (e.g. disabled people, people from ethnic minorities or people of a certain gender or age), we will where appropriate make every effort to:
- include a statement in our job advertisements, positively encouraging people from those groups to apply;
- ensure our job advertisements reach them;
- consider using minority and specialist media for our job advertisements;
- consult specialist agencies, such as Job Centre Plus, for advice;
- make sure the criteria for selection are entirely job-related;

- review and revise the company's policies, practices and procedures; and consider taking positive action to provide training specifically for under-represented groups.
- We will consider using external agencies to support and advise us on equality matters.
- We will review this policy and any procedures arising from it in the light of changes to legislation, case law or other guidance issued.

## **Governance**

All trustees will be expected to follow the guidelines set out in this policy. To ensure a diverse mix of Board membership, VOYC Devon will monitor the composition of the Board and where appropriate, encourage under-represented groups to join. In addition, there will be a trustee mentoring programme to ensure new and inexperienced trustees are supported, plus a structured induction.

## **Breach of this Policy**

Breaches of this policy will be taken very seriously by VOYC Devon. Any member of staff failing to carry out any aspect of this policy or taking part in discrimination or harassment may be subject to the Disciplinary Procedure. If members of staff feel they have been treated unfairly in relation to this policy, they should follow the steps outlined in the Grievance Procedures.

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Date Reviewed and Agreed at Executive Meeting: 24.09.15