

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Options Wellbeing Trust's Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy enables Options Wellbeing Trust to send out a strong message of commitment, both internally and externally.
- 1.2 Options Wellbeing Trust is fully committed to working in ways that promote Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and to ensure that our services are fair and individuals are not discriminated against.
- 1.3 Options Wellbeing Trust is fully committed to the elimination of unlawful and unfair discrimination and values the differences that a diverse workforce brings to the organisation.
- 1.4 All employees, associates, trainee volunteers, volunteer peer supporters and third party providers are responsible for the promotion and advancement of this policy. Behaviour, actions or words that transgress the policy will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in line with the organisation's disciplinary policy.
- 1.5 **This Policy is applicable to all** employees, associates, trainee volunteers, volunteer peer supporters and third party providers, and users of Options Wellbeing Trust services (service users), communities, suppliers and contractors, whether permanent or temporary. The policy applies to all processes relating to employment and training and to any dealings with service users. Decisions relating to service users and communities will be based on business-related criteria only and any irrelevant information will not form part of the process.
- 1.6 This Policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to reflect changes in the law, demographics and internal business requirements.

2.0 Policy Statement

- 2.1 Options Wellbeing Trust wants to be recognised as an organisation in which its service users, communities, board members, staff, associates, trainees, third party providers, volunteers, supporters, funders and partners embrace its work in contributing to a fairer, more equal and just society.
- 2.2 We welcome the active participation and co-design/production of all parts of our communities in our work regardless of but not limited to age; disability; gender; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.
- 2.3 We recognise that false assumptions, prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping are widespread in society and that to achieve our aim, we must take steps to actively promote equality and combat prejudice, discrimination and harassment.
- 2.4 We take a zero-tolerance approach to any discrimination, harassment and/or victimisation which one member of staff may perpetrate against another and/or against any other person including but not limited to former employees, job applicants, service users, suppliers and visitors.
- 2.5 This policy not only applies in the workplace but also outside of it when dealing with service users, suppliers or other work-related contacts or when wearing Charity identifying items (e.g. lanyards with Identity cards / promotional materials) and on work-related trips or events including social events.
- 2.6 We will take seriously and investigate any complaints of discrimination or harassment, using the agreed procedures and respecting confidentiality

3.0 Definitions used in this Policy

- 3.1 **Protected Characteristics:** are the protected characteristics as listed in the Equality Act 2010 are sex, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, age, disability, pregnancy and maternity.
- 3.2 **Direct Discrimination:** is when you treat someone less favourably than others because of a protected characteristic, whether or not the person possesses that protected characteristic.
- 3.3 **Indirect Discrimination:** is when a policy, practice or procedure that applies to everyone has an effect which particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic.
- 3.4 **Disability:** is a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on an individual's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. The effect must have lasted for 12 months or be likely to last 12 months. An effect that is likely to recur is treated as continuing for this purpose.
- 3.5 **Detriment arising from disability:** is when an employer treats an employee unfavourably because of something arising in consequence of the employee's disability, and it cannot be justified in relation to the job.
- 3.6 **Duty to make reasonable adjustments:** is where a provision, criterion or practice puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in relation to others who are not disabled, the employer / service provider has a duty to take reasonable steps to avoid the disadvantage, including changes to physical features, providing auxiliary aids and providing information.
- 3.7 **Harassment:** is unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive working environment. This includes protection against third-party harassment where the employer has failed to take reasonably practicable steps to prevent the harassment.
- 3.8 **Victimisation:** is when a person is treated badly because they have made a complaint about discrimination or have given evidence in a discrimination case.
- 3.9 **Positive discrimination:** is unlawful.
- 3.10 **Positive action:** is proportionate steps taken to enable or encourage people who share a protected characteristic to overcome or minimise a disadvantage, to meet their needs or to participate, when the organisation reasonably thinks that people who share the protected characteristic suffer the disadvantage, or have needs that are different, or a disproportionately low number of such people participate in an activity. Under the Equality Act 2010, positive action in recruitment and promotion applies to the steps that an employer can take to encourage people from groups with different needs or with a past record of disadvantage or low participation, to apply for positions within the company. Positive action in recruitment, would not be used to treat people with a protected characteristic more favourably, it would be used only in tie-break situations, when there are two candidates of equal merit applying for the same position.
- 3.11 **Equality:** means giving everyone equality of opportunity in line with their needs.
- 3.12 **Diversity:** can be described as the differences that make people unique.
- 3.13 **Inclusion:** means involving people within a group or within society.

4.0 Legal Background for this Policy

4.1 The Equality Act 2010

4.2 Race Relations Act 1976, 2000 Amendment and 2003 Amendment Regulations

- 4.3 Equal Pay Act 1970
- 4.4 Sex Discrimination Act 1975, 1986 Amendment, Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulations 2005 and Gender Equality Duty 2007
- 4.5 Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007
- 4.6 Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations and Gender Recognition Act 2004
- 4.7 Civil Partnership Act 2004
- 4.8 Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005 and the Disability Equality Duty 2006
- 4.9 Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 and the Equality Act 2006
- 4.10 Employment Act 2002 (as amended by the Employment Act 2008)
- 4.11 Work and Families Act 2006
- 4.12 Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- 4.13 The Human Rights Act 1998 and the European Convention on Human Rights.

5.0 Policy Aims

- 5.1 To ensure Options Wellbeing Trust's Associates and other staff work within the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions (2018).
- 5.2 To ensure that discrimination on the basis of, but not limited to, age; disability; gender; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation, or any other criteria is challenged at all times.
- 5.3 To remove any barriers, bias or discrimination that prevent individuals or groups from realising their potential and contributing fully to Options Wellbeing Trust's performance and to develop an organisational culture that positively values diversity.
- 5.4 To challenge discrimination in our own policies and ensure that all policies comply with equalities legislation.
- 5.5 To ensure that recruitment, promotion, training, development, assessment, benefits, pay, terms and conditions of employment, redundancy and dismissals are determined on the basis of capability, qualifications, experience, skills and productivity.
- 5.6 To contribute to creating a work environment free of harassment and bullying, where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

6.0 Responsibilities

- 6.1 Options Wellbeing Trust's leadership team holds the corporate responsibility for equality diversity and inclusion within Options Wellbeing Trust to actively demonstrate commitment. This will be done by ensuring that the spirit of the policy is promoted and respected at all times by all throughout the organisation. Ongoing evaluations will be undertaken and action plans to support continuous improvement put in place.
- 6.2 Options Wellbeing Trust is an organisational member of the BACP and has a key responsibility to follow the ethical framework in the delivery of counselling and therapeutic services. The ethical framework can be found here:

<https://www.bacp.co.uk/events-and-resources/ethics-and-standards/ethical-framework-for-the-counselling-professions/>.

Our values and principles reflect that we recognise each service user is unique and that we do no harm

6.3 The Leadership Team

- 6.3.1 All senior managers and managers of Options Wellbeing Trust will demonstrate commitment to the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy and are responsible for ensuring the mainstreaming of equality throughout Options Wellbeing Trust's businesses.
- 6.3.2 Senior managers and managers are responsible for monitoring all annual service plans to identify areas for improvement to deliver fairer services for all.
- 6.3.3 Senior managers and managers are responsible for monitoring individual behaviour and will take immediate action if there is evidence of discrimination, harassment or bullying. They will be responsible for continual raising awareness of individual rights and responsibilities, and have a strategic approach to creating a spirit of inclusion.

6.4 Individual Responsibility

- 6.4.1 Staff, Associates, trainees, third party providers, volunteers, supporters, funders and partners are individually responsible for their own behaviour. Any employee who causes offence or makes another individual feel unsafe or undignified or unjustly, unfairly or unlawfully prevents them from developing within OWT, whether intentionally or not, may be subject to disciplinary action and may face legal action from the complainant.
- 6.4.2 Service users, staff, Associates, trainees, third party providers, volunteers, supporters, funders and partners who feel that they are suffering from unfair, unjust or unlawful treatment, may take action as detailed in the Complaints or Grievance procedures, or notify the Head of Health and Wellbeing as soon as possible. Similarly any employee who witnesses an individual being treated in such a way, should report the incident without fear of detriment to their Line Manager, Head of Health and Wellbeing or HR Manager.

7.0 Employment Practices

- 7.1 Options Wellbeing Trust wishes to have regard for equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of employment, from advertising vacancies, recruitment and selection, terms and conditions of employment, training and personal development, to reasons for ending employment. We will do this by:
 - 7.1.1 Well-structured processes that include clear vision and values, shared team leadership, valuing diversity as a positive element of the team, listening to all voices within the team, and asking only for the skills and competencies actually needed for the job.
 - 7.1.2 Advertising jobs using methods that reach all communities and in particular positive action methods that allow all groups who are currently under-represented in the workforce to be targeted.
 - 7.1.3 Valuing skills gained through non-traditional or informal work, such as voluntary work and caring responsibilities. The competencies gained through this kind of experience are balanced against those gained through more formal methods.
 - 7.1.4 Ensuring that more than one person shall be involved in shortlisting and selection for interview, and at least one panel member will have received specific equality training in regards to recruitment practice.
 - 7.1.5 Recognising and supporting the potential of all employees by offering opportunities for training and personal development.
 - 7.1.6 Having effective diversity management policies, practices and procedures in place that allow to shape and reinforce equal employment.

8.0 Training

- 8.1 Training has a key role to play in promoting equality of opportunity and equality, diversity and inclusion training forms a key part of induction training for all staff, associates, trainees, third party providers, volunteers, supporters, funders and partners. Options Wellbeing Trust's induction and training includes equality, diversity and inclusion so that staff, associates, trainees, third party providers, volunteers, supporters, funders and partners at all levels can perform effectively and develop their full potential within their jobs - this includes ensuring that all new staff are encouraged to read the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy as part of their induction process and that supervisions cover Equality, Diversity and Inclusion practice. Managers will also offer advice and guidance to ensure they understand their responsibilities under the law and the Options Wellbeing Trust Policy.

9.0 Service Delivery

- 9.1 We will monitor access and quality outcomes by equality issues. As part of all service improvement plans specific local and business wide targets will be identified to deliver continuous improvement.
- 9.2 Equality, diversity and inclusion issues will be considered with proactive activity to promote, celebrate and campaign for better understanding and respect and dignity for all.

10.0 Principles

- 10.1 When providing our services, everyone working for or on behalf of Options Wellbeing Trust should follow the following principles:
- 10.1.1 Always respect diversity by providing person-centred services, care, and support.
 - 10.1.2 Always treat the individuals we support as unique rather than treating all individuals in the same way.
 - 10.1.3 Always ensure we work in a non-judgemental way. Do not allow judgemental beliefs to affect the support we provide.
 - 10.1.4 Always follow the agreed ways of working in your workplace to create an environment that is free from discrimination.
 - 10.1.5 Always work in an inclusive way that sees the positive input that all individuals can make to society and to their own care and support
 - 10.1.6 Always feel confident to challenge or confront discriminatory practice if you see this in your workplace. Options Wellbeing Trust will support you.

11.0 Code of Conduct

- 11.1 Our Code of Conduct states in relation to all who receive a service from us, staff, Associates, trainees, third party providers, volunteers, supporters, funders and partners should act on the following principles:
- 11.1.1 The rights of all individuals within society should be promoted and supported so that equality and quality of life is available to each individual within the service.
 - 11.1.2 Staff should look out for direct and indirect discrimination and should promote anti-discriminatory practice.
 - 11.1.3 All should be accountable by making sure they can answer for their actions or omissions.

- 11.1.4 Promote and uphold the privacy, dignity, rights, health and wellbeing of people who use Options Wellbeing Trust's services, and their carers at all times.
- 11.1.5 Work in collaboration with colleagues to ensure the delivery of high quality, safe and compassionate services.
- 11.1.6 Communicate in an open, and effective way to promote the health, safety and wellbeing of people who use our services.
- 11.1.7 Respect a person's right to confidentiality.
- 11.1.8 Strive to improve the quality of the services we deliver through continuing professional development.
- 11.1.9 Uphold and promote equality, diversity and inclusion.

12.0 Valuing Diversity

- 12.1 To work in ways that are inclusive Options Wellbeing Trust believes we need to understand and value the things that make people different. The services we provide must be specific to each individual's needs, wishes and preferences and take into account the likes and dislikes, beliefs and personal history of an individual to meet their needs in the best way possible.