

## Equal Opportunities Policy

### 1. Equal Opportunities Policy Statement

- 1.1. As a charity working within a Christian ethos, Darlington Area Churches Youth Ministry (DACYM) believe that all people are made in the image of God, and we therefore celebrate the rich diversity of the neighbourhoods in which we are working as a source of life and vibrancy. We embrace the opportunities diversity creates for new experiences and learning, and the increased strength, openness and wisdom to which these lead.
- 1.2. Discriminatory practice is not only illegal, but also against our values. DACYM positively welcomes our diverse communities, seeking to work with all who seek to promote the common good, and looks forward to the time when God's desire for a society based on equality, justice, love, and compassion is fulfilled where all can take their meaningful place.
- 1.3. Throughout our work, we are committed to reflecting the full diversity of the community we serve and to promoting equality of opportunity for everyone. We aim to ensure equal access to our services by all young people on the basis of need and to provide services in a manner that is sensitive to the individual, whatever their background. We will represent the needs of our diverse client group to other agencies and make equal opportunities a key guiding principle in all of our work with our partners. We will work hard to ensure that our workforce reflects the communities it serves.
- 1.4. We recognise that we don't always get this right. We can be unaware of our own prejudices, and we have not always been vocal enough about the things we stand for. At such times we will humbly seek forgiveness, and seek to make right what has been wrong. We will work to eliminate discriminatory behaviour wherever it is found and educate those who show prejudice, as we pursue a better world for young people.
- 1.5. We seek to be proactive about minimising discrimination within our organisation, whether in our employment and volunteering practices, or in the way we work with participants. We are committed to ensuring that in all aspects of our provision and projects are open to all, regardless of:
  - age
  - disability
  - gender reassignment

- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- employment status
- income level
- responsibility for dependants

## 2. Our Values

2.1. One of our 4 key values is “Include Everyone”.

We encourage the following behaviours amongst our staff and participants:

- ensure everyone gets a warm welcome, feels safe, encouraged and invested in
- embrace, value and celebrate diversity
- intentionally reach out to connect and work proactively to remove barriers to participation
- I ensure people have a sense of belonging, feel personally known, cared for, significant.

## 3. Aims

Consistent with our values, we will aim to:

3.1. Reflect the range of diversity of our service users on the staff team and Management Board.

3.2. Respect and value differences of race, ethnicity and culture in our consultation work and in our dealing with clients.

3.3. In planning projects and programmes, give attention to the following issues;

- Physical Access
- Location
- Financial access
- Communication
- Timing of services
- Caring responsibilities
- Food and diet
- Publicity and marketing

3.4. Attend to the needs of people whose first language is not English as well as people who are hearing impaired or communication disadvantaged. With advanced notice we will arrange for competent interpreters to be available, and suitable audio or visual equipment. We will provide documents that have been translated to the first language of service users that have requested them.

3.5. Monitor and review the operation of this policy, recording the extent that we have responded to racial, ethnic, cultural or other needs. We will also record needs or responses we believe we have overlooked and consider the options for including these facilities in our future services.

3.6. Listen to and investigate all complaints or concerns about the services we provide. This includes complaints about the implementation of the Equal Opportunities Policy. The complainant is welcomed to be accompanied by an advocate, and where spoken English is the not first language we will arrange for a suitable interpreter.

3.7. We aim to include socially excluded young people as trainers, staff, volunteers and Board members in DACYM. This is yet to be achieved, and we are particularly concerned that black and minority ethnic service users are represented. We are aware that we have not arrived in our journey to deliver Equal Opportunities, rather we have made a start. The aims and actions listed below indicate of the next steps we are taking. The practice of non-discrimination applies beyond staff and personnel matters, to include all aspects of our operations.

#### **4. Dealing with unconscious bias**

4.1. How a person thinks will depend on their life experiences. Sometimes people have beliefs and views about other people that might not be right or reasonable. This is known as 'unconscious bias' and includes when a person thinks:

- better of someone because they believe they're alike
- less of someone because that person is different to them, for example, they might be of a different race, religion or age.

4.2. Unconscious bias can lead to people making decisions influenced by false beliefs, assumptions or stereotypes. It is important to be aware of the potential influence of unconscious bias. We are committed to taking steps to minimise the effect of unconscious bias on behaviour and decisions.

4.3. Steps we are taking to avoid unconscious bias in recruitment and employee management include:

- being aware of unconscious bias
- advertising a job vacancy in at least 2 different places to reach a wide range of people from different backgrounds
- getting managers to agree to make each other aware if they notice stereotyping
- holding back some details on job application forms, such as the applicant's name or sex (this is called 'blind sifting'), that could affect recruiting managers' opinions
- at each stage, having more than one person sifting job applications, interviewing the applicants and deciding who gets the job
- allowing time to make decisions, for example on recruitment, promotions or grievance and disciplinary outcomes
- keeping written records of why decisions were made

#### **5. Recruitment of staff and volunteers**

5.1. DACYM has a Recruitment Policy that should be consulted by all those recruiting staff and volunteers in the organisation.

5.2. As a charity that works from a Christian ethos, we do have some roles that have a Genuine Occupational Requirement (GOR) for the person to demonstrate a Christian faith through commitment to our vision and values. For these roles we operate a Justifiability Policy regarding the employment of staff, and which roles a GOR is applicable.

5.3. In all other roles we will respect and consider for employment individuals regardless of status regarding the criteria listed in section 1.6. It is our policy and intent to practice non-discrimination in regard to the above factors and personnel matters concerning employment, promotion, demotion, transfer, recruitment, advertising, rates of pay or other forms of compensation and selection for training.

5.4. We will seek to ensure that all potential employees are aware of our Genuine Occupational Requirements, even when the GOR are not applicable to the post for which they are. It is important that all applicants are made aware of the potential opportunities and limitations on future career development in the organisation.

## **6. Disability**

6.1. As an employer, we have certain legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 towards an employee who has a disability or who acquires a disability during their employment with us.

6.2. We have a duty to make 'reasonable adjustments', for example to the workplace or working arrangements, to avoid the employee being substantially disadvantaged compared to non-disabled people. Even if an employee does not fall under the legal definition of 'disabled', but would benefit from some adjustments that are reasonable to make, then we will make all such reasonable adjustments.

6.3. Reasonable adjustments may include things like:

- providing practical aids and technical equipment
- allocating to another employee some tasks that cannot be done easily by the disabled employee
- a phased return to work after absence due to disability – perhaps working flexible hours or part-time

6.4. The law recognises that what may be 'reasonable' as an adjustment for a large employer may not be possible for a smaller employer. Nevertheless, we will implement any adjustments that are reasonable, in consultation with the employee.

6.5. We will take specialist occupational health advice if needed, for example from [www.fitforwork.org](http://www.fitforwork.org).

## **7. Young People and Discrimination**

7.1. DACYM are wholeheartedly committed to equality and inclusion; being a safe, welcoming, and affirming community and celebrating diversity. We are committed to anti-oppressive practice and are proactive in supporting and safeguarding young people who are at risk as a result of prejudice and discrimination on the basis of their sexuality and/or gender identity.

7.2. DACYM aims to work with organisations, services, groups and individuals tackle to discrimination that threatens the very lives of marginalised young people.

7.3. We are aware of the “double discrimination” experienced by socially excluded young people who are, for example, black and gay, lesbian or bi-sexual. We promote approaches that foster respect for the individual and develop community safety. Tackling discrimination is integral to our work and the methods we use.

## **8. Criminal Convictions**

8.1. DACYM’s Vision and Values promote the principle of forgiveness and rehabilitation for all and so we would seek not to discriminate against those with previous criminal convictions.

8.2. However, with a duty of care to the young people who access our services as well as our volunteers and employees, Worth Unlimited reserves the right to refuse employment or service provision to any person where we believe the risk is too great. Decisions will be based on a range of factors including;

- Nature and circumstances of offence
- Time since conviction
- References received (for employment or volunteering)
- Narrative of experience since conviction

8.3. Individuals on the Sex Offenders register will never be recruited as employees or volunteers, in keeping with government legislation

## **9. Challenge**

9.1. Instances of discrimination, bullying and abuse from an employee or volunteer should be reported immediately to the appropriate line manager and will be dealt with within the appropriate disciplinary process.

9.2. DACYM staff and volunteers will seek to challenge all instances of discrimination, bullying and abuse among young people. It is acknowledged that the nature of this challenge may vary depending on the relationship that the youth worker has with the young person and the specific circumstances and environment. This is not eliminating challenge, but rather ensuring that the challenge provided brings about positive outcomes and change in behaviour and thinking.

## **10. Complaints**

10.1. We have in operation a detailed complaints procedure in relation to employment. Job applicants that believe they have been discriminated against can request that their specific concerns are investigated. DACYM aims to be accountable in its employment policies. Both the Board of Trustees and the Project Director will consider at the highest level a complaint about our employment practice.

10.2. We also have in operation a detailed complaints policy for users and other agencies and members of the public.

10.3. DACYM will take steps to ensure that all future documents, procedures, Codes of Practice, management guidelines, instructions related to employment issues or connected with the employment of people are developed in line with this policy.

## **11. Action & Responsibility**

11.1. While it is the responsibility of all DACYM employees, short term workers and volunteers to ensure this policy is carried out it is acknowledged that specific responsibilities lie with those in a managerial position or those responsible for recruitment.

**REVIEWED AND ADOPTED – 01/12/2022**

**NEXT SCHEDULED REVIEW – AUTUMN TERM 2024**