

## EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY Policy and Procedures



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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Lewisham LINK strives to ensure that our Executive Body, volunteers and members reflect the wider community.
- 1.2 Lewisham LINK strives for high standards, we recognise the need for encouraging diversity and wholeheartedly support a policy of equal opportunities in all areas of our work and responsibilities.
- 1.3 This policy provides guidance to enable all who work with or for Lewisham LINK to comply with anti-discrimination legislation. The policy will also address anti-discrimination issues involving areas that currently fall outside any legislation.
- 1.4 Failure to follow the procedures in the policy may lead to disciplinary or other appropriate action.
- 1.5 Lewisham LINK's aims and objectives will be achieved through action planning, effective monitoring and a willingness to tackle problems where they arise. Lewisham LINK is committed to reviewing this policy on an annual basis. Through our training, publications, interaction with members and other activities, Lewisham LINK will ensure those we work with know our statements of policy.
- 1.6 Lewisham LINK will regularly review the implementation of its Equality and Diversity Policy and strategy. Where evidence is found of ineffectiveness, immediate remedial action will be taken to ensure implementation.

## **2. Definitions**

- 2.1 Equal Opportunities ensure that policies, procedures and practice within Lewisham LINK do not discriminate against the people within it. It is about treating people fairly and equally regardless of who they are, their background or their lifestyle.
- 2.2 Diversity ensures that all people are valued as individuals and are able to maximise their potential and contribution to Lewisham LINK and to the community. It recognises that people from different backgrounds can bring fresh ideas and a different approach, which can make the way we work and learn more fun, more creative, more efficient and more innovative.
- 2.3 Direct Discrimination occurs when an individual is dealt with less favourably on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin or sex. Also because of, for example, marital status or caring responsibility; sexual orientation; age; physical, sensory or learning disability; mental health; political or religious beliefs; class; HIV status; employment status; unrelated criminal convictions; union activities.
- 2.4 Indirect Discrimination occurs when a requirement or condition, which although it applies equally to persons of all groups, is such that only a considerably smaller proportion of a particular group can comply with it. Examples: a rule about clothing that disproportionately disadvantages a racial group cannot be justified; requiring applicants to have British qualifications.
- 2.5 Victimisation occurs when an individual is treated less favourably because that person has asserted rights under the Sex Discrimination Act, the Race Relations Act or the

Disability Discrimination Act or acted as a whistleblower on such activity. People must be able to act against unlawful discrimination without fear of reprisals.

- 2.6 Harassment means repeated, unreciprocated and unwelcome comments, looks, actions, suggestions or physical contact which is found objectionable and offensive and which might threaten an employee or participant or create an intimidating or uncomfortable environment. Harassment can be sexual, racial, directed against people with disabilities or indeed related to any characteristic exhibited by the individual.
- 2.7 Positive Action refers to measures taken to assist volunteers and members who have been under-represented in specific areas, to reach a level of confidence, knowledge and competencies that is comparable with 'representative' members. These measures would normally take the form of additional training
- 2.8 Lewisham LINK urges staff, volunteers and members to be aware of the less obvious types of discrimination which result from general assumptions and pre-conceptions about the capabilities, interests and characteristics of individuals.

### **3. Policy Statements**

#### **Diversity**

- 3.1 Lewisham LINK will actively encourage diversity to maximise achievement, creativity and good practice and to bring benefit to individuals and communities.
- 3.2 Lewisham LINK encourages all people it works with and for to contribute to an environment in which people feel comfortable expressing how they feel and what they need, knowing they will be treated with respect and that their contribution will be valued.
- 3.3 The way we work, train and learn within Lewisham LINK reflects both the Mission and Objectives of Lewisham LINK and the spirit and intentions of legislation that outlaws discrimination and promotes equality and diversity.
- 3.4 Lewisham LINK will make reasonable adjustments to working practices, equipment and premises and offer, where appropriate, additional support to trustees, staff and volunteers to ensure they are able to take a full and active part in Lewisham LINK work.
- 3.5 Lewisham LINK will endeavour to deliver services in a way that genuinely recognises the importance of an inclusive society that brings opportunities and access, not barriers to individuals.

#### **Equal Opportunities**

- 3.6 Lewisham LINK is an equal opportunities organisation. No volunteer, member or member of the community should receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin; sex; marital status or caring responsibility; sexual orientation; age; physical, sensory or learning disability; mental health; political or religious beliefs; class; HIV status; employment status; unrelated criminal convictions; union activities. Nor will such person be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable. This principle applies to recruitment, promotion, transfer, training, benefits, facilities, procedures and all terms and conditions of employment.

## **4. Aims and Objectives**

### **4.1 The aims and objectives of the Equality and Diversity Policy are:**

- To encourage, promote and celebrate diversity in all our activities and services.
- To ensure equal access to jobs and volunteer opportunities.
- To ensure compliance with legislation on discrimination and equality (Disabled Persons Employment Acts of 1944 and 1958, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Race Relations Act 1976, Disability Discrimination Act 1995).
- To promote equal opportunities in other areas not currently covered by legislation. Examples Age, Rural.
- To create environments free from harassment and discrimination.
- To maximise the use of resources in the best interests of staff, volunteers and service users.
- To confront and challenge discrimination where and whenever it arises whether it be between colleagues, or in any other area relating to Lewisham LINK work.
- To make a willingness to accept and implement this policy to be a necessary qualification for any position in Lewisham LINK.
- To ensure, through positive action and so far as is practicable, that all Lewisham LINK premises and services are accessible to all people.
- To ensure that employment and advancement within the organisation is determined by objective criteria and personal merit.

## **5. Policy Implementation: Expectations**

5.1 Lewisham LINK recognises that passive policies do not provide equality and Lewisham LINK will seek to promote equality and diversity within the following framework of responsibilities.

5.2 Responsibility for implementing and developing the policy rests with the Executive Body. The overall co-ordinating responsibility for equal opportunities and management of diversity is delegated to the LINK Development Manager. However, Lewisham LINK believes that all who work with or for the organisation have an individual responsibility: to accept the policy and ensure a personal involvement in its application; to co-operate actively to ensure that the environment we desire is a reality. Therefore:

### **5.3 Lewisham LINK expects individuals:**

- to co-operate with measures introduced by Lewisham LINK to ensure equality of opportunity, diversity and non discrimination.
- to respect, include and encourage other employees or participants regardless of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin; sex; marital status or caring responsibility; sexual orientation; age; physical, sensory or learning disability; mental health; political or religious beliefs; class; HIV status; employment status; unrelated criminal convictions; union activities.
- to feel sufficiently confident to inform the Executive Body and the host organisation if they suspect discrimination is taking place.

#### **5.4 Lewisham LINK expects our Executive Body and Host Organisation:-**

- to ensure that grievances are dealt with in a fair and consistent manner and in line with Lewisham LINK 's Grievance Policy and Procedure.
- to ensure that individuals within their area are aware of their legal responsibilities, and the organisation's Equality and Diversity Policy.
- to promote actively the benefits of participant diversity, in all aspects of the organisation.
- to ensure that the highest standards of Equality Opportunities practice are observed in the delivery of Lewisham LINK services and to undertake training and development opportunities to ensure that competence is maintained.
- to offer advice and guidance to members, volunteers and organisations of Lewisham LINK's Equality and Diversity Policy and Procedures.
- to facilitate training and discussion on Equal Opportunities and Diversity issues as appropriate.

#### **6. Policy Implementation: Training**

- 6.1 In line with the intentions of this policy, Lewisham LINK will not discriminate in the provision of training courses / opportunities wherever possible.
- 6.2 Appropriate training will be provided to enable the Executive Body, staff and volunteers to perform their jobs effectively. The training offered will take into account the needs of all people.
- 6.3 Briefing on this policy will form part of the Induction Procedure for staff, volunteers and Executive members

#### **7. Enforcement**

Lewisham LINK recognises the need for a continuing commitment to genuine equal opportunities and diversity within the organisation. The effectiveness of the policy's aims and objectives can only be judged by how the policy operates in practice.

#### **Policy Enforcement – Grievances**

- 7.1 Any staff member or volunteer who feels they have been a victim of unlawful discrimination or unfairly treated in a way contrary to the intention of this policy should raise the issue through Lewisham LINK's established Grievance Procedure.
- 7.2 Any member who feels he / she has been unfairly treated in a way contrary to the intention of this policy should make a complaint through Lewisham LINK's Development Manager, who must report any such complaint to the Executive Body. If the complaint is about the Development Manager, this should be made through the Chair of the Executive Body.
- 7.3 All incidents of direct discrimination are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure.
- 7.4 Incidents of indirect discrimination will be investigated to determine whether they should be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure.

- 7.5 Incidents of victimisation or harassment will be dealt with in accordance with Lewisham LINK's Harassment Procedure. Where incidents of victimisation and harassment are proven, the issue will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure.
- 7.6 Lewisham LINK will not treat lightly or ignore grievances from members of disadvantaged groups on the assumption that they are over-sensitive about discrimination.

### **Policy Enforcement – Disciplinary Procedure**

- 7.7 Any member of staff found to be in breach of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action in line with the Standard Terms of Employment.
- 7.8 Any volunteer found to be in breach of this policy will be counselled on his/her actions and may, where necessary, be removed from Lewisham LINK's volunteer register.
- 7.9 Any member of any Committee or working group of Lewisham LINK found in breach of this policy will be counselled on his/her actions and may, where necessary, be asked to leave Lewisham LINK.
- 7.10 Any member found in breach of this policy will, where appropriate, be counselled on his/her actions and may, where necessary, be referred back to their organisation or refused future services from Lewisham LINK.

To be decided as part of the work plan.

## **8. Monitoring**

- 8.1 Lewisham LINK view the collection/analysis of data is vital in informing change and improving performance. Where appropriate, statistics on Lewisham LINK's services will be collected and analysed in relation to equality and diversity matters. We will review employee turnover and seek information on reasons for leaving. Local and national data or statistics will be used to benchmark our performance.
- 8.2 The Executive Board will review annually equality of opportunity relating to Lewisham LINK services. Volunteer recruitment and selection procedures will be monitored and reviewed annually by the Development Manager who will report to the Chair of the Executive Board. All aspects of personnel policies and procedures shall be kept under review to ensure that they do not operate against the Equal Opportunities Policy.
- 8.3 In order to determine the impact of this policy it is important that a monitoring system be developed which will measure commitment, progress and effectiveness. The Diversity and Equality Policy will be monitored and reviewed as follows:
  - The policy will be an agenda item at Lewisham LINK executive meetings.
  - The Chair of the Executive Body and the Development Manager will undertake an annual policy review. All relevant parties will be encouraged to submit comments for consideration.
  - The review recommendations will be presented to the next Trustee meeting for their comments and ratification.
- 8.4 Where it appears that there may have been or there is a breach of the policy, the Chair of the Executive Body and the Development Manager will investigate the circumstances and action will be taken to counter any proven breach of policy.

- 8.5 If it is found that the policy is excluding or discouraging the development of trustees, staff or volunteers or restricting service users, the Chair of the Executive Body and the Development Manager should take positive action to re-adjust the policy.

## Review Form

Equality and Diversity Adviser:

Tel:

Email:

Monitoring Arrangements:

Date of local review(s):

Other information: