

Equality & Diversity Policy

Policy Name	Equality & Diversity Policy			
History	Date adopted 2017	Date of last review April 2021	Date of last updates April 2021	Date staff last informed about or trained in policy July 2021
Approval Authority	Judith Davey			
Responsible Office	Ali Wright			

Scope: Equality, diversity & inclusion policy

Reason for policy: To provide set the required standard of practice and demonstrate commitment to equality & diversity at The Advocacy Project.

Who should read this policy: Everyone working on behalf of The Advocacy Project.

Policy statement

The Advocacy Project is committed to providing services and a working environment which values difference. We strive to make sure people of all backgrounds can access and benefit from our services, and flourish in our workplace.

Equality means creating a fair system so the rules, policies, and procedures are applied equally and consistently, so everyone has equality of opportunity.

Diversity is about understanding, recognising, respecting differences between people and groups of people, and placing a positive value on those differences.

Equality of opportunity is about making sure everyone has an equal chance to take up opportunities and also to make full use of the opportunities on offer and to fulfil their potential.

All staff are required to:

- Ensure that all photos, diagrams, pictures and text used in any external or internal communications (including case studies) avoid stereotypes. We must ensure that communications are balanced in terms of gender, ethnicity, and body image.
- Ensure that we avoid language that stereotypes or causes offence to others.
- Ensure that the calendar of religious festivals is consulted before scheduling key meetings so we are inclusive to people of all faiths and no faith
- Ensure that appropriate access is arranged to translation and interpretation services to ensure the people we work with can participate fully. This includes British Sign Language, Makaton and other non-verbal languages.
- Conform to the Accessible Information Policy so that we conform to the Accessible Information Standard which ensures all our communications are easy to read and assimilate.
- We must record in a secure location the communications needs of everyone we work with – volunteers and service users – so that anyone contacting that individual knows their individual requirements.
- All staff are required to collect diversity information so that we can analyse patterns and identify those people, communities and groups that are not accessing services so that action can be taken to address this.

Our commitment

We are fully committed to and undertaking action under the Equality Act 2010 and other forms of legislation that combat discrimination and promote equality and diversity. We will not tolerate discrimination because of a protected characteristic, these are:

- age
- race
- sex
- gender reassignment
- disability
- sexual orientation
- religion or belief,
- pregnancy and maternity
- civil partnership and marriage

We will also not discriminate because of working patterns or trade union membership for example, nor will we tolerate harassment or bullying on these or any other grounds. A separate Bullying and Harassment 'positive working environment' policy is available for staff to access in the employee handbook

We will strive to create an environment where everyone in The Advocacy Project is respected and can give their best, irrespective of who they are or what job they do and feel able to discuss their personal needs in relation to equality & diversity issues.

We will work hard to ensure that our services are accessible to a diverse community, this may include offering first language services, providing information in sign language or audio for example. A separate Access to our services policy is available and provides more information.

Our responsibilities - how we will keep our commitment

Our trustees are responsible for making sure that the organisation keeps to our equality and diversity policy and commitment. This includes keeping to Equality Act 2010 and making sure developments and strategy provide equality of opportunity.

We recruit trustees from diverse backgrounds, which reflects the communities we work with. By having trustees with real experiences, our decision making will be more informed and supportive of service users. Our diverse board contains a broader mix of skills, knowledge and experience which gives greater flexibility to overcome challenges, meaning service users can influence decisions and the board has the skills it needs to drive forward our strategy forward.

How our trustees do this

There is an equality & diversity champion on the board who is responsible for:

- reviewing the equality & diversity policy annually
- making sure the policy is applied to all areas of development, including equality impact assessments
- reviewing diversity data in management reports
- being a visible leader on equality & diversity
- keeping an overview of diversity consultations including staff survey

Our managers are responsible for making sure the Equality and Diversity Policy is embedded in all aspects of organisational practice.

How our managers do this

Our managers uphold our equality and diversity commitments by:

- organising annual training for all staff on equality & diversity
- challenging unacceptable behaviours and creating a climate where complaints can be raised without the fear of reprisal
- treating everyone with respect, consideration and without prejudice and promoting the same levels of behaviour in colleagues
- taking firm action where unfairness or inconsistency exists
- encouraging and supporting diversity within their teams
- demonstrating and promoting considerate and fair behaviour
- treating staff with dignity and respect and recognising and valuing individual skills and contributions
- demonstrating through words and actions that diversity is an integral part of meeting the organisation priorities
- creating an environment in which staff can identify and share good practice, celebrate success and encourage positive attitudes towards diversity
- creating an environment where staff feel able to discuss their personal needs in relation to equality and diversity issues
- promoting and providing opportunity for feedback and discussion and action on equality and diversity
- making sure people are recruited, selected, trained, or promoted, solely because of their relevant aptitudes, skills and abilities and that no one receives less favourable treatment due to a protected characteristic
- making sure people from all backgrounds are able to fully benefit from our services, this includes access to interpreters. please refer to our Access Information Standards Policy and Access to translation and interpretation services guidance

Everyone at The Advocacy Project is responsible for making sure they are using the equality & diversity policy in their work

How we do this

- treating everyone with respect, consideration and without prejudice and to promote the same levels of behaviour in colleagues

- attending equality & diversity training
- participating in valuing and celebrating difference such as through events eg Black History month or LGBTQ+ awareness month
- making sure people from all backgrounds are able to fully benefit from our services, this includes access to interpreters. please refer to our Access Information Standards Policy and Access to translation and interpretation services guidance

How we know we are meeting our commitment

- We ask our employees about their experiences
- We ask people who use our services about their experiences
- We review our equality & diversity action plan
- We review our diversity data

Communication

We want to make sure that our messages get across successfully and people inside our organisation and outside our organisation understand our policy and commitment.

How we will do this

We strive to deliver information in as many different formats as possible.

- Have the policy in a variety of formats such as easy read, variety of languages, video and paper copy, braille or audio.
- Publish our policy and case studies on the website
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion training for all staff
- Clear commitment in external materials such as when we recruit staff
- Accreditations
- Train staff in different communication skills such as Makaton

Getting our message across successfully means all staff will:

- be aware of The Advocacy Project policies on equality & diversity
- understand the benefit of valuing diversity and how this impact on the work of The Advocacy Project
- understand their own role in promoting equality and diversity
- be aware of their legal responsibilities under current equality law.

When things go wrong

Employees who feel they have been unfairly treated contrary to this policy should raise their concerns with managers to get them addressed. If matters are not addressed the individual can raise a grievance using the normal grievance procedure. All complaints will be investigated thoroughly and without delay.

Harassment of or discrimination against a colleague will be considered a disciplinary offence and dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.

Additional guidance is available in the employee handbook.

The Advocacy Project will make sure that raising a grievance will not have an adverse effect on a person, and that they will be protected from victimisation.

People we work with who feel they have been unfairly treated contrary to this policy should raise their concerns with a member of staff or manager using our Feedback and Complaints Policy.

Why we collect diversity data

Capturing diversity data is a strong tool for championing equality and inclusion; for making sure we represent diverse communities; and for identifying specific needs and issues that affect various communities.

What is diversity data?

This is information about a person, we collect this from our staff and from people that we work with. Diversity information is based on current UK equality legislation, which aims to prevent discrimination on the grounds of age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership and gender reassignment.

We ask people to select from a list

Ethnicity

Sexual orientation

Gender

Religion

Age

Disability

How do we collect diversity information?

When you receive a service The Advocacy Project we will ask you to complete a diversity form, this can be online or paper or by talking with a member of staff.

In all of the diversity categories there is a space for you to self-describe if you do not identify with any of the categories in the list.

The demographic information you provide is confidential and will be anonymised. You can decline to answer, but we still need to ask. If you prefer not to say, please tick the 'Prefer not to say' option on the form.

Why do we collect diversity information?

We collect this information so that we are able to better understand our staff and people using our services which will help us to improve our services and organisation as a whole.

Diversity information helps us to check that our organisation is inclusive and to identify hidden barriers or challenges people may face to be involved with our organisation. As the collection and analysis of demographic data relating to equality and diversity is crucial for ensuring equal access to all The Advocacy Project's services, staff are required to record this information on the Case Management System (CMS), or elsewhere as directed by your manager. This information will be analysed by Service Managers who will take the necessary action to address the situation (in conjunction with commissioners as appropriate).

Other organisations we work with ask us to monitor diversity information, for example local authorities. When we report to other organisations the information is always anonymised and presented as groups of data.

We keep and use all information in line with data protection law, you can find out more about this in our privacy policy on our website.

Policy review

We are committed to keeping this policy current and relevant. It will be monitored and reviewed annually.

Action plan

Our Action Plan to support the commitments made in this policy is available. This year we are working on:

- Being a proactively anti-racist organisation
- Promoting E&D stories and our work
- Strengthening internal and external commitment to E&D/inclusivity

