



Equality and Diversity Policy

Statement of intent

Epic Partners recognises that many people in our society experience discrimination or lack of opportunity for many different reasons. People frequently suffer as a result of discrimination against them due to their social and economic circumstances.

Discrimination occurs for many different reasons and is sometimes based on their race, religion, national and ethnic origin, political beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, HIV status, age, disability, health or drug-related problems, marital status, family circumstances, responsibility for dependants, geographical area, social class, income level, criminal record, trade union activity and in many other ways.

EPIC declares its intention to challenge discrimination and lack of opportunity and to work with others towards their elimination in its own policy and practice and within all organisations and individuals with whom it works.

EPIC strives to create an environment (within the limitations of the resources/offices) in which all individuals can feel welcome as a whole person and in which everyone is treated with respect and fairness.

Promotion of Equality and Diversity and Acceptance of EPIC's Equality and Diversity Policy

All staff and volunteers will be made aware of this policy as part of the induction process. Other groups, such as Trustees and partner organisations, will be informed of this policy and have access to it via the website and the Epic Shared Drives. Everyone is expected to declare their support for the objectives of this policy. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

EPIC is committed to promoting equality and diversity both in relation to its services as well as areas in which it has influence. EPIC will make every effort to reflect its commitment to equality and diversity in its marketing and communication activities.

A full copy of the Equality and Diversity Policy will be freely available to staff, volunteers, members and any other interested parties.

The person responsible for updating and reviewing this policy to ensure that it complies with current legislation is the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

Commitment

EPIC is committed to eliminating discrimination and promoting equality and diversity within our policies, practices and procedures and in those areas in which it has influence.

EPIC is also committed to promoting equality and diversity in the operation of all its services.

This applies to professional dealings with service users, staff and volunteers, as well as Trustees and third parties. All service providers who work with us will be expected to adhere to this policy as a minimum standard.

We shall treat everyone equally and with the same courtesy and respect, regardless of:

- gender (including marital status, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity and paternity)
- sexual orientation (including civil partnership status)
- ethnicity or racial group
- religion or belief
- age
- caring responsibility; or
- disability

Regulation and Legislation

We will comply with all current and any future anti-discrimination legislation and associated codes of practice. We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that we and our staff/volunteers and other third parties as detailed above do not unlawfully discriminate under:

- (a) the Equality Act 2010
- (b) the Civil Partnership Act 2004
- (c) the Employment Rights Act 1996
- (d) the Human Rights Act 1998
- (e) the Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000
- (f) the Fixed-Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000
- (g) the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- (h) the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief Act) Regulations 2003
- (i) the Work and Families Act 2006
- (j) the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- (k) any other relevant legislation in force from time to time relating to discrimination in employment and the provision of goods, facilities or services.

We are also aware of two Nottingham City Council documents: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2020 – 2023 and Nottingham City Hate Crime Strategy and aim to ensure our policy and practice are in line with these documents.

What Constitutes Discrimination?

EPIC believes that discrimination can take one or more of the different forms set out below.

Direct Discrimination is treating one person less favourably than another in the same or similar circumstances or segregating them from others solely because they are, for example, a lesbian, a gay

man or because they have a disability or illness. Refusing to employ someone who has the required skills because they are deaf or because they are pregnant would constitute such discrimination.

Indirect Discrimination occurs where there is a requirement or condition which appears to apply equally to everyone but which, in practice has an adverse impact on a particular group and cannot be objectively justified. For example, an unnecessary physical or age requirement can discriminate against women or people with disabilities. The setting of language tests, where language skills or fluency are not essential for a job, is another example.

Harassment occurs when unwanted conduct related to any of the grounds referred to above takes place with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment may involve physical acts or verbal and non-verbal communications and gestures.

Victimisation occurs when a person is treated less favourably or is discriminated against because she/he has pursued, or intends to pursue, their rights in respect of alleged discrimination.

Oppression occurs when one group of people are in a dominant position over another within a given social framework, such as, men over women, white people over black people. The type of behaviour to be challenged is behaviour displayed by a dominant group against a member of an oppressed group, which uses and reinforces the existing power relationship. This may be by action or by opinions held.

Direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or victimisation is unacceptable regardless of whether there was any intention to discriminate, harass, victimise or not.

Service Provision, Meeting Service Users' Needs and Raising Awareness

Service Provision

All services maintained, developed and co-ordinated by EPIC will be provided in accordance with our commitment to Equality and Diversity.

EPIC reserves the right to refuse to work with individuals or organisations who it considers to be discriminating or oppressive.

EPIC will promote Equality and Diversity and good practice in its work with other agencies or individuals.

EPIC constantly reviews and monitors the quality of its services and uses a range of tools to analyse performance and past and current trends. This may include feedback from stakeholders, user involvement where practical (e.g. satisfaction surveys, user forums) and feedback from staff and volunteers. Changes in practice will be made in response to the outcomes of this monitoring.

The views of service users are monitored through our statistical database and trends can be identified in order that appropriate targeting of our resources can take place.

Office and Accommodation

EPIC will make every effort to ensure that premises used in relation to its work are accessible and comfortable for all members of the community.

Service users and Service users' Needs

EPIC is committed to treating all stakeholders and service users equally and fairly. EPIC will also, wherever possible, take steps to promote equal opportunity in relation to access to the services that we provide, taking account of the diversity of the communities that we serve.

EPIC is committed to meeting the diverse needs of service users. We will take steps to identify the needs of service users in our community and develop policies and procedures setting out how we will meet service users' needs and ensuring that the services we provide are accessible to all. We will take account the needs of service users with a disability and service users who are unable to communicate effectively in spoken English. We will consider which groups are predominant within our service user base and devise appropriate policies to meet their needs. EPIC recognises that not everyone has access to personal transport or is able to use it and will plan its services and activities accordingly.

Raising Awareness (Communication)

EPIC will devise policies and procedures to promote and raise awareness of policies and procedures for ensuring that our services are accessible for a diverse range of service users. EPIC's Senior Management Team will set out what steps we have taken to make our services accessible to service users. It will include a list of policies and procedures, information about what steps we will take to put them in place, who is responsible for them and how we will make our policies and procedures openly available for the public. Staff, volunteers and Trustees will be informed of the steps where appropriate to ensure that they are effectively implemented.

Recruitment and Selection, Service conditions and training

EPIC believes that no person or group should be treated less favourably in employment because of their race, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability or illness.

EPIC will treat all employees and job applicants equally and fairly and not unlawfully discriminate against them. This applies equally to voluntary positions and anyone undertaking work experience with us. Staff appointments will be monitored to ensure no discrimination is occurring at the point of selection.

EPIC believes it has an obligation to the community that it serves to make sure that any employment opportunities available at EPIC are equally open to all sections of the community. Furthermore, EPIC believes that it can only provide services, which meet the needs of all sections of the community by reflecting the diversity of the community throughout its staff.

Training Plan

EPIC will identify equality and diversity training needs of individuals and ensure that either personal or organisational training plans, which address these needs, are in place. All new employees will receive an assessment of needs and, where necessary, will be provided with Equality and Diversity training. Confirmation that relevant training has been undertaken will be kept on individual Training Records.

Dealings with third parties

EPIC will not unlawfully discriminate in dealings with third parties. This applies to dealings with other similar service providers and general procurement. EPIC will not knowingly purchase goods and services from agencies whose activities are contrary to the principles outlined in this policy.

Working with other organisations

All those who act on the organisation's behalf will be expected to pay due regard to this when conducting business on the organisation's behalf. In all its dealings with partner organisations, EPIC will seek to promote the principles of equality and diversity.

Referring or signposting Service users to other agencies/services

The criteria for selecting agencies are based on service provision, expertise and their equality and diversity practices.

Implementation and Monitoring

Responsibility

Ultimate responsibility for implementing this policy rests with the organisation. The organisation will appoint a senior staffing member within it to be responsible for the operation of the policy. All employees and Trustees of the organisation are expected to pay due regard to the provisions of this policy and are responsible for ensuring compliance with it when undertaking their jobs or representing the organisation.

Acts of unlawful discrimination on any of the forbidden grounds by employees, volunteers or Trustees of the organisation will result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. Failure to comply with this policy will be treated in a similar fashion. The policy applies to all who are employed in the organisation and to all Trustees.

Complaints of discrimination

The organisation will treat seriously all complaints of unlawful discrimination on any of the forbidden grounds made by employees, director/trustees, service users, or other third parties and will act where appropriate.

All complaints will be investigated and the complainant will be informed of the outcome.

We will also monitor the number and outcome of complaints of discrimination made by staff, service users, director/trustees and other third parties.

Breach of Equality and Diversity Policy

Trustees

Any breach of the Equality and Diversity Policy made by a trustee will be thoroughly investigated and appropriate action taken. This may include removal of the Trustee from the Board.

Volunteers

Any breach of the Equality and Diversity Policy made by a volunteer will be thoroughly investigated and appropriate action taken. This may include asking the volunteer to leave the organisation.

Staff

All staff will be expected to be familiar with the contents of this policy. EPIC is committed to dealing robustly and transparently with all complaints of discrimination, victimisation, harassment or abuse. Disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, will be taken against a member of staff who is considered to have acted in a discriminatory manner.

Service Users

Under circumstances of persistent discriminatory, oppressive or violent behaviour, services may be withdrawn from a user.

Monitoring

EPIC will monitor and record equal opportunities information about staff, volunteers and Trustees, based on age, gender, ethnicity, and disability.

EPIC will also monitor its services and service users in order to identify trends and inform the development of our services to increasingly meet the needs of service users.

Where it is possible to do so, and where doing so will not cause offence or discomfort to those whom it is intended to protect, we will monitor the sexual orientation and religion or belief of staff, volunteers and Trustees, to ensure that they are not being discriminated against in terms of the opportunities or benefits available to them. We are aware that individuals may choose not to disclose their sexual orientation or religion or belief and will take care to avoid inadvertent discrimination in such cases.

We will store equal opportunities data as confidential personal data and restrict access to this information. Equal opportunities information will be used exclusively for the purposes of equal opportunities monitoring and have no bearing on opportunities or benefits.

The organisation will provide equal opportunities information to funders as required in relation to personnel and service users under the terms of any service level agreements, funding agreements or contracts.

Review

The operation of this policy as an ongoing process will be reviewed to ensure it meets the standards set out above. Monitoring of equal opportunities issues will form part of this review to identify relevant trends or areas where improvements can be made to providing the highest standards of service under this policy.

Policy updated and agreed by Trustees: April 2020

Date of review: Spring 2023