

# Our policy on diversity and equality of opportunity

As a Christian organisation we believe each person to be a unique creation of God, bearing his image and valued by him. We believe his intention is for community – a community enriched by diversity and in which all are valued equally. These convictions compel us to repudiate prejudice and discrimination in all our relationships. Our commitment to equality of opportunity in both service delivery and employment follows from this.

## What this means for our Service Users

Our services are open to all who meet the qualifying criteria and are able to benefit from them. We do not discriminate against anyone on grounds of race, colour, ethnic or cultural origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age or disability.

Nor do we accept our service users being victims of any such discrimination, harassment or abusive remarks while in our care (whether or not made in their presence), either from our staff, other service users, visitors to our premises, or the staff of any external services we use. We will investigate any allegations made, using our normal grievance procedure. Wherever possible, we will seek reconciliation between those involved, but our first concern will be for the welfare of our service users. Allegations found to have been made maliciously will themselves be the subject of disciplinary procedures.

In the particular matter of religion, we are fully committed to respecting and working with the various beliefs of our service users. In the light of our own convictions concerning the benefits of Christian faith, we do offer opportunities from time to time for service users to explore the relevance of a personal Christian faith, but no pressure is put on anyone either to take part in these, or to make any particular response if they do. We do not discriminate in the provision of our services on account of the choices they make in these matters.

## What this means for our Staff and Volunteers

In the selection of staff and volunteers, we are looking for people whose personal qualities, skills, training and overall experience make them best able to satisfy the requirements of the job. We do not discriminate on grounds of race, colour, ethnic or cultural origin, religion (except where a Genuine Occupational Requirement exists for someone with a personal Christian faith – see below), gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age or disability. Neither do we discriminate on any of these grounds in any of our working practices, procedures, training opportunities or conditions of employment. We do, however, reserve the right to request Criminal Records Bureau Disclosures for all staff and volunteers (including agency staff and sessional workers) who are likely to be closely involved with our more vulnerable service users.

Naturally, we expect all our staff to be appreciative of our beliefs, aspirations and values, and to be able to work accordingly. For the holders of certain posts, principally in senior management, we consider it to be a Genuine Occupational Requirement that they have a personal Christian faith, so as to lead and represent our work in accordance with these beliefs and aspirations, and to maintain our Christian identity and ethos with integrity, conviction and sound judgement. We consider this a “proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim”, as allowed by the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations (2003). Whenever this applies, the case will be made in the Job Description.

Within this framework, we value diversity in the staff we employ, each bringing their own unique skills, insights and experiences.