

Leeds Mind Policy



Equality and Diversity Policy

Building diversity and countering discrimination

This policy replaces the Leeds Mind Equal Opportunities Policy

Purpose of the policy

Leeds Mind aspires to create an organisation that reflects the richness of the diversity of the communities we work in, in all aspects of the organisation.

The purpose of this policy is:

- To encourage an atmosphere in which everyone involved is able to embrace the benefits and see the value of working in a diverse organisation
- To promote fair and equal treatment for people who are involved in the organisation, whether as employees, job applicants, members, service users, volunteers, trustees, students or visitors, (referred to collectively in this policy as 'stakeholders') irrespective of their individual differences or any personal characteristics

“We aspire to acknowledge and value diversity and difference and actively seek to challenge and correct imbalances of power and the negative impacts of oppression and discrimination” (From Leeds Mind Core Values, 2002)

Leeds Mind is committed to the principles of valuing diversity. We recognise the benefits that can be secured through employing a diverse workforce and harnessing the individual talents of staff from different backgrounds and with different skills. These include:

- Tangible benefits such as improved staff morale, absence levels, client satisfaction
- Widening access to services (in all senses) for stakeholders
- Recognising, and removing barriers, either physical, practical or psychological
- Improved organisational image leading to a wider client base
- Putting Leeds Mind Core Values into practice (see Appendix 1)

We are committed to providing fair and equal treatment for all stakeholders who are expected to treat everyone with whom they come into contact with dignity and respect.

Any failure to comply with the spirit of this policy will be taken seriously and appropriate action will be taken.

Staff should be aware of the importance Leeds Mind attaches to this policy and that breaches may be classed as disciplinary offences and dealt with accordingly.

Introduction

By **Equality** we are talking about:

- Treating people according to their needs and as you would wish to be treated
- The same choices and opportunities given to all
- A right not a privilege
- Equal treatment, irrespective of age, race, religion, disability, gender or sexual orientation

By **Diversity** we are talking about:

- Valuing the differences of individuals and harnessing these to the benefit of the organisation, the individual and society
- Harnessing differences to create a rich, harmonious and productive environment where everyone feels valued because talents are fully used
- Using diversity as a tool to meet the goals of the organisation

In order to do this we:

- Encourage positive action, thinking and behaviour
- Address the barriers, discrimination and oppression that prevent this being achieved

Definitions

Equal Opportunities – complying with legislation, which protects some disadvantaged groups

Equality – Equal treatment, irrespective of age, race, religion, disability, gender or sexual orientation

Diversity - recognising talents and strengths of individuals, that everyone is unique, and celebrating differences

Direct Discrimination - treating a person less favourably because of particular personal characteristics

Indirect Discrimination – applying criteria or practices equally to all people, but has the effect of disadvantaging one group of people

Harassment – unwanted behaviour, which affects the dignity of individuals or groups. It is behaviour a person finds intimidating, upsetting, demeaning, embarrassing, humiliating or offensive

Bullying – “persistent, offensive, abrasive or insulting behaviour, abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate degenerate or injure the recipient”. (ACAS)

Victimisation - treating a person less favourably because they have asserted their rights under this policy or equality legislation

The legal context

In valuing diversity Leeds Mind commits itself to go beyond the legal minimum regarding equality. In applying this policy the organisation needs to take account of current and future equality legislation (and associated codes of practice) including, but not limited to the following:

- Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (as amended)
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1975
- Race Relations Act 1976 (as amended)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended)
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- (Legislation relating to Age Discrimination due in October 2006)

This list relates to Employment Legislation but there are other areas of relevant legislation, such as the Human Rights Act, the Mental Health Act and the Carers Act.

The above legislation protects individuals against **direct discrimination** (such as **harassment** including **bullying** and **victimisation**) and **indirect discrimination** because of their gender, race, disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief. This is referred to in more detail in **Leeds Mind Dignity at Work Policy**.

It is impossible to define all of the characteristics, which make people different and are hence covered by this policy. Some are protected by legislation (as above) whilst others are not. Examples include:

Directly covered by legislation

Race, gender, sexual orientation, colour, religion or belief, disability and age discrimination (from October 2006)

Can be indirectly covered by legislation

Ethnicity, marital status, nationality, culture, appearance, working pattern, state of health, caring responsibilities and family responsibilities

Other grounds on which people may be discriminated against

Language, regional accent, upbringing, social class, height, weight, previous jobs, employment status, criminal record, career length, education, qualifications, outside interests, personality, trade union activity, politics

In pursuing this policy we believe that the principles, which underpin the above legislation, should be extended to all regardless of any personal characteristics.

Scope

This policy relates to all aspects of Leeds Mind

- Access to services
- How services are delivered
- Attitudes and behaviour of individuals
- Recruitment and selection
- Training and development
- Conditions of work
- Language and images used in publications and marketing
- Any other aspect of the organisation as appropriate

The principle applies equally to all stakeholders in the organisation, and includes the culture of the organisation and the “messages” (actual or implied) it gives out.

Responsibilities for implementing this policy

It is the responsibility of everyone to promote Equality and Diversity throughout the organisation.

It is the responsibility of all to address appropriately, any breaches of this policy.

All staff - paid and unpaid, and trustees will be expected to read and understand this policy as part of their induction, and ensure they behave in accordance with its principles and contribute to the advancement of diversity and equality within the organisation.

Managers – are responsible for:

- a) Ensuring the staff in their team understand and comply with this policy
- b) Dealing with breaches and complaints seriously, speedily, sensitively and confidentially
- c) Leading by example

Trustees (the Executive Committee) – are responsible for:

- a) Implementing, reviewing and monitoring the effectiveness of the policy
- b) Providing advice on this policy
- c) Ensuring complaints are adequately investigated
- d) Leading by example

Service Users and visitors

Managers and staff must ensure that service users understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to this policy. In addition managers have a responsibility to challenge behaviour that goes against the spirit of this policy.

What constitutes a breach of the policy?

Breaches can be:

- Actions that break the law
- Actions against the letter or spirit of this policy, including Leeds Mind Core Values

What other policies does this relate to?

The spirit of diversity is consistent with our **Core Values** and this policy impacts on all work policies and practices in the organisation. We would draw particular attention to the following policies already in place:

- **Dignity at Work (Bullying and Harassment)**
- **Disciplinary and Grievance**
- **Family Leave**
- **Training and Development**
- **Flexible Working**
- **Recruitment and Selection**
- **Dealing with Conflict**

Complaints

Complaints about breaches of this policy can be made using the Leeds Mind “Dealing with Conflict policy “.

If you feel this policy has been breached in the first instance, if you are a:

- a) service user – you should speak to a staff member or;
- b) staff member you should speak to a manager

who will ensure all issues are investigated and dealt with appropriately. It may be that an informal resolution can be achieved to deal with the situation. Leeds Mind will train and support staff and managers to do this

If you feel unable to approach your manager directly, a colleague or someone from personnel can make this initial approach. This can be done verbally or in writing.

Positive Action initiatives

As a demonstration to its commitment to promoting diversity Leeds Mind may undertake Positive Action initiatives, for certain groups, where appropriate. Positive Action should not be confused with positive discrimination.

Positive Discrimination

Occurs when someone is selected for a particular job or opportunity purely on the basis of one of their personal characteristics such as their race or gender. Unlike positive action, positive discrimination is illegal.

Positive Action

Positive action is activity to increase the numbers of men, women or minority ethnic groups in a workforce where they have been shown by monitoring to be under represented. This may be in proportion to the total number of people employed, or in relation to the profile of the population served.

Examples of positive action are:

- carefully targeted advertising
- outreach work
- access courses
- courses to develop the careers of those from under-represented groups who are already employed by an organisation.

Positive Action is within the law and is designed to help employers achieve a more balanced workforce.

Monitoring, review and consultation

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored through the collection of data relevant to Equality and Diversity.

This policy will be reviewed every two years.

When writing new and reviewing old policies and procedures Leeds Mind will ensure they are consistent with this policy

Putting the policy into action

A policy by itself is not enough. It needs to be put into practice in a variety of ways, which can evolve as the needs of the organisation and its workforce change.

The following are examples of what will need addressing, the list is not exhaustive

Access

- How and where services are promoted and provided
- Physical barriers and solutions
- Discriminatory attitudes
- Language(s) and information in community languages
- Culture of organisation for example, where the perceived culture is seen as a barrier
- Sensory impairment and access

Leeds Mind will challenge such barriers by:

- Training and awareness raising
- Information
- Outreach work
- Challenging ourselves and the way we work
- Reviewing access to buildings
- Reviewing the location of services

Service delivery

- Opening hours
- Access issues as above
- Recruitment and a diverse workforce
- Culturally appropriate and sensitive services for example, women's groups,
- Location of services
- Monitoring and evaluation that will be fed into organisational development

Training

- Induction
- Knowledge of legislation
- Awareness raising
- Anti discrimination training
- Rolling programme so that this becomes integrated into Leeds Mind working practice

Staff appraisal

This is already covered in the Staff Review policy

Policy written: June 2004

Ratified by the Leeds Mind Executive Committee: July 28th 2004