

ACTION FOR HEALTH, EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT (AHEAD)

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Introduction

AHEAD exists to represent the needs and rights of people using the Association's services and to promote the contribution of self help as a crucial strand in care and service development.

Equality of opportunity arises naturally from AHEAD's commitment to working with equality and fairness for all people using the Association's services in that everyone should be treated with respect and that no-one should be treated unfairly and less well than others within the organisation.

Declaration of Intent

We recognise that we live and work in a society where unfair discrimination does exist. We accept the responsibility to oppose this in our practice. Part of our opposition will be to monitor our systems and services in order to find effective strategies for improvement.

AHEAD is fully committed to opposing all forms of unfair discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, antibody status, physical ability, age, present or past involvement in the sex industry, present or past drug use, criminal record, marital status, responsibility for dependants, class or religious persuasion.

We fully accept our responsibility in law according to the Race Relations Act 1976 (s.4 & s.1 (1)(a)), the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (s.1 (1)(a) & s.6), and the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (see notes). We accept this as a minimum and are committed to taking steps to ensure that discrimination on these grounds and on those above does not take place within the organisation and that AHEAD will do everything in its power to implement this.

Application

AHEAD therefore declares its intention to introduce measures to combat these forms of unfair discrimination in the three specific contexts of:

1. Decision Making :

Examples of areas that may be addressed are consultation in management decisions; access of members and external agencies to complaints procedures; involvement in decisions about services; representation in forums, membership of AHEAD elections and representation on the Management Committee.

2. Services :

Examples: Access to AHEAD's services being equally available to intended users; public image of the organisation; catering for specific needs etc.

3. Employment:

Recruitment procedures; disciplinary and grievance procedures, access to different jobs/promotion; representation within the staff group. (Some of these will relate to both paid and unpaid staff).

Implementation

AHEAD will ensure that all members, staff, users and volunteers are familiar with AHEAD's equal opportunity policy, and that they are able to implement it in work practices. We will provide training to members, volunteers, staff, and users where necessary.

AHEAD will produce detailed practice guidelines and recommendations on the implementation of the policy, including systems for regular monitoring and review.

We recognise our responsibility to give clear information and resources to help our member groups in dealing with these issues in the context of their work. We expect that our commitment is reflected by organisations that provide us with goods and services and we will use our best endeavours to ensure that they are following good practice as outlined in this policy.

This policy relates to all the work that AHEAD undertakes both locally and nationally. AHEAD Directors will also consistently argue for the implementation of equal opportunity policies within the membership of AHEAD and within external forums.

Breach of this policy

Breach of Equal Opportunities policy by staff or volunteers will be treated as a disciplinary offence and may lead to suspension or termination of contract as gross misconduct.

Notes to the Equal Opportunities Policy

Note 1.

1. **Race Relations Act 1976** - relevant sections: s.4 & s.1 (1)(a) & (b); s.37 & s.38; s.51-33-1.43.

The Race Relations Act 1976 makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person on racial grounds, directly or indirectly, in the field of employment, housing, education, and certain services.

Direct discrimination consists of treating a person on racial grounds less favourably than others are (racial grounds are the grounds of race, colour, nationality - including citizenship - or ethnic or national origin).

Indirect discrimination consists of applying in any circumstances covered by the Act a requirement or condition which although applied equally to persons of all racial groups, is such that a considerably smaller proportion of a particular racial group can comply with it and it cannot be shown to be justifiable on other than racial grounds.

Positive Action: Where a racial group is under-represented in the workforce, it can be lawful to attempt to redress the balance, through advertising, provided that there is no discrimination at the point of selection. Particular posts may, in certain circumstances, be reserved for people of a specific racial origin.

Genuine Occupational Qualification: Selection on racial grounds is allowed in certain jobs where being of a particular racial group is a genuine occupational qualification for that job.

2. **Sex Discrimination Act (1975)**

Unlawful Discrimination SDA s.1 (1)(a) s.1 & s.6

It is unlawful to discriminate against a woman if on the grounds of her sex she is treated less favourably than a man in relation to employment, education, housing and certain services, either directly or indirectly. Similar discrimination against men is also unlawful.

Positive Action SDA s.48

The Act does allow certain steps to redress the effects of previous unequal opportunities. Where there have been few members of one sex in particular work, for example, employers may give special encouragement to and provide specific training for the minority sex.

Note 2

Antibody Status

AHEAD may discriminate on the grounds of antibody status in ways that are considered fair.

Note 3

Grievance with regard to this policy should follow the normal procedure for complaint.