

Equality & Diversity Policy

Dudley Counselling Centre/Dudley Community Church (DCC) is committed to encouraging equality and diversity among our workforce, and eliminating unlawful discrimination.

The aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and our customers, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

DCC - in providing goods and/or services and/or facilities - is also committed against unlawful discrimination of customers or the public.

The policy's purpose is to:

Provide equality, fairness and respect for all in our employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time or volunteers.

Not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation.

We are mindful that no counsellor or client who is a wheelchair/scooter user can access our current toilets. [We are currently in temporary facilities whilst The Lighthouse Centre is being built. There is wheelchair access to counselling rooms but not the bathrooms yet.](#)

Oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities. We do, however, reserve the right to recruit Christians where there is a Genuine Occupational Requirement (GOR) to do so within our service, in order to maintain our Christian ethos and purpose".

The Equality Act

The Equality Act 2010 received Royal Assent on 8 April 2010 and the first phase was implemented on 1 October 2010. It replaced previous anti-discrimination legislation (including the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995).

General Duty

The duty is set out in the Equality Act 2010 (the Act). In summary, the lighthouse Centre must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;

Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;

Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

DCC commits to:

Encourage equality and diversity in the workplace as they are good practice and make business sense

Create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.

This commitment includes informing managers, all other employees and volunteers about their rights and responsibilities under the equality policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the centre provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

All staff should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, service users, suppliers and the public.

Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, service users, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities.

Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and any appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

Further, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff when available, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the centre.

Decisions concerning staff being based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).

Review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.

Monitoring will also include reviewing them periodically, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

All staff employed by the Lighthouse centre are directly accountable and responsible for their actions within their service areas and for ensuring equality, diversity, dignity, respect and human rights are at the core of all the centres values.

Overall responsibility

The Trustees of the Lighthouse centre has overall responsibility for equality and diversity issues.

Research used in formulating this policy

The Equality Act (2010)

The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) regulations 2011

Mental Health Act Code of Practice – January 2015

NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) guidance 2015 – 2016

Accessible Information Standard Specification and Implementation Guidance

Equality Act 2010 Act (Gender Pay Gap Regulations) 2017 in the Trust and is accountable for ensuring this policy is fully implemented.