



## **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & DIGNITY**

### **AT WORK POLICY**

#### **1. Definitions**

This policy outlines Communityworks' approach to equality and diversity at work. It is important to understand the difference between the concepts of equality and diversity.

- Equality (or equal opportunities) is about protecting certain groups of people against unfair treatment based on a particular personal characteristic. This protection is normally based on those groups covered by legislation i.e. age, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief.
- Diversity is about recognising, valuing, and embracing the differences which people have.

#### **2. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to encourage an atmosphere in which all employees and colleagues embrace the benefits of working in a diverse workforce. The policy aims to promote harmony at work and to ensure fair and equal treatment for all employees, job applicants, customers, suppliers and visitors, irrespective of their individual differences or any personal characteristics.

#### **3. Scope**

This policy relates to all aspects of employment, including individual standards of behaviour, the advertisement of jobs, recruitment and selection, training and development, appraisal, pay, promotion and leaving the organisation. The principles apply equally to all dealings with service users, suppliers and visitors.

The Policy is also linked to Communityworks' ethos and values statement and is informed by appropriate legislation. It is supplemented by Communityworks policies and procedures including:

Recruitment & Selection  
Training & Development  
Disciplinary Policy & Procedures  
Grievance Policy & Procedures  
Confidentiality Policy  
Guidance Procedure for completing Equality Impact Assessments

#### **4. Statement of policy**

Communityworks is committed to the principle of valuing diversity. It recognises 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. Furthermore, Communityworks believes in dignity at work for all our employees and colleagues and encourages the ethos of reciprocated respect to build an environment,

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which embraces fair and unbiased treatment, with mutual understanding and wider tolerances of people's differences. The aim is that these will lead to:

- Tangible organisational benefits such as improved staff morale, reduced absence levels, service users' satisfaction and efficiency of operation.
- An improved image leading to a wider community base and a broader pool of people to recruit from.
- The avoidance of possible costly legal proceedings caused by breaches of equality legislation.

The organisation is committed to providing fair and equal treatment for all staff, service users, suppliers and visitors and all staff are expected to treat everyone with whom they come into contact with dignity and respect. Employees should be aware of the importance that Communityworks attaches to this policy and that breaches of this policy will be classed as disciplinary offences and dealt with accordingly.

## 5. Legal Obligations

In valuing diversity Communityworks commits itself to go beyond the legal minimum regarding equality. However, in applying this policy management still needs to take account of current and future equality legislation (and associated codes of practice).

The government introduced the Equality Act 2010 on 1st October 2010. This single piece of legislation consolidated all previous individual equality laws, including the Equal Pay Act 1970.

The Act covers 9 areas which are now referred to as "protected characteristics". These are:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender re-assignment
4. Marriage and civil partnership
5. Race
6. Religion or belief
7. Sex
8. Sexual orientation
9. Pregnancy and maternity

The above legislation protects individuals against direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment (including bullying) and victimisation because of their age, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief.

- **Direct discrimination** is treating a person less favourably because of a particular personal characteristic.
- **Indirect discrimination** is applying a criteria or practice equally to all people but which has the effect of disadvantaging one group of people.
- **Harassment** is unwanted behaviour that affects the dignity of others.
- **Bullying** is a form of harassment which is normally but not always, related to an abuse of power.
- **Victimisation** is treating a person less favourably because they have asserted their rights under this policy or equality legislation (i.e. made or assisted with a complaint).

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

## **6. Responsibilities**

**Communityworks** acknowledges that, as an employer, it has responsibility to protect employees in the work place, to remove barriers to individual development and to maintain and promote an environment that appreciates diversity and is free from discrimination, harassment and bullying. All employees will be treated with dignity and respect at all times and valued for the skills and talents they bring to the organisation.

Communityworks will mainstream equality into all aspects of the business and aims to be recognised by customers, stakeholders and the business community and communities as an organisation that appreciates the benefits gained from celebrating diversity. This will be achieved by the use of Equality Impact Assessments and guidance on completing them is in a separate procedure document.

While recognising and believing in the benefits of this policy, sight must not be lost of the fact that along with the needs of an individual employee or indeed a group of employees, the overriding principle must be that the service the organisation provides should not be adversely and unreasonably affected by the implementation of this policy. Communityworks gives a commitment to fair treatment and flexibility where possible but every case must be considered on its own merits and the needs of the enterprise.

## **7. Review and consultation**

This policy will be reviewed annually and where deemed appropriate a consultation period will be initiated on proposed changes.

## **8. Individual Responsibility**

Every employee is individually responsible for her or his own behaviour. Any employee, who causes offence or makes another individual feel unsafe or undignified or unjustly, unfairly or unlawfully prevents them from developing within Communityworks whether intentionally or not, may be subject to disciplinary action and may face legal action from the complainant. Any employee, who feels that he or she is suffering from unfair, unjust or unlawful treatment, should take action as detailed in the Complaints or Grievance procedures. Similarly, any employee who witnesses another individual being treated in such a way should report the incident without fear as defined in the Complaints Policy.

Training has a key role to play in promoting equality of opportunity. Communityworks will provide training to increase awareness of equality and diversity so that employees at all levels can perform effectively and develop their full potential within their jobs – this includes ensuring that management courses cover the implementation of equality and diversity policies and guidance on completing Equality Impact Assessments.

## **9. Management Responsibility**

All Managers at Communityworks will demonstrate commitment to this Policy and are responsible for ensuring the mainstreaming of equality throughout its business.

All Managers are responsible for monitoring individual behaviour and will take immediate action if there is evidence of discrimination, harassment or bullying. They

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will be responsible for continually raising awareness of individual rights and responsibilities. They are also responsible for supporting and encouraging staff, volunteers and people involved with Communityworks to reach their full potential and will do so by ensuring that no barriers to development exist.

## **10. Monitoring & Review**

This Policy will be monitored, evaluated and reviewed by HR and Policy Committee at least once a year, or as required by changes in legislation.

## **11. Communicating this policy**

In order to ensure the principles of this policy are embedded in everything we do; all existing employees will receive a copy of this policy and training regarding how it should be interpreted. This policy will also be covered in all future inductions.

Communityworks aims to be a safe and pleasant environment for all who visit or work in this building. We will ensure all visitors to this centre are treated courteously and with respect and dignity at all times. Equally staff are entitled to the same conduct from visitors.

## **12. General standards of behaviour**

Communityworks expects its staff to conduct themselves in a professional and considerate manner at all times. The organisation will not tolerate behaviour such as:

- Physical violence
- Threatening or intimidating behaviour
- Shouting or swearing
- Rudeness
- Isolating, ignoring or refusing to work with certain people
- Telling offensive jokes or name calling
- The display of offensive material such as pornography or sexist/racist cartoons
- Distribution of offensive material via email, text messages, etc

**It is no defence for staff to say they did not intend their behaviour to cause offence, or to blame individuals for being over-sensitive as it is for the recipient of the behaviour to decide what they consider to be offensive. It is the impact of the behaviour rather than the intent which is important.**

## **13. Meeting individual needs**

As far as possible the organisation will try to meet the needs of individuals at work.

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