



Oxted and District Link Association

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Registered Charity No: 266988



Equal Opportunities Policy

Link is committed to implementing and promoting equal opportunities in its activities, services and practice. It realises that discrimination exists in society (whether protected by law or not), and believes that this can prevent people's potential and ability from being realised.

Link will not tolerate discrimination on the basis of:

- Race
- Colour
- Gender
- Sexual orientation or identity
- Ethnic or national origin
- Disability
- Partnership status or home responsibility
- HIV or AIDS status
- Age
- Political or religious belief
- Trade union activity
- Socio-economic background
- Refugee or asylum seeker status

As a provider of a service to the community, Link accepts the responsibility to promote equal opportunities and challenge discrimination wherever it occurs. This document sets out the main consequences of this commitment and the action to be taken in order to achieve equal opportunities.

Link recognises that some users of its services may, because of their past or present distress or illness, say or do things which would otherwise be unacceptable and incompatible with Link's Equal Opportunities Policy. Link will do all it can to challenge such behaviour. In cases where intervention is possible, a gentle approach will be adopted which aims to alter attitudes and behaviour while maintaining practical support to the client. Link realises that a genuine commitment to equal opportunities must operate on all levels:

- Link will seek to prevent the unfavourable treatment, either directly or indirectly, of individuals from any group facing discrimination in its recruitment and deployment of human resources. Where discrimination does occur, it will be dealt with through the agreed procedures. This will be achieved by following the Link Equal Opportunities Policy.
- Link will seek to prevent discrimination and ensure equal representation in the services it provides, the structures that it facilitates and the practice through which it carries out its work. This involves the development of greater diversity in the management committee, networks and membership, to ensure a genuinely wide representation.

Responsibility

1.1 The Council of Link has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy. However, all volunteers and service users have a duty as part of their involvement with Link to do everything they can to ensure that the policy works in practice.

1.2 Link will bring to the attention of all volunteers and service users the existence of this policy, and will provide such training as is necessary to ensure that the policy is effective.

1.3 If any service user or volunteer feels that they have been, or are being, discriminated against in any way, they are entitled to pursue the matter with the Council.

1.4 All instances or complaints of discriminatory behaviour will be treated seriously.

1.5 Complaints or allegations of an unfounded or malicious nature will also be treated as serious.

Disabled Access

1.6 Link will endeavour to ensure, as far as is practicable, that all requests from service users are met. However, we have to accept that we would not always be able to help people with a disability that would require our volunteers to be trained to deal with that particular disability e.g. wheelchair user. If we have no volunteer trained, we cannot offer the service.

Use of Language

1.7 Volunteers and service users should avoid and challenge the use of language which, in any way, belittles or offends anyone.

1.8 Where the language used has a personal impact on others, and it has been made clear to the person concerned that their use of such language is unwelcome and/or offensive, disciplinary action may be taken if they persist with it.

1.9 All materials used or developed by Link will be judged in the light of the promotion of equal opportunities, and those considered to be discriminatory will not be used.

Sexual Harassment

1.10 No volunteer or service user should be subject to sexual harassment.

1.11 This is interpreted as unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature including:

- verbal sexual abuse
- physical contact
- repeated remarks which an individual finds offensive

1.12 If it has been made clear to the person concerned that their behaviour is unwelcome and they persist with it, then the service user or volunteer who is the recipient of the behaviour will be entitled to make a formal complaint.

Monitoring and Review

The Policy will be constantly reviewed by the Council to ensure that no member of the group is put to a disadvantage either, directly or indirectly. This monitoring will apply to the practices of staff and volunteers, the member organisation, the composition of the Committees and the provision of services.

It is the responsibility of every individual to eliminate discrimination and to ensure the practical application of this Policy.

Link Council will review this policy every two years.

Approved by the LINK Trustees on 2nd April 2024