

Equal Opportunities and Anti-Discrimination Policy

Aims & Objectives

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects individuals from discrimination in the work place and wider society, including educational establishments and as a consumer using public and private services. LIFE-FORCE Centre, hereafter referred to as The Organisation, aims to abide by this Act and as such supports the principles of equal opportunities, diversity, anti-discrimination and open access. The Organisation is committed to developing and implementing an effective Equal Opportunities and Anti-Discrimination Policy, which provides a caring and welcoming atmosphere within which all individuals can achieve their full potential.

As such it is our policy to treat all members (which includes staff, team counsellors, students on placement and Centre tutors), service users and visitors fairly and equitably plus wherever possible to provide opportunities for advancement and development. Through our practise of equal opportunities, the Organisation provides an open access policy by endeavouring to ensure that any person may put themselves forward for any part of our services. Literature, guidance notes and any other publication produced by the Organisation will avoid a format or language which may not be readily understood, be offensive or implies a biased attitude of any kind. Such literature will be monitored, amended and updated on a regular basis.

The Organisation takes its legal responsibilities under the Equality Act seriously and therefore expects all members to conform to the requirements laid down in this policy. Any form of unlawful discrimination will not be tolerated by the Organisation.

Disabled Access

The Organisation aims to ensure that individuals are not hindered by mobility, whenever possible, and to also implement any reasonable adjustments within the restrictions of the premises, as not to do so would be considered unlawful under the Equality Act. The Centre is as far as possible a disabled-friendly environment and provides disabled access to the rear of the property including one disabled parking space that needs to be pre-booked with the office prior to visiting the Centre. Disabled parking is also permissible outside the main entrance to LIFE-FORCE in East Hill for up to 3 hours for blue badge holders. However, the main entrance is furnished with 3 steep steps up from the pavement into the building. The Centre has a disabled accessible toilet by the back entrance of the building.

Protected Characteristics

It is against the law to discriminate against anyone due to specific identified parameters called protected characteristics, which are listed below. The Organisation therefore aims to ensure its members do not discriminate against any other member, service user or visitor because of one or more of the following:

- Age
- Disability (a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on an individual’s ability to do normal daily activities)
- Gender
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage or Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy/Maternity/Paternity or Adoption
- Race
- Religion, belief or lack of religion/belief
- Sexual Orientation

Types of Discrimination

In relation to the delivery of services, the Equality Act makes discrimination, harassment and victimisation unlawful with respect to the above range of protected characteristics. The Organisation therefore has a legal responsibility to support individuals who consider themselves to be discriminated against by any of the following means:

Direct Discrimination	Someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic
Discrimination by Association	Direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic
Discrimination by Perception	Direct discrimination against someone because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic
Indirect Discrimination	Can occur when you have a rule or policy that applies to everyone but disadvantages a particular protected characteristic
Harassment	Members can now complain of behaviour they find offensive even if it is not directed at them
Harassment by a Third Party	The Organisation is potentially liable for harassment of their members by people who are not members
Victimisation	Someone is treated badly because they have made/supported a complaint or grievance under the Equality Act 2010

Implementation and Monitoring

All members, service users and visitors have the right not to be discriminated against and are also expected to treat other members, service users and visitors in a way which does not discriminate against them. Any person who feels that they have been unfairly discriminated against they, or another person, has the right to complain through the LIFE-FORCE Complaints Procedure.

(Ref. Complaints Procedure)

This policy is the responsibility of the Organisation's Centre Director, Nicole Joyce and the Service Support Manager, Martin Chester, who will implement, monitor and evaluate the policy to ensure commitment and co-operation from all members who have a responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented and applied, and that all members, service users and visitors, including those with protected characteristics are treated with dignity and respect. Failure to adhere to this policy could result in members facing disciplinary proceedings and service users incurring a withdrawal of service opportunities.

(Ref. Disciplinary Procedure)

The Organisation endeavours to ensure the best working practice for members, service users and visitors by conducting regular monitoring of the building and environment and by obtaining feedback from members and service users. Anonymity will be used to ensure that evidence-gathering feedback methods are both available and confidential to all individuals and that data analysis will strictly follow the guidelines of BACP.