

# LOCAL FRIENDS

Helping ordinary people care for one another

# Equality and Diversity Policy

## Introduction

This is the *Local Friends* policy on equality and diversity. As with all our policies, our intention is that this policy is helpful and expresses the way we live and work. If anyone feels that this policy is in some way wrong or inadequate, or that we have not acted in accordance with this policy, please let us have the details. Our contact details can be found on the web site:

<http://localfriends.pbworks.com/>

The aim of this document is to express the way we operate in the area of equality and diversity. We do not treat people fairly because we have a policy on the subject; we aim to treat people fairly because it is the right thing to do; the policy, as described here, seeks to express and clarify this understanding.

## Summary

*Local Friends* is committed to help everyone who is referred to us, in whatever way we can, whatever they may believe or not believe. *Local Friends* will not unfairly discriminate between people on grounds of their legally protected characteristics, or for any other reason.

## Details

### *Scope*

This policy covers all aspects of our activity. In particular, it covers the following groups of people:

- clients (the people who are referred to us for help;
- volunteers (the people who visit and befriend the clients); and
- workers (the people who have specific roles and responsibilities within *Local Friends*).

This policy explicitly covers the ‘protected characteristics’ of age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation and gender reassignment; but it is our intention that we will not unfairly discriminate for any reason.

## **No Restrictions**

*Local Friends* is committed to help everyone who is referred to us, in whatever way we can within the scope of our activities. We aim to help people build healthy, strong and supportive relationships, in ways that are sensitive and appropriate to the the people we are helping and to their circumstances, whatever their beliefs and values.

The initial volunteers will be members of a faith community, because the faith communities are the places where pastoral care is already being practised and where the necessary skills, experience and training is to be found.

As relationships are developed, there is no reason, from the perspective of *Local Friends*, why other people may not join the team of volunteers; but it is the responsibility of the local scheme to determine who the members of their team will be.

Inevitably, some people who offer to join the team will not be considered suitable. There are a number of obvious possible reasons: volunteers must be able to maintain confidentiality; they must be able to focus on the interests and concerns of the person they are visiting, rather than themselves.

If someone offers to join the team but is not considered to be suitable, we will do our best to ensure that the situation is handled in a pastorally sensitive manner, ideally acting in partnership with the person who is currently offering them pastoral care.

## **Discrimination**

*Local Friends* will not unfairly discriminate between people on grounds of their age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation and gender reassignment. Where any of these characteristics causes a problem for the way we seek to serve other people, we will do our best to overcome such problems; however, our primary aim is not to overcome problems caused by such characteristics, but to serve those who are referred to us.

For example, someone who is unable to get out of their home unaided is unlikely to be able to function as a volunteer, visiting other people. However, they may be able to talk to people on the telephone, or undertake administrative tasks. *Local Friends* will do our best to ensure that people who wish to help can do so in some way, but this cannot be guaranteed.

## **Integrity and love**

Communicating the love of God also commits us to expressing God's love in every detail of the work and every aspect of the way we deal with people; so, for example, we will act with integrity, kindness, patience and gentleness; we will avoid bullying or harassment of any kind and for any reason. Any such behaviour is unacceptable, and should be reported to the local scheme administrator immediately. If the local scheme administrator is unable to provide a satisfactory response, the problem should be reported to the *Local Friends* Coordinator, whose contact details can be found on the web site.

- <http://localfriends.pbworks.com/>

# Appendix

## ***Bristol City Council Requirements***

Some aspects of this will be more immediately relevant to us than others; this is not a set of objectives, but a check list of potentially relevant issues which need to be considered as we develop the service. The following details were provided by Bristol City Council in October 2017.

### Evidence required

- Demonstrates a good understanding of the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty
- Demonstrates as an employer that equality of opportunity is integral to vacancy advertising, recruitment, retention, promotion, training and grievances
- Demonstrates that services will be tailored and regularly reviewed to include understanding of the various service user needs, backgrounds and their differing requirements
- Evidence of where you believe these policies have made a difference

Demonstrates a good understanding of the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty

- Accurate reference to the nine protected characteristics
- References the need to tackle discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Reference to public sector equality duty
- replacing previous equality legislation/not refer to out of date legislation
- Reference to reasonable adjustments

The Public Sector Equality Duty. Public authorities, in the exercise of their duties, must have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity (the Act refers to removing or minimising disadvantage, meeting needs of people with protected characteristics or encouraging participation where participation is disproportionately low)
- foster good relations (the Act refers to tackling prejudice and promoting understanding)

### Recruitment

- Advertise to ensure wide pool of applicants
- Job requirements do not contain discriminatory statements/reference to job descriptions
- Equality training for interview panels/fair transparent recruitment process
- A complaints and grievance procedure is in place

- There are arrangements for equality training, including commitment to providing access to training for all employees

Demonstrates that services will be tailored and regularly reviewed

- Reference service user needs, backgrounds and their differing requirements
- Organisational review – equality action plans / use of impact assessment / annual reviews by management
- Equalities monitoring of service users and / or outcomes, evidence of producing and using data
- Individual reviews – feedback from service users or individual reviews of cases
- Evidence of making access improvements

Good Practice Examples

- An example of how a service was changed as a result of the organisation reviewing equality or community cohesion issues
- Positive action in recruitment e.g. apprentices
- An example of how service user consultation resulted in a change to how the organisation conducts its business
- Providing promotional information in different languages and different formats ( not just on request)
- Outreach with community organisations to increase service uptake of job applications from under represented communities

Examples of Good Practice

- Evidence of activities to foster good relations, tackling prejudice and promoting understanding
- A really accessible customer feedback process – different languages / easy read
- A formalised feedback system which includes people from equalities communities
- Encouraging reporting of harassment and domestic abuse for staff or service users