



Forest Voluntary Action Forum (FVAF)

Equality and Diversity Policy

1. Statement of Intent

FVAF recognises that many people in our society experience discrimination or lack of opportunity for reasons which are not fair. These include: race, religion, creed, colour, national and ethnic origin, political beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability (including mental illness), HIV status, marital status, responsibility for dependants, appearance, geographical area, social class, income level or criminal record.

FVAF will challenge discrimination and lack of opportunity in its own policy and practice and will help other organisations and individuals to do the same.

FVAF aims to create a culture that respects and values each others' differences. FVAF sees these differences as an asset to our work as they improve our ability to meet the needs of the organisations and people we serve.

All volunteers, employees, committee members and member organisations must declare their support for the objectives of this Equality and Diversity Policy. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action and/or ineligibility for membership.

2. What is discrimination?

FVAF believes that discrimination can take one or more of the forms set out below.

Direct discrimination is treating one person less favourably than another in the same or similar circumstances or segregating them from others solely because they are, for example, a lesbian or a gay man or because they have a disability or illness. Refusing to employ someone who has the required skills because they are deaf or because they are pregnant would constitute such discrimination.

Indirect discrimination occurs where there is a requirement or condition which applies equally to everyone but which, in practice, has an adverse impact on a particular group and cannot be justified. For example an unnecessary physical or age requirement can discriminate against women or disabled people. The setting of language tests, where language skills or fluency are not really needed for a job, is another example.

Abuse and/or harassment – Discrimination also covers actions which amount to abuse and/or harassment of people or groups of people because for example they are a member of a national, racial or ethnic minority group, a woman, a lesbian, a gay man or have a disability or illness.

Victimisation occurs when a person is treated less favourably or is discriminated against because she/he has pursued or intends to pursue their rights in respect of alleged discrimination.

Institutional racism (Macpherson Report, 1999)

The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen in the processes or attitudes and behaviour, which amount to discrimination, to unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantages minority ethnic people.

Racist incident (Macpherson Report, 1999)

Any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person. If the victim doesn't want to complain, another person may do so.

Discrimination in any of the forms stated above is unacceptable, regardless of whether there was any intention to discriminate or not.

3. Staff development

Decisions about learning and development opportunities will be made in accordance with FVAF staff development and all staff will have access to opportunities to enable them to develop in line with FVAF aims and objectives.

4. Service provision

All FVAF services are covered by this policy.

FVAF will promote equality and diversity in its work with other agencies or individuals.

FVAF services will be reviewed regularly and changed where needed.

All trainers, facilitators and consultants contracted to work for FVAF will be required to support our Equality and Diversity Policy.

5. Recruitment and selection

FVAF believes that no person or group should be treated less favourably in employment because of the reasons given in the Statement of Intent above.

Staff appointments will be monitored to ensure no discrimination is occurring at the point of selection.

6. Miscellaneous

Office accommodation

FVAF will make every effort to ensure that premises used in relation to its work are accessible and inviting for all members of the community.

Purchasing

FVAF reserves the right not to purchase goods and services from agencies whose activities are contrary to the principles outlined in this policy.

Promotion of policy

Copies of this policy will be freely available to staff, volunteers, members and any other interested parties. A laminated copy of the Statement of Intent, together with a named contact for more information, will be placed in a prominent position in the FVAF office.

Travel

FVAF recognises that not everyone has access to personal transport or is able to use it and will plan its services and activities with this in mind.

7. Implementation and monitoring

Monitoring of the Equality and Diversity policy and its implementation is the responsibility of the management committee.

The Committee will review the policy bi-annually.

Induction for committee members and new staff will include a briefing on the Equality and Diversity Policy.

A copy of the Equality and Diversity Policy will be given to all new staff, committee members, new members of FVAF and to any member on request.

Training can be provided for employees, management committee members and volunteers on cultural awareness, disability awareness and other subjects that will develop of equality and diversity

8. The committee

All management committee members will affirm their commitment to the Equality and Diversity Policy.

The committee's membership (including co-opted members) should aim to reflect a fair balance and representation of the local community and should endeavour to redress any imbalance of under-represented groups.

9. CVS policies, procedures and practice

Other FVAF policies, procedures and practice support our commitment to equality and diversity.

Forest Voluntary Action Forum
Belle Vue Centre
Cinderford
Glos GL14 2AB
01594 822073

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