

Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Dorset Advocacy seeks to be an equal opportunity and diverse employer. Therefore we will aim to treat workers and all applicants equally. There will be no discrimination in respect of marital status, gender, sexuality, disability, health, age, colour, race, religion, nationality, ethnic, or national origins and respect diversity within the workplace.

There will be no discrimination on these grounds in the terms and conditions offered to job applicants, trustees, member of staff, volunteer or individual with whom we work. The policy also covers recruitment, induction, conduct at work and the disciplinary and grievance procedure. The only basis for promotion or selection is the management's considered opinion of the applicant's suitability for the job.

POLICY

Dorset Advocacy believes that promoting equal opportunities should be an integral part of its work. The Business Manager will have overall responsibility for this policy in ensuring that Dorset Advocacy follows the above statement of intent, and implement it in all areas of our practice:

1. The Management Committee

Dorset Advocacy will try to make sure that the make-up of its Management Committee be representative of the wide range of individuals and groups with whom Dorset Advocacy seeks to work. Elections to the Management Committee shall be widely advertised and nominations from relevant under-represented groups shall be encouraged.

Management Committee meeting venues will be chosen to allow as many people as possible to attend and shall reflect and be assessable depending on the needs of different groups and individuals. This will be the same for the venues of all meetings/workshops/training events organised by Dorset Advocacy. Meetings will only take place at venues where both the meeting room and facilities (eg toilets) are fully accessible to people who have a disability. Venues will also, so far as

possible, reflect the needs of those living in isolated situations and those dependent on public transport for their mobility.

In the conduct of Management Committee and all other meetings, attention will be paid to the communication needs of all participants. Where necessary, we will seek to ensure that all forms of communication are made available i.e. sign language, interpreters etc.

2. Recruitment

Dorset Advocacy will advertise any post of paid employment offered openly to reach the widest range of applicants. In particular, all posts will be advertised throughout Dorset using a wide range of methods. All advertisements shall clearly state that "Dorset Advocacy is an Equal Opportunities Employer".

Dorset Advocacy will seek to recruit volunteer advocates from a broad cross-section of backgrounds whilst remaining committed to the principle of matching advocates to partners, solely on the basis of the partner's needs, wishes and circumstances. To this end, contacts will be made with groups representing minority ethnic communities, people with a disability and those with a learning disability.

3. Partners

No person with a learning or physical disability, or mental illness shall be excluded from having an advocate on any of the discriminatory grounds mentioned in paragraph 2 of the Statement of Intent. Furthermore, no person shall be excluded from having an advocate on the grounds of mental ill-health, behaviour or record of offending.

Where the staff of Dorset Advocacy are unable to meet a request for an advocate, the prospective partner and/or the person making a request on their behalf, shall receive a clear explanation of this decision. Such decisions will be based solely on the need to prioritize the work of the scheme; the criteria used to make such decisions shall be applied impartially.

The Management Committee of Dorset Advocacy shall take positive steps to ensure that individuals who have a learning disability are where possible encouraged to join the Management Committee and to make a full contribution to its workings.

4. Promoting Dorset Advocacy

In all meetings, reports, publicity materials and press releases designed to promote the work of Dorset Advocacy, we shall avoid negative images of individuals and

groups who are likely to encounter discrimination.

The Management Committee, Business Manager and Development Manager of the scheme recognise the knowledge held by people who have a disability, with regard to their own disabilities, needs and hopes and shall seek to involve such people in the promotion of Dorset Advocacy, wherever possible and where appropriate, with the assistance of their advocates.

5. Conduct

The Management Committee, staff and volunteers who carry out the role of advocate or any other task on behalf of Dorset Advocacy shall at all times adhere to the principles of equal opportunity. Staff, volunteers and members of the Management Committee shall at all times ensure they do not take any racist, sexist or other personally abusive actions.

Any person or group of people that feels that they have been discriminated against, sexually harassed or otherwise abused by someone acting on behalf of Dorset Advocacy, is encouraged to make a complaint. The Management Committee shall, if the complainant wishes, provide the name of an independent listener who shall help them to prepare the complaint.

Complaints about discrimination may be made in the first instance to the Business Manager, Line Manager or volunteer against whom the complaint is laid. Should the complainant not wish to take this step or should such a step fail to resolve the issue, the Chairman of the Management Committee shall be informed. He will give a written response to the complaint, whether this is written or verbal, within 28 days of receipt of the complaint. If after this, the complainant wishes to pursue the matter further, the complaint shall go before a panel of 4 committee members who will make a decision in a further 28 days.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

It will be the responsibility of the Business Manager and the Management Committee to implement and evaluate this policy. To this end, the Volunteer Support worker shall provide 6 monthly figures detailing the number of advocates and partners recruited, their gender, ethnicity and any disadvantage they may have, such as a disability. The Co-ordinators shall further record all meetings attended for the purpose of recruiting advocates including, where appropriate, the name and purpose of any groups addressed.

The Equal Opportunities policy as a whole shall be reviewed on an annual basis and it shall be amended where appropriate.