



Equal Opportunities Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 Focus Birmingham works to achieve equal opportunities in both service provision and employment. It is the policy of Focus Birmingham to work towards ensuring that no recipient of its services, present or future employee (including volunteers) or job applicant receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of: -

- age
- colour
- disability
- ethnic origin
- marital status
- nationality
- race
- religion
- gender
- sexual orientation
- social status
- trade union membership
- responsibility for dependents

1.2 The policy works to ensure that no present or future employee, volunteer or job applicant is disadvantaged by any conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justified.

1.3 The policy will be implemented in accordance with the statutory requirements as laid down in relevant legislation, but will seek to go beyond those minimum standards.

1.4 Overall responsibility for implementation rests with the Board but day-to-day implementation is the responsibility of all department heads who will ensure that all employees within that department understand the Policy and their role in its implementation.

1.5 The success of this policy depends upon the commitment, compliance and goodwill of all staff and volunteers.

1.6 This policy is not accompanied by a procedure as it is implemented through other procedures including: -

- i. Recruitment, selection and training
- ii. Terms and conditions of employment
- iii. Retention and retraining
- iv. Dismissal and redundancies
- v. Staff development and training
- vi. Discipline and Grievance
- vii. Working environment
- viii. Consultation and policy development
- ix. Monitoring and review

2. Definitions Of Discrimination

2.1 Direct Discrimination

This takes place when a person or groups of people are treated less favourably than other people in the same or similar circumstances. For example, refusing to employ people who meet the requirements of the job on the grounds of sexuality, gender, ethnicity, or any of the other categories named in section 1.1 would constitute direct discrimination.

2.2 Indirect Discrimination

This takes place when a requirement or condition has the effect of discriminating unfairly and unjustifiably between one group or one individual and another. This can happen quite unintentionally, for example, standard entry qualifications applied automatically across a wide range of jobs, may lead to a position where applicants are asked to meet requirements which are not relevant to the needs of the job.

2.3 Institutional Discrimination

This takes place when established policies, practices and procedures within an organisation have discriminatory effects whether intentional or not.

2.4 Victimisation and Harassment

Any behaviour deliberate or otherwise directed at an individual as a result of that person exercising rights under relevant legislation or employment policy, or which seeks to create an intimidating environment and threaten the job security of the employee.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES of Focus Birmingham

3.1 Focus Birmingham has the primary legal and moral responsibility for ensuring that discrimination does not occur and is met by an effective policy, which is continually monitored. The framework of existing legal and/or subsequent legislation here and after enacted is as follows: -

- Disabled Persons (employment) Acts 1944 and 1958
- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (including 1976 amendments)
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Acts 1974
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (including 1986 amendments)
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Equal Pay Act 1980 (including 1983 amendments)
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Race Relations Act 2003
- Sexual Orientation, Religion and Belief Act 2003
- Disability Discrimination Act 2004

3.2 Focus Birmingham is liable (together with its employees) for any acts of unlawful discrimination by its staff even when such acts are carried out without the charity's knowledge or approval.

4. Services

Focus Birmingham will take positive action to communicate its work to all sections of the community. N.B. Positive action may take the form of ensuring that there is adequate access to information in relevant languages, an interpreting service (e.g. Braille) or by other suitable means.

5. Employment

5.1 The policy aims to ensure: -

- I. The recruitment of the most suitable person for the job.
- II. That no job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment than another on any grounds of age, colour, creed, disability, ethnic origin, marital status, nationality, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, social status, responsibility for dependents and trade union membership or is disadvantaged by any conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justified.

5.2 The policy will be maintained by ensuring that the Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedures are adhered to at all times. The main points are as follows: -

6. Recruitment

6.1 All job descriptions will be reviewed by the Line Manager and Corporate Services Manager prior to advertisements being placed, to ensure they are relevant, non-discriminatory and accurately reflect the requirements of the post. Any special or unusual demands that are a requirement of the post holder will be clearly stated.

6.2 A personal specification will be drawn up for each job prior to advertisement. This must reflect the requirements contained in the job description and should clearly indicate the essential and desirable aspects of a successful candidate in terms of: -

- i) Qualifications
- ii) Knowledge and Skills

- iii) Experience
- iv) Personal Circumstances
- v) Personal Characteristics i.e. being able to work on own initiative.

6.3 Advertisements must be clear and unambiguous and must not discriminate either directly or indirectly.

7. Selection Process

7.1 All candidates will be considered solely on their ability to do the job both at the short listing and interviewing stage. Selection decisions must not be influenced by the applicant's age, colour, creed, disability, ethnic origin, marital status, nationality, race, religion sex, sexual orientation, social status, responsibility for dependents and trade union membership. Selection decisions must not be influenced by the prejudices of other staff.

7.2 All applicants invited for interview will have the right, on request, to be informed of the reasons for their non-selection.

7.3 All interviews will be carried out by more than one member of staff and they will be carried out as objectively as possible using a set of 'core questions', which cover the main aspects of the job, although it is accepted that every interview will differ to some extent. Information necessary for personal records will be collected only after a job offer has been made and accepted. Interview questions must be related only to the requirements and circumstances of the job and must not be of a discriminatory nature. A note of reasons for selection and non-selection must be made at the time of interview and will be kept on the job file.

8. Monitoring

8.1 All job applicants will be requested to complete an Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form on their application for a post within Focus Birmingham. The information given will remain confidential and will be used solely for monitoring purposes and will form no part of the selection process.

8.2 A summary of the information provided by the monitoring forms will be held in the Human Resources Department for use in reviewing the Recruitment & Selection Policy and Procedures and will be available if required.

9. Staff Development And Training

9.1 Focus Birmingham is committed to providing training around issues of equality. All new members of staff will receive details of the Equal Opportunities Policy **and will receive training as soon as possible after commencing employment.**

10. Uses Of The Disciplinary, Grievance And Redeployment Procedure

10.1 Disciplinary Procedure

Direct or indirect discrimination may be treated as a disciplinary offence. Racial and sexual abuse and harassment shall be treated as a disciplinary offence. In applying the disciplinary procedure, care must be taken to ensure that members of one particular group are not disciplined for performance or behaviour, which would be overlooked or condoned in other groups.

10.2 Discipline and Grievance Procedure

Particular care must be taken to deal effectively with all complaints of discrimination, harassment or victimisation. All complaints must be processed through the Discipline and Grievance Procedure. Any employee who has, in good faith, complained and/or taken action under the Race Regulations Act 1976, Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (amended 1986) and/or other aspects of this policy shall not receive less favourable treatment than any other employee.

Supporting people with visual impairments and other disabilities, together with their carers, to live fulfilling and independent lives by providing services that reflect their wants and needs.

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