

NORTH KENT MIND

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY

Statement of Intent

1. North Kent Mind is committed to equality of opportunity and the elimination of discrimination. The organisation exists to serve its local community by promoting mental health, combating prejudice and providing services for all who need them.
2. North Kent Mind believes that there is a direct link between discrimination and oppression and mental distress, due to the effect it has on identity, self-esteem and opportunities to achieve self-fulfilment, and is committed to eliminating discrimination and promoting equality and diversity in its own policies and procedures and in any other areas where it may have influence.
3. At the same time, the organisation positively values people's differences and welcomes the diversity that comes from staff, volunteers and service users who differ in characteristics such as age, ethnic background, faith, interests, sexual orientation, as long as we all subscribe to the key aim of the organisation to promote good mental health.
4. We therefore wish to work in a way which:
 - Recognises that everyone is different and works to create an environment that includes everyone and is open to different points of view.
 - Treats everyone fairly, no matter what their race, colour, ethnic background, religion, sex, sexuality, physical or mental disability, health status (including HIV and AIDS), appearance, age, marital status, parental status, and caring responsibilities.
 - Employs and develops staff that reflect the communities we work in, and aims to achieve a good balance of people from different backgrounds at all levels of the organisation. We recruit staff fairly and openly to help us to achieve a varied workforce.
 - Makes sure that any private contractors who provide services on our behalf show a commitment to equality and diversity by having fair employment practices and providing a consistent standard of customer service, and receive a copy of this policy.
 - Works to ensure that the services provided by us are relevant and accessible to all sectors of the community we serve.
 - Regularly reviews policies and practices relevant to equalities and diversity, and monitors our performance with regard to these.
 - Takes action to introduce positive changes in policies and procedures in response to the results of monitoring, research, guidelines and good practice.
 - Makes sure we meet best practice standards and our legal responsibilities, particularly under the Equality Act 2010.
 - Promotes awareness of the causes, forms and effects of discrimination amongst its Trustees, staff, volunteers, sessional workers and service users

- Works with others through local networks to eliminate stigma, discrimination and disadvantage, promote justice, and celebrate diversity.
5. This policy aims to ensure no job applicant, employee, volunteer, sessional worker or service user is discriminated against either directly or indirectly on the grounds of their race, colour, religion, ethnic or national origin, culture, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, physical or sensory disability, age, mental disability, mental health problem, gender reassignment or on any other grounds. Breaches of this policy will lead to disciplinary proceedings.
 6. This policy aims to ensure that structures are in place to ensure we achieve the positive range of diversity which is in itself a hallmark of a healthy organisation serving all of the community.
 7. North Kent Mind will take seriously, and will take action, where appropriate concerning all complaints of discrimination. All complaints will be investigated in accordance with the Organisation's Grievance or Complaints procedures.

Implementation

The CEO is responsible for the operation of all policies.

1. Membership

- 1.1 Membership of the organisation is open to all. Positive recruitment of people from local minority groups should be undertaken with sensitive planning of promotional material and by nurturing links with organisations representing these groups. Membership leaflets and application forms shall include a monitoring form inviting members to volunteer confidential information regarding gender, ethnicity, age and disabilities.
- 1.2 Members of the Organisation can be nominated for election to the Board of Trustees at its Annual General Meeting. This Board appoints standing committees and ad hoc Sub-Groups made up from elected members. In addition, individuals with knowledge and expertise of benefit to the Organisation may be nominated by the elected Board for co-opting onto the Board of Directors or its sub-groups.
- 1.3 Membership of the Board and Sub-Groups will be reviewed annually to identify any need for positive recruitment or co-opting which will make the organisation more representative of its general membership and the community it serves. It is a requirement for affiliation to National Mind that some of the Trustees are mental health service users.
- 1.4 Board members will be asked to complete a monitoring form providing confidential information regarding gender, ethnicity, age and disabilities.

2. Recruitment of Paid Staff, Self-employed Sessional Workers and Volunteers

- 2.1 The recruitment and selection process is crucial to any equal opportunities policy, and we recognise the benefits of having a diverse workforce. North Kent Mind will endeavour to recruit from the widest pool of qualified candidates, adopting a consistent, non-discriminatory approach to the advertising of vacancies. We will not confine our recruitment to areas or media sources which provide only, or mainly, applicants of a particular group, and where appropriate will take positive action to attract applications from all sections of society. We do however, reserve the right to run internal recruitment procedures for certain posts
- 2.2 Employment opportunities are open and accessible to all on the basis of their individual qualities and personal merit, and will be considered solely on their ability to do the job. We will endeavour through appropriate training to ensure that employees making selection and recruitment decisions do not discriminate, whether consciously or subconsciously, in making these decisions.
- 2.3 Selection criteria and procedures will not discriminate unjustly on the grounds of gender, disability, marital status, race, racial group, colour, ethnic or national origin, culture, religion, belief, sexual orientation or gender realignment except where permitted under Equalities Legislation.
- 2.4 All involved in the recruitment process will review their selection criteria to ensure that they are related to the job requirements and do not unlawfully discriminate.
- 2.5 Short listing and interviewing for paid positions, and screening for volunteers, shall be carried out by more than one person.
- 2.6 Interview questions will be related to the requirements of the job and will not be of a discriminatory nature.
- 2.7 We will not disqualify any applicant because he/she is unable to complete an application form unassisted unless personal completion of the form is a valid test of the standard of English required for the safe and effective performance of the job.
- 2.8 Selection decisions will not be influenced by any perceived prejudices of other staff.
- 2.9 The organisation will seriously consider any adjustments it needs to make in order to employ staff, sessional workers or utilise volunteers, who are appropriate for the role, but have additional needs which require such adjustments.

3. Staff , Sessional Workers and Volunteers in Post

- 3.1 The Organisation sets out, in its Employment Policy, its aim to apply fair and equitable employment practices at all times. Members of staff are encouraged to identify their support needs and discuss them with their supervisor.

- 3.2 For Volunteers, 'Time Out' of up to 12 months is available at any time, without jeopardising their future role. The same level of support and facility for 'time out' applies to volunteers serving on the Board of Trustees.
- 3.3 Promotion and advancement will be made on merit and all decisions relating to this will be made within the overall framework and principles of this policy.
- 3.4 Job descriptions will be reviewed to ensure that they are in line with our Equality and Diversity Policy. Job requirements will be reflected accurately in any personnel specifications.
- 3.5 All staff and volunteers will receive training in the application of this policy to ensure that they are aware of its contents and provisions

4 Monitoring

- 4.1 Individuals applying for paid and voluntary work with Mind shall be invited to complete a monitoring form providing confidential information regarding gender, ethnicity, age and disabilities
- 4.2 We will maintain and review the records of all employees and volunteers in order to monitor the progress of this policy. We will maintain and review equal opportunities information relating to the applicants for paid and unpaid positions.
- 4.3 Monitoring may involve:-
 - the collection and classification of information regarding the race in terms of ethnic/national origin, the sex and disability.
 - the examination by ethnic / national origin, sex and disability of the distribution of employees and volunteers and the success rate of the applicants.
 - Recording recruitment, training and promotional records of all employees and volunteers, the decisions reached and the reason for those decisions.
- 4.4 Confidential information regarding gender, age ethnicity and mental health problems will be obtained by means of monitoring forms and regular surveys within Mind services. This information will be fed into the organisation's monitoring system.
- 4.5 The results of any monitoring procedure will be reviewed at regular intervals to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of this policy. Consideration will be given, if necessary, to adjusting this policy to afford greater equality of opportunities to all applicants, current staff and volunteers, and beneficiaries.
- 4.6 A report monitoring gender, ethnic or national origin, age and disabilities will be produced yearly for the Board of Trustees. This information will be used to review the progress and impact of the Policy. Any issues to be addressed from the report will be decided at this level and the Board will direct any actions to be taken to Managers.

4.7 Equalities shall be a standing item on the monthly staff meeting.

5 Services

- 5.1 The organisation's services are designed to provide a welcoming, unstigmatising environment for all, and to reflect positively on service users. Promotion of Mind services shall emphasise the ethos of 'accessibility' to individuals or groups with special physical, cultural, linguistic or emotional needs, with specific responses tailored to individual needs and circumstances. Promotional materials should portray individuals of both sexes, from a range of cultural backgrounds, age groups and with physical disabilities. Promotional Materials shall be made available in other formats, and in other languages, on request.
- 5.2 Staff should ensure that service users understand that individual differences are valued in the organisation, and that harassment of others, for any reason, will not be tolerated. North Kent Mind reserves the right to service users from some or all services, for a defined period, where they continue to harass other service users.
- 5.3 Some services may be designed, in response to expressed need, to help specific groups of people (e.g. LGBT – Lesbian Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered or BAME – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Groups) and will therefore not be open to all.
- 5.4 Where the organisation is contemplating using new or occasional premises for the delivery of any of its services, including public events and training, staff involved in the arranging of this shall review the accessibility of the venue, and associated services (eg catering) in line with the requirements of this policy.
- 5.5 Where services are delivered in venues which are not fully accessible for particular known individuals who wish to avail themselves of these services, North Kent Mind shall move the venue of the service to one which is accessible to this person or persons in need.
- 5.6 North Kent Mind shall hold a designated fund within its reserves for the provision of interpreters where these are required by the service user. North Kent Mind shall hold and update a list of the language abilities existing within the voluntary and paid workforce.

6. Equality and Diversity Training

- 6.1 Employed staff, sessional workers and volunteers undertake an induction programme, including a 3 day course, when they join North Kent Mind. Awareness of equalities and diversity issues and implications for practice in Mind are promoted in particular sections in this training. Further issues arising from this, or otherwise occurring will be discussed at staff supervision or volunteer support sessions.
- 6.2 In addition, Trustees, Staff and Volunteers will be encouraged to undertake further training on Equalities and Diversity issues to enhance their work..

- 6.3 All employees and volunteers are expected to make sure that they understand the policy and pay due regard to it. They are all responsible for ensuring compliance with it when undertaking their paid work or voluntary placement.