



ADOPT NI

Controlled Document

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Owner (Responsibility)	Ciara Scully, Regional Manager
Pass amendments to:	Kathryn Rice, Project Officer
Revision History	See appendix

Document Description

Adopt NI ("the Charity"), as an employer and service provider, has a part to play in reducing the disadvantages which certain people and groups have experienced. We also want our staff and volunteers to be truly representative of the community they service. This policy sets out how we aim to achieve this.

Implementation and Quality Assurance

Implementation is immediate and this Policy shall stay in force until any alterations are formally agreed.

The Policy will be reviewed every two years by the Board of Trustees, sooner if legislation, best practice, or other circumstances indicate this is necessary.

All aspects of this Policy shall be open to review at any time. If you have any comments or suggestions on the content of this policy please contact Ciara Scully, Regional Manager, ciara@adoptni.org or at Adopt NI, 18 Heron Road, Belfast, BT3 9LE.

Equal Opportunities Policy

Introduction

Adopt NI, as an employer and service provider, has a part to play in reducing the disadvantages which certain people and groups have experienced, both now and in the past. We also want our staff and volunteers to be truly representative of the community they serve.

We extend the same principle to everyone. We recognise that, while much can be achieved through developing policies and procedures to meet our legal and other obligations, real progress requires a programme of action that involves the participation of our staff and volunteers. Genuine Equal Opportunities in every workplace and every service requires a commitment from everyone.

The Law

We wholeheartedly accept the statutory requirements laid down in the Equality Act. It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of age, disability, sex, gender re-assignment, pregnancy, parenthood, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion, or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership. These are known as 'protected characteristics'.

In addition, staff should not discriminate against or harass a member of the public in the provision of services. It is unlawful to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to using services caused by disability. The duty to make reasonable adjustments includes the removal, adaptation, or alteration of physical features, if the physical features make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of services. In addition, service providers have an obligation to think ahead and address any barriers that may impede disabled people from accessing a service.

Unlawful discrimination can include:

- a) Direct discrimination – where a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic
- b) Indirect discrimination – where a provision, criterion or practice is applied that is discriminatory in relation to individuals who have a relevant protected characteristic.
- c) Harassment – where there is unwanted conduct, related to one of the protected characteristics.

- d) Associative discrimination – where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.
- e) Perceptive discrimination – where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that they have a particular protected characteristic.
- f) Third-party harassment – when an employee is harassed by third parties such as clients and the harassment is related to a protected characteristic and the employer has failed to take action.
- g) Victimisation – where an employee is subject to a detriment because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance, or because they are suspected of doing so.
- h) Failure to make reasonable adjustments – where a physical feature or a provision, criterion or practice puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared with someone who does not have that protected characteristic and the employer has failed to make reasonable adjustments to enable the disabled person to overcome the disadvantage.

The following statements of policy provide a framework within which we will seek to develop programmes and initiatives.

Responsibilities

The Charity's trustees and senior management are responsible for promoting equal opportunities.

All staff, volunteers and trustees of the Charity share the responsibility for ensuring that the Equal Opportunities Policy is promoted and implemented fairly and effectively.

The Regional Manager will ensure the implementation and effectiveness of the policy and report to the board annually. It is, however, the responsibility of the Charity's senior management to actively promote equality of opportunity in their services.

It is the individual responsibility of every member of staff and all volunteers to seek to ensure the practical application of the policy. Adopt NI wishes to state explicitly that acts of direct and indirect discrimination and failure to comply with the provisions of the policy cannot and will not be tolerated and will be investigated. Disciplinary action may then be taken against the individual(s) concerned.

In addition, if any member of staff or volunteer considers that they are the subject of, or witnesses, unequal treatment, a complaint may be made through the agreed procedures for dealing with grievances, harassment or whistleblowing.

Equal Opportunities in Employment and Volunteering

Statement of Policy

Adopt NI aims to achieve genuine equality of opportunity in all aspects of its activities as an employer and in its engagement of volunteers.

Implementation

This policy is made available to all new staff via the Policy Handbook and copies are available on the website. Volunteers are asked to refer to the website for the policy although a paper copy can be made available if this is a difficulty for them. The principles and practices of the policy are covered by their Line Manager during induction.

Staff are advised of any revisions to the policy and asked to pass the information to their teams (both staff and volunteers). The updated policy is also uploaded to the website.

Staff

- Adopt NI will ensure that the ways in which jobs are designed, advertised and filled meet the requirements of our equal opportunities policy and the Equality Act.
- Information, training, advice, and guidance, as appropriate, will be given to those staff and trustees involved in the recruitment and selection process.
- Permanent paid posts will normally be advertised externally, and all posts will be advertised internally within Adopt NI as a minimum. Advertisements, job descriptions, application forms and person specifications for each job will be designed to ensure that no unnecessary requirements or qualifications are called for. Unrelated criminal convictions will not be taken into account (see Recruitment of Ex-offenders Policy).
- All potential applicants for jobs will be asked to complete and return a diversity monitoring form so that we can check how inclusive our recruitment processes are.
- Interviews will take an unbiased approach, asking only those questions which relate to the job and are non-discriminatory.

Volunteers

- Interviewers will take an unbiased approach, asking only those questions which relate to the task or role and are non-discriminatory.
- Applicants will be supported within the interview process and in their ongoing engagement according to their needs and within the resources at our disposal.
- Links will be sought with a diverse range of groups to promote and encourage the recruitment of volunteers from all backgrounds.
- Volunteers will be placed on the basis of their knowledge, skills, experience, and ability. Where no suitable opportunity exists within Adopt NI, alternatives will be suggested.
- Personal details of volunteers will be confidential to those members of staff dealing with recruitment. The only information passed to other staff will be that necessary to ensure appropriate support for the volunteers.
- All potential applicants for volunteer roles will be asked to complete and return a diversity monitoring form so that we can check how inclusive our recruitment processes are.
- The reasons for not placing someone as a volunteer will be recorded.

Equal Opportunities in Service Delivery

Statement of Policy

We recognise that certain groups in our society are discriminated against, directly or indirectly, intentionally, or unintentionally. Direct and indirect discrimination can occur when services are inappropriate, insensitive, or inaccessible.

We are committed to providing quality services to our service users. We aim to promote equal access and appropriate levels of take-up of our services and facilities by all groups in the community.

Implementation

- All individuals with whom we work will be accorded equal respect and the same courteous, efficient approach. We aim to offer a warm and welcoming environment to all service users.
- The diversity of service users is acknowledged and valued and access to services shall be according to our published service criteria alone.
- Service users will be asked to complete a diversity monitoring form in order for us to check and review how inclusive our services are.
- Our services aim to respond to such diversity by adopting a flexible, non-judgemental, anti-discriminatory approach that values each individual equally.
- Our services seek to provide each individual service user with a service that meets their individual needs and choices, within available resources.
- We aim to make the physical environment in which services are provided as accessible and inclusive as possible.
- We shall continually review our service provision in order to develop more inclusive ways of working that more appropriately meet the diverse needs of the local community.
- We shall ensure, as far as is possible, that all our service activities and sites are accessible in accordance with the Equality Act. We are committed to challenging discrimination within our service provision through focussed staff and volunteer training, development and support and a culture that respects and values the individual.

Monitoring

The success of any policy depends upon the commitment of all employees and volunteers but particularly of senior management and Trustees. The effectiveness of the policy in meeting the aims of the Charity can be judged by careful monitoring of the operation of the policy. We aim to produce monitoring reports on a regular basis covering staff and volunteer recruitment, training and development, and staff and volunteer turnover. As part of the service planning process, the management team will also monitor the take-up of services.

Revision History

Version	Author	Revision date	Summary of Changes	Next Review
2.0	Regional Manager	July 2022	New Policy. Recommend to the Board for approval.	
			Approved by Board of Trustees	July 2024