

Equality and Diversity Policy

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 North Halifax Partnership (NHP) is committed to encouraging equality, diversity, and inclusion among our workforce, and eliminating unlawful discrimination. The aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and our customers, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.
- 1.2 NHP celebrates the diversity of the communities in modern Britain. We will seek to foster good relations between people of different backgrounds; and to enrich the experience of service users and employees through the understanding and promotion of that diversity.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. We are committed to equality of opportunity and providing services and following practices which are free from unfair and unlawful discrimination. The aim of this policy is to ensure that no applicant, member of staff or service user receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation or trade union membership. Nor will they be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be relevant to performance.
- 2.2. NHP also recognises that discrimination can take place against individuals because of social or financial status, family circumstances or simply because of the area they live in i.e. so called 'post code discrimination'. NHP therefore views this form of discrimination as unfair and contrary to a genuine policy of equality of opportunity and fair treatment for all persons. We value people as individuals with diverse opinions, cultures, lifestyles and circumstances.
- 2.3. NHP believes that discrimination, either direct or indirect, on any of these grounds is not acceptable and will not be condoned. This policy explains what to do if you feel that discrimination is taking place.
- 2.4. In adopting this policy, it is necessary to state the context within which the North Halifax Partnership operates. NHP's prime objective is '*a better future for all generations*'. Achieving equality of opportunity for the people and communities we work with (and for) is at the heart of all NHP business.
- 2.5. In Appendix 1 we have committed to Equal Opportunities policy statements that underpin this Policy.

3. Policy Implementation –NHP as an Employer

- 3.1. All employees are covered by this policy, and it applies to all areas of employment including recruitment and selection, training, deployment, career development, and promotion. These areas are monitored, and policies and practices are

amended, if necessary, to ensure that no unfair or unlawful discrimination, intentional, unintentional, direct or indirect, overt or latent exists.

- 3.2. All employees and workers (including self-employed contractors) whether part time, full time or temporary, will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, training, or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of delivering our services and projects.
- 3.3. Equality of opportunity, valuing diversity and compliance with the law is to the benefit of all individuals in our organisation (including our partners), as it seeks to develop the skills and abilities of its people. While specific responsibility for eliminating discrimination and providing equality of opportunity lies with managers and supervisors, individuals at all levels have a responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect. The personal commitment of every employee to this policy and application of its principles are essential to eliminate discrimination and provide equality throughout the organisation.

Our commitment as an employer

- 3.4. NHP is committed to:
 - creating an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of our staff are recognised and valued;
 - entitling every employee, worker or self-employed contractor to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated;
 - providing training, development and progression opportunities to all staff;
 - understanding equality in the workplace is good management practice and makes sound business sense;
 - encouraging all staff to come forward with any issues they need assistance and understanding with, no matter their background, identity or circumstances, such as if they are victims of domestic abuse or have caring commitments.
 - selecting those for employment, promotion, training, or any other benefit purely on the basis of aptitude and ability;
 - reviewing all our employment practices and procedures to ensure fairness, due regard to the Equalities Act, good practice and any learning that can be applied to underpin the culture of fairness and equality.
- 3.5. To assist this, we will:
 - conduct recruitment exercises in a way that will ensure selection is made on the basis of merit and jobs will be filled by open and fair competition;
 - ensure all posts have a job description and personnel specification and applicants for jobs will be judged solely on how they can meet the criteria described in those documents;
 - no conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be necessary for the satisfactory completion of the job will be within the job description or person specification. In particular, care will be taken to ensure that applicants are not required to demonstrate work experience or qualifications held that are not directly relevant to the job;
 - recognise that voluntary work and other experiences outside of paid employment can be relevant to a post and, therefore, applicants are encouraged to provide such information on application forms;

- encourage employees to develop their understanding of equal opportunities legislation, policy and practice.
- ensure employees are aware of NHP's Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy and arrange for relevant training courses on equal opportunities and diversity matters to be available to employees.
- make every effort to create opportunities that are fair and accessible to all. Where necessary reasonable adjustments will be implemented to provide fair access to these opportunities.
- have clear procedures that enable our employees to raise a grievance or make a complaint if they feel they have been unfairly treated.
- have clear procedures that enable our employees to raise a concern about unfair treatment or discriminatory practices or behaviour. This is our Whistleblowing policy and procedures.
- treat breaches of our equality and diversity policy as misconduct which could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

3.6. Employees will have access to a range of policies which aim to support and encourage flexibility and diversity in our workplaces.

3.7. As an employer NHP will collect data from employees on their personal characteristics and will use this data for monitoring purposes to ensure that we are meeting the expectations we set ourselves.

4. Policy Implementation – NHP as a Service Deliverer

4.1. NHP will work with other local and national organisations to ensure its policy and practice is consistent with the best practice of stakeholder organisations wherever appropriate. This includes:

4.2. North Halifax Partnership is committed to:

- providing services to which all clients are entitled regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, offending past, caring responsibilities or social class;
- making sure our services are delivered equally and meet the diverse needs of our service users and clients by assessing and meeting the diverse needs of our clients;
- having clear procedures that enable our clients and other external parties (including candidates for jobs) to make a complaint if they feel they have been unfairly treated. See 4.4.
- encouraging our clients to come forward with any issues they need assistance and understanding with, no matter their background, identity or circumstances.
- secure and maintain equality- focused accreditation, for example the Disability Confident Scheme, Quality for Health (Voluntary Action Calderdale), and Volunteering Kitemark (Sector Support Calderdale);
- ensuring we meet the communications needs of service users in the spirit of the Accessible Information Standard, which is mandatory for deliverers of adult care services.

4.3. In addition, NHP recognises that some of its work may be contracted to project sponsors or sub-contractors to deliver. In order to implement this policy via its project sponsors NHP will:-

- Copy this policy to project sponsors;
 - Through formal contracting arrangements, require project sponsors to comply with English Law (including employment legislation) in particular the Equalities Act 2010;
 - Expect larger organisations contracting with NHP to have in place their own equal opportunities and diversity policy and both encourage and assist smaller contracting organisations to adopt such a policy.
- 4.4. Staff and recipients of NHP's (and its project sponsors) services have the right to complain of discrimination, abuse, victimisation and harassment. They should do this by raising a complaint, in line with our Complaints Policy.
- 4.5. Allegations against individual's not directly employed by NHP (e.g. project sponsor's staff) will normally be subject to the sponsoring organisation's internal investigation arrangements and/or disciplinary procedures. Project sponsors or sub-contractors will be required to report to NHP where such a complaint is upheld and to advise of the action taken. Project sponsors, sub-contractors or their staff found to be undertaking discriminatory practices may lead to NHP suspending or terminating its contract with that organisation.

5. Monitoring

- 5.1. The CEO has responsibility for implementing and monitoring the Equality and Diversity policy and, as part of this process, all personnel policies and procedures are administered with the objective of promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating unfair or unlawful discrimination.
- 5.2. The CEO will be fully supported in implementing and role-modelling this policy by senior management.
- 5.3. To support the monitoring of this policy NHP will regularly report monitoring data at Board level. This will include reporting disciplinary, grievance and external complaint cases that reference equality or diversity matters.
- 5.4. NHP will review this policy every two years.

Appendix 1 - Equal opportunity policy statements

Age

We will:

- ensure that people of all ages are treated with respect and dignity
- ensure that people of working age are given equal access to our employment, training, development and promotion opportunities and
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about younger and older people.

Disability

We will:

- provide any reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled people have access to our services and employment opportunities
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about disabled people and
- seek to continue to improve access to information by ensuring availability of loop systems, braille facilities, alternative formatting and sign language interpretation.

Race

We will:

- challenge racism wherever it occurs
- respond swiftly and sensitively to racist incidents and
- actively promote race equality in the organisation.

Sex

We will:

- challenge discriminatory assumptions about women and men
- take positive action to redress the negative effects of discrimination against women and men
- offer equal access for women and men to employment, training and pay and encourage other organisations to do the same.

Gender reassignment

We will:

- provide support to prevent discrimination against transsexual people who have or who are about to undergo gender reassignment
- prohibit and respond to all instances of discrimination, both from colleagues and externally.

Sexual orientation

We will:

- ensure that we take account of the needs of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals and
- promote positive images of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals.

Religion or belief

We will:

- ensure that employees' religion or beliefs and related observances are respected and accommodated wherever possible and
- respect people's beliefs where the expression of those beliefs does not impinge on the legitimate rights of others.

Pregnancy or maternity

We will:

- ensure that people are treated with respect and dignity and that a positive image is promoted regardless of pregnancy or maternity
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about the pregnancy or maternity of our employees and
- ensure that no individual is disadvantaged and that we take account of the needs of our employees' pregnancy or maternity.

Marriage or civil partnership

We will:

- ensure that people are treated with respect and dignity and that a positive image is promoted regardless of marriage or civil partnership;
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about the marriage or civil partnership of our employees and
- ensure that no individual is disadvantaged and that we take account the needs of our employees' marriage or civil partnership.

Ex-offenders

We will prevent discrimination against our employees regardless of their offending background (except where there is a known risk to children or vulnerable adults). Our policy on recruitment of ex-offenders is within our Recruitment and Selection Policy.

Equal pay

We will ensure that all employees, male or female, have the right to the same contractual pay and benefits for carrying out the same work, work rated as equivalent work or work of equal value.

Unconscious bias

We recognise the dangers of unconscious bias arising at work, which is where an opinion is formed on an individual by a manager or colleague without them necessarily being aware they have formed it.

There are many different forms of unconscious bias, ranging from an affinity towards those of a similar background to placing too much significance on what has been identified as a negative trait.

We will work against forms of unconscious bias in all decisions taken for employment, including recruitment, promotion and training opportunities, with a focus on promoting diversity and inclusion. In particular, we will implement the following:

- Blind recruitment
- Referring to specific job criteria when making recruitment decisions
- Discounting any favourable personal relationships with staff.