



Equal Opportunities Policy

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Victims & Survivors Service

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) is an equal opportunities employer. VSS aims to provide equality of opportunity in employment to all persons and we will not discriminate unlawfully against our job applicants or employees on any of the protected equality grounds which are:

- Sex
- Gender reassignment
- Marital or civil partnership status
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Religious or similar philosophical belief
- Political opinion
- Racial Group
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Age

1.2. When making recruitment and selection decisions we will aim to select the best person for the job and all decisions will be made objectively and lawfully. Likewise, we will follow the same principles when making other employment-related policies and decisions, such as those relating to pay and benefits, opportunities for promotion and training, flexible working arrangements, absence and performance management and, if necessary, redundancy.

We will promote a good and harmonious working environment in which our employees will be treated with dignity and respect. We will not tolerate harassment on the protected equality grounds or bullying.

We recognise that our workplace and our employment policies and practices may potentially cause barriers for job applicants and employees who have disabilities. We will make reasonable adjustments to ensure that these are removed when needed. We recognise that a failure to comply with the reasonable adjustment duty would be an act of unlawful discrimination.



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2. Objectives

2.1 VSS is committed to the following:

- Promoting equality of opportunity for all persons
- Promoting a good and harmonious working environment in which all persons are treated with respect, free from unlawful discrimination and harassment, and feel able to complain about such behaviour should it occur
- Preventing occurrences of unlawful direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Fulfilling all our legal obligations under the equality legislation and associated codes of practice
- Complying with our own equal opportunities policy and associated policies
- Taking lawful affirmative or positive action, where appropriate
- Regarding all breaches of equal opportunities policy as misconduct which could lead to disciplinary proceedings up to and including dismissal depending on the seriousness of the breach.

3. Implementation

3.1 The Chief Executive Officer has specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy. Each Head of Service and manager also has responsibilities and VSS expect all our employees to abide by the policy and help create the equality environment which is its objective.

3.2 In order to implement this policy VSS shall:

- Communicate the policy to employees, job applicants and relevant others (such as contract or agency workers)
- Incorporate specific and appropriate duties in respect of implementing the equal opportunities policy into job descriptions and work objectives of all staff
- Provide equality training and guidance as appropriate, including training on induction and management courses
- Ensure that those who are involved in assessing candidates for recruitment or promotion will be trained in non-discriminatory selection techniques



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- Incorporate equal opportunities notices into general communications practices (e.g., staff newsletters, intranet)
- Obtain commitments from other persons or organisations such as subcontractors or agencies that they too will comply with the policy in their dealings with our organisation and our workforce
- Ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfil the objectives of the policy.

4. Affirmative Action

Where appropriate, lawful positive action measures such as special encouragement in advertisements or special training will be developed. These measures are available to VSS in certain circumstances, for example where there is an under-representation of a particular group in specific areas of work.

5. Monitoring & Review

- 5.1. Monitoring information will form no part of the selection process and will remain confidential. VSS also monitors its workforce composition and undertakes periodic reviews as required by fair employment legislation. Progress on implementation of this policy and any equal opportunities and affirmative/positive action programmes will be reviewed annually.
- 5.2. HR will submit monitoring information to the Equality Commission on an annual basis.

6. Complaints

- 6.1. Employees who believe that they have suffered any form of discrimination, victimisation or harassment should raise the matter in accordance with the Dignity at Work Policy & Procedures. These internal procedures do not replace or detract from the right of employees to pursue complaints before an Industrial or Fair Employment Tribunal.
- 6.2. Employees who make complaints of discrimination or harassment and others who give evidence or information in connection with such complaints, will not be victimised (i.e.



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they will not be discriminated against or harassed in retaliation for their actions).
Victimisation is also discrimination contrary to the equality laws and this policy.

7. Variation

The VSS reserves the right to vary this Policy on 4 weeks' notice as it deems appropriate to include compliance with any legal requirements. The appropriate staff will be notified of any proposed variation and consulted in advance.

8. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years or when required and will be provided to the Chief Executive for approval.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Walker', is written above a horizontal line.

SIGNED:

Interim Chief Executive Officer of the Victims and Survivors Service

DATE:

10.01.23



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Annex 1: Types of Discrimination

a. Direct Discrimination

This is when a person (or organisation) treats or would treat someone less favourably than others on one of the grounds (listed above) in the same or similar circumstances. Direct discrimination is unlawful whether it is intentional or not.

b. Indirect Discrimination

There are three definitions of indirect discrimination:

1. A provision, criterion or practice is applied or would apply equally in a situation which puts certain people at a disadvantage and which cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
2. A requirement or condition is applied or would apply equally in a situation: where a considerably smaller proportion of a certain group of people can comply with it; which is not justifiable; and which is to the detriment of the individual because they cannot comply with it.
3. It covers not only individuals who are put at an actual disadvantage by a provision, criterion or practice but also individuals who would be put at such a disadvantage. This will therefore cover individuals who are deterred from trying to access a service because of a provision, criterion or practice.

Like direct discrimination, indirect discrimination can be unlawful even if it is not intentional. For any comparisons to take place under indirect discrimination, the circumstances in the case should be the same or not materially different.

c. Disability Discrimination

Disability discrimination occurs when, for reason related to his/her disability, a disabled person is treated less favourably than other people, and this treatment cannot be justified. It can also occur when an employer fails to comply with the duty to make reasonable adjustments in relation to the disabled person, and the failure cannot be justified. An



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employer cannot justify less favourable treatment if, by making a reasonable adjustment, it would remove the reason for the treatment.

d. Victimisation

This occurs when someone is treated less favourably because they have already made a complaint under the relevant legislation (e.g. undertook proceedings or threatened to bring proceedings), have helped someone else to do so (e.g. provided evidence in proceedings or acted as a witness), or alleged that a service provider or others have committed an unlawful act under the law. Protection from victimisation is intended to ensure that people are not deterred from complaining about discrimination out of fear of further adverse treatment.