



EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY

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EQUALITY & DIVERSITY STATEMENT

NE Youth is committed to promoting and valuing equality & diversity in all of our activities and we take our responsibilities in relation to the Equality Act 2010 seriously. We welcome and celebrate the diversity of the communities in which we work and are strongly committed to achieving equal opportunities and access for all people and groups in society.

Equality & Diversity is the cornerstone of all our policies and procedures. We are proud of the actions we take to eliminate discrimination and prejudice and to ensure inclusion and engagement for all the people who work and volunteer with us and those who access our services. We will continue to strive towards a culture that is diverse, and that recognises and develops the potential of all our staff, volunteers and service users, and we will go above and beyond the minimum legal requirements in order to achieve this.

EQUALITY

Equality is about making sure people are treated fairly and given fair chances. Equality of opportunity is about everyone being evaluated fairly and that they are able to progress purely on the basis of their merit. Throughout the course of our work, NE Youth will ensure that appropriate attention is given to the 'protected characteristics' outlined in the Equality Act and listed below:

- Race
- Gender/sex
- Marital/civil partnership status
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Religion and belief
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- Gender re-assignment
- Age.

People must not be unfairly discriminated against because of any of these factors and we should all contribute to creating a positive learning and working environment where discriminatory practices and discrimination are not tolerated.

DIVERSITY

Diversity is an inclusive approach to the delivery of services and employment, accepting that each individual is unique. Diversity recognises that everyone has a positive contribution to make to society.

Diversity is about respecting and valuing the individual and positively striving to meet the needs of different people. It goes beyond equal opportunities legislation, encompassing any aspect of an individual that is not directly related to their ability to do a specific job or to undertake a particular task, such as:

- Values
- Experience
- Family commitments

- Where someone lives
- Socioeconomic background.

People with different backgrounds and attitudes bring fresh ideas and perceptions, and as a diverse organisation, we can draw upon the widest range of experiences so that we can offer the best possible services and be a welcoming place to work.

1. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY AT NE YOUTH

Good Practice

NE Youth will always endeavour to uphold and promote good equal opportunities practices.

NE Youth strives to implement its objectives by:

- regularly reviewing its membership and work
- listening to its members and service users
- ensuring that information about NE Youth and its activities are widely available
- meeting with other relevant local agencies to discuss possible new developments
- ensuring that our activities and services are varied and meeting the needs of our vibrant and diverse members and service users.

NE Youth will actively seek training opportunities to develop and implement effective policies on equality and diversity.

2. AIMS:

To develop an organisational culture that promotes and maximises the contribution, and potential, of all of NE Youth staff, members and service participants.

To celebrate diversity.

To encourage and build better understanding and respect within NE Youth and with those whom we work with.

To ensure that NE Youth fully complies with current legislation (see Appendix One), the regulatory framework and best practice.

3. OUR PRACTICE:

NE Youth will meet the aims of this policy by ensuring that good equality and diversity practice is maintained in all that we do, especially in the following areas:

a) Challenging of policy and practice

We will encourage NE Youth staff, member organisations and the young people participating in our services to highlight and challenge any policy or practice which does not (or does not appear to) adhere to the aims of this policy.

We will challenge unfair discrimination and the stereotyping of young people when we encounter it and aim to promote the positive portrayal of young people in all communications.

Individuals should feel able to challenge each other respectfully, and to accept and act upon constructive feedback with regard to behaviour and language from others, or, where appropriate, speak to their line manager.

b) Meeting the needs of young people

Young people have the right to be involved in decisions which affect them and NE Youth will ensure that young people are actively involved in influencing and shaping the nature, level and extent of provision of services we provide. Through their involvement, NE Youth will strive to meet their needs.

NE Youth will actively seek to recognise groups of young people who are less involved in organised activities and take appropriate steps to encourage their greater involvement.

c) Access

NE Youth understands that there are factors which may prevent an individual coming forward, to participate in activities and services, or to apply for employment or volunteering opportunities with the organisation.

It is therefore essential that NE Youth activities and services are as fully accessible as possible for all who are eligible. The following will be carefully considered and planned:

- Meetings, activities and events
- Publicity – the range of methods and formats used; reflecting the diversity of the young people we want to attract.

We will strive to become more accessible by working in an accountable and transparent way.

d) Recruitment and Training

NE Youth is committed to fair recruitment of staff and volunteers, subject to our Safer Recruitment Policy, as well as fair and equal access to training and promotion.

All recruitment and selection will be undertaken with care to eliminate the likelihood of unlawful or unfair discrimination. Recruitment procedures will comply with best practice.

NE Youth recognises that it is important for the organisation to attract and retain the best people available.

e) Adjustments

NE Youth will take all reasonable steps to ensure that disabled people are able to work at NE Youth, use its services and take part in events and activities. NE Youth will also consider all reasonable changes to accommodate religious or cultural observances.

f) Dignity at Work

NE Youth aims to create a culture in which all staff and those in contact with NE Youth are treated with dignity and respect. Everyone at NE Youth is responsible for maintaining an environment free of harassment, bullying, discrimination and victimisation. Individuals are encouraged to:

- Be aware of the impact of their behaviour and language on others
- Challenge and/or report behaviour which is considered to be unacceptable.

NE Youth senior staff have a particular responsibility to be aware of inappropriate behaviour and to take appropriate action.

g) Partnership working

NE Youth will encourage members and project delivery partners to adopt appropriate equality and diversity policies and to undergo training.

NE Youth aims to work in partnership with those who are aware, and take seriously, the importance of good equality and diversity practice in relation to services for young people.

We aim to be a positive role model for members, with regard to equality and diversity, and to share our good practice.

h) Procurement

Where appropriate, NE Youth aims to work with suppliers who have an active, current equality and diversity policy, and will encourage those who do not, to develop one.

4. IMPLEMENTATION:

a) Responsibilities

Responsibilities of all:

NE Youth is actively committed to encouraging and promoting the positive contribution of our diverse staff and membership. Under this policy, it is therefore the responsibility of all staff and volunteers to:

- Read this policy, meet the contained expectations and seek clarification if anything is unclear
- Attend appropriate equality and diversity training provided by NE Youth

- Set a positive example in the treatment of others
- Challenge and/or report (where necessary) any behaviour that could be interpreted as breaching this policy
- Be pro-active in ensuring this policy is adhered to
- Promote an environment in which all individuals feel welcome, valued and respected
- Promote equality and diversity in all NE Youth's activities and responsibilities.

Senior staff should:

- Be a role model
- Encourage a culture where staff and others feel able to challenge and/or report inappropriate behaviour
- Promote and implement the principles of this policy through all service provision, policy and practice
- Support and implement action to improve equality and diversity in NE Youth
- Ensure all staff are aware of the expectations of this policy, and their responsibilities under this policy
- Ensure appropriate action is taken where there has been a breach of this policy
- Support and direct those who may have experienced discrimination, harassment or bullying, to additional support as appropriate.

In addition to all of the above, the Chief Executive will:

- Oversee the operation of this policy
- Update the organisation on any changes affecting the policy
- Ensure that the policy is implemented effectively
- Organise equality and diversity training for NE Youth staff as needed
- Ensure that the organisation is adhering to good practice
- Ensure that any concern, grievance or complaint is dealt with appropriately, promptly, sensitively and confidentially.

Responsibilities of the Board:

- Ensure clear leadership in the promotion of equality and diversity
- Ensure that NE Youth adheres to current legislation and good practice
- Ensure this policy is implemented with the assistance of the Chief Executive and senior staff
- Ensure the policy is developed and reviewed as stated.

5. INDUCTION AND TRAINING:

It is important for staff to receive equality and diversity training in order to ensure that expectations and issues contained in this policy are understood and acted upon. Training for staff will be arranged as appropriate, and this policy will be included in all induction arrangements, for new staff.

6. CONSIDERING IMPACT:

This policy and its aims will be taken into account during the review of all NE Youth policies and processes to ensure there is no unfair discrimination or disadvantage within it.

7. TAKING ACTION:

If a member of NE Youth staff/volunteers experiences discrimination or harassment they are encouraged to deal with it through the use of the grievance procedure.

If a member of NE Youth staff/volunteers is aware of discrimination or harassment of others, they should challenge it where appropriate and, if necessary, report it to their line manager or a senior member of staff.

If anyone connected with a member organisation, or with NE Youth, experiences harassment or discrimination from a NE Youth staff member or volunteer, they can make a complaint and this will be investigated.

Any member of staff who discriminates or harasses a staff member, volunteer or anyone connected with NE Youth, or who breaches this policy, will be subject to the disciplinary procedure.

Any volunteer who discriminates or harasses a staff member, volunteer or anyone connected with NE Youth, or who breaches this policy, will have their role terminated.

8. COMMUNICATION AND REVIEW:

a) Communication

This policy is available on NE Youth's shared drive and will be included in all Policy and Procedure Manuals.

It will be supplied to all new staff and volunteers. During induction, this policy will be signed off as having been read and understood by new staff and volunteers.

The policy will be made available for current and prospective member organisations as requested.

b) Review

The policy will be reviewed every year in order to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of NE Youth and all who receive or participate in NE Youth services or activities.

The policy will be updated according to legislative changes.

APPENDIX ONE: THE EQUALITY ACT 2010 – A BRIEF OVERVIEW

On 1st October 2010, the Equality Act 2010 became law. The main aims of the Act are to strengthen and streamline the law related to equality and to support wider work to promote equality. Nine major pieces of legislation and around 100 other measures have been replaced with this Act.

The following **9 Protected Characteristics** are covered by the legislation:

Age	Disability	Gender Reassignment
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Pregnancy and Maternity	Race
Religion and Belief	Sex	Sexual Orientation

With regard to these nine protected characteristics there are seven key types of conduct to avoid:

- Direct Discrimination including by association and/or perception
- Indirect Discrimination
- Discrimination arising from disability
- Discrimination arising from gender reassignment with regard to absence from work
- Discrimination arising from pregnancy and maternity
- Harassment
- Victimisation.

There are also a number of actions which are allowed with the aim of encouraging equality in the workplace, in services, in education and in training. These are:

- More favourable treatment with regard to disability
- Occupational Requirements can be specified where justified
- Reasonable adjustments are required with regard to disability.

For further information please see the Equality and Human Rights Commission website:
www.equalityhumanrights.com

APPENDIX TWO: ACCESSIBILITY OF ACTIVITIES

NE Youth wishes to make all activities it undertakes as accessible as possible to the young people, members, partners and staff who are eligible to attend. As an organisation with limited resources, we will make all reasonable efforts to ensure full access to events and activities, but with regret, know that this may not always be possible. With this in mind NE Youth will endeavour to do the following:

Meetings and Events

- NE Youth will endeavour to hold events in premises which are accessible for all potential participants, including access for those with limited mobility.
- NE Youth will endeavour to help with organising transport where is practicable.
- NE Youth will endeavour to provide appropriate communication methods where needed e.g. hearing induction loops.
- NE Youth will endeavour to provide catering for events and meetings that reflects cultural and religious dietary requirements of the individuals who are participating/may participate.
- Whenever possible, NE Youth will endeavour to ensure that events are not scheduled on religious or culturally significant dates.

NE Youth will actively seek to enable adjustments as and when identified in terms of accessibility of its activities.

Publicity

- NE Youth is committed to ensuring all young people can access services and will seek to encourage specific groups of young people who are less likely to get involved
- NE Youth will publicise our activities and services by a range of means.
- Where possible, materials will be provided in a variety of formats e.g. large font.
- NE Youth will use positive and inclusive language and images in all our publicity materials to affirm our commitment to valuing diversity and continuously improving accessibility.
- Images used will reflect the diversity of the young people involved with NE Youth and member organisations.
- NE Youth is committed to ensuring that all forms of electronic communication are inclusive and accessible including websites and emails. By accessible we mean that wherever possible NE Youth will:
 - Produce written material in plain English
 - Endeavour to use language and terms that do not alienate individuals
 - The use of acronyms will be accompanied with a full explanation.