

## Equality and Diversity Policy

### Related Policies and Procedures

This Policy should be read in conjunction with all related policies and procedures. See the separate list in the Policies and Procedures file.

### Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this Policy is to sets out the way Healthwatch Leeds (HWL) staff and volunteers work and behave.

Healthwatch Leeds (HWL) wholeheartedly promotes equality and diversity. It seeks to ensure that equality and diversity principles underpin all areas of the organisation's work and service provision. HWL recognises that many people and groups suffer discrimination and face serious barriers when trying to fulfil their true potential. It also recognises that not all forms of unreasonable and unfair discrimination are the subject of legislation.

In most cases it is unlawful to discriminate against people because of their gender or gender assignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic and national origin, sexuality/sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, or because they are disabled, married or in a civil partnership, a member of a trade union, work part time or are on a fixed-term contract. It is also unlawful to discriminate against people either because they are perceived to have a certain characteristic or because they associate with someone who has a certain characteristic. However, we recognise that people may experience discrimination for many additional social, educational and economic reasons such as their language, health, caring responsibilities, trade union activity, where they live, how they speak and whether they work flexibly. This policy will apply equally to all these circumstances.

HWL will follow the principles and requirements of this policy as an employer.

The HWL Volunteer Policy will be used to deal with any complaints

about discrimination, harassment or bullying involving volunteers.

## Policy

HWL will not tolerate discrimination, harassment, bullying, victimisation or abuse of people who are members of staff or of people connected with the services provided by HWL.

It is the aim of HWL to take positive steps to redress discrimination, to improve equality of opportunity and to combat any unreasonable or unfair treatment which places people at a disadvantage for any reasons not directly related to their ability to do a job for this organisation or to their eligibility to receive services from us.

Board Directors will be informed that an Equality and Diversity Policy is in operation and that they are bound to comply with its requirements. HWL will seek a broad selection of people to sit on its Board.

It is expected that when staff or Board members represent HWL on the committees of other agencies they will endeavour to ensure that equality and diversity principles and practices are adopted by those agencies.

The policy will also be drawn to the attention of HWL volunteers, job applicants and those using the services of HWL.

An 'Equality and Diversity Statement' shall be easily available in our offices, accessible to staff and visitors. It is the responsibility of all staff to report any discrimination of which they become aware.

## Service delivery

HWL seeks to ensure that its services are accessible to all sections of the community served by our organisation. In particular HWL will ensure that this applies to those most at social, economic or educational disadvantage.

HWL will:

- make public its commitment to combating discriminatory attitudes where these are encountered.
- attempt to ensure that none of its policies discriminate directly or indirectly against any group or individual.
- attempt to find ways of making our service accessible to everyone, including people for whom English is not a first

- language, people with visual or hearing impairments, and people who live in remote rural areas and/or who cannot easily travel.
- take all reasonable steps to ensure that all its activities are carried out in premises which are accessible to people with mobility difficulties. In the event that the premises operated by HWL are not accessible for particular individuals, HWL will arrange alternative meeting places. This will include Board meetings.
  - be sensitive to the particular needs of the public by trying to provide for example, translations, interpreters and, when providing food, having regard to religious and other dietary requirements.
  - operate a range of mechanisms to allow people to contact staff including answerphone, a number for texts and written contact details.
  - be concerned especially with people and communities that are disadvantaged and excluded and will find ways to understand and include their interests and experiences.

Please refer to the Open Access Guidance for how we ensure HWL is open to as many voices and experiences as possible in practice.

### Monitoring and evaluation

HWL will regularly evaluate its services and the effectiveness of its equality and diversity policy, by a variety of means.

Monitoring may be carried out by HWL to provide the data for this regular evaluation. For instance, HWL may ask people using our services, job applicants, volunteers and Board Directors for information about their ethnic origin, disability, age or other personal information. We will only do this for a specific defined purpose such as collecting statistical data for funders, for research or for our own monitoring to evaluate this policy's impact.