



Equality and Diversity Policy

1. Ottery Help Scheme (OHS) recognises that we live in a society where discrimination still operates to the disadvantage of many groups in society.

2. OHS believes that all persons should have equal rights to recognition of their human dignity, and to have equal opportunities to be educated, to work, receive services and to participate in society.

3. OHS is committed to the promotion of equal opportunities through the way we manage the organisation and provide services to the community. In order to express this commitment, we develop, promote and maintain policies that will support and uphold the principles of fairness and equality in the workplace.

4. The objective of this policy is that no person should suffer or experience less favourable treatment, discrimination or lack of opportunities on the grounds of gender, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religious or philosophical beliefs, health status, HIV status, age, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, political beliefs or trade union membership, class, responsibility for dependents, physical attributes, ex-offender status as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, lack of formal qualifications where such qualifications are not formally required, or any other grounds which cannot be shown to be justifiable within the context of this policy.

5. This policy will influence and affect every aspect of activities linked to OHS, as determined by the trustee board.

6. In the provision of services and the employment of staff, OHS is committed to promoting equal opportunities for everyone. Throughout its activities, OHS will treat all people equally whether they are:

- Seeking or using our services
- Applying for a job or already employed by us
- Trainee workers and students on work experience or placements
- Volunteers

How the policy will be implemented and who is responsible?

The Chief Officer has specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy and we expect all our employees and volunteers to abide by the policy and help create the equality environment which is its objective.

Conduct and general standards of behaviour

All staff and volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and considerate manner at all times. OHS will not tolerate behaviour such as:

- making threats
- physical violence
- shouting
- swearing at others
- persistent rudeness
- isolating, ignoring or refusing to work with certain people
- telling offensive jokes or name calling
- displaying offensive material such as pornography or sexist / racist cartoons, or the distribution of such material via email / text message or any other format.
- any other forms of harassment or victimisation.

The items on the above list of unacceptable behaviours are considered to be disciplinary offences within OHS and can lead to disciplinary action being taken. OHS does, however, encourage staff to resolve misunderstandings and problems informally wherever possible, depending on the circumstances. However, whether dealt with informally or formally, it is important for staff or volunteers who may have caused offence to understand that it is no defence to say that they did not intend to do so, or to blame individuals for being over sensitive. It is the impact of the behaviour, rather than the intent, that counts, and that should shape the solution found both to the immediate problem and to preventing further similar problems in the future.

Complaints of discrimination

All complaints will be investigated in accordance with the organisation's grievance, complaints or disciplinary procedure, as appropriate and the complainant will be informed of the outcome in line with these procedures.

We will also monitor the number and outcomes of complaints of discrimination made by staff, volunteers, clients and other third parties.

Legal Obligations reference point:

Equal Opportunities and Discrimination (Equality Act 2010)

The new Equality Act came into force in October 2010 and replaces all previous equality legislation in England, Scotland and Wales – namely the Race Relations Act 1976, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Sex Discrimination Act, the Equal Pay Act, the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006, The Civil Partnership Act 2004, the Employment Equality Regulations 2003 (religions and belief and sexual orientation).

The Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics are:

Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.