

Policy and Approach to Equal Opportunities

Advocacy Action is an equal opportunities organisation and will take positive measures to ensure that participants have a full understanding of the equal opportunities policy and all that it entails. The equal opportunities policy aims to ensure that those facing discrimination in our society feel welcome within the project and feel able to participate fully in it.

Equal Opportunities Statement:

Advocacy Action is committed to actively opposing all forms of discrimination arising from gender, age, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, physical health or disability, sexual orientation, record of mental ill-health, HIV/Aids, appearance, class, marital status, responsibility to dependants, record of unemployment, homelessness, or religious or cultural beliefs, except where those beliefs contradict any part of this equal opportunities policy. Advocacy Action will challenge and combat discrimination through its employment practices, project work, and other activities.

Implementation and monitoring of the Equal Opportunities Policy:

1. We find unacceptable any attitude or behaviour which may result in a person feeling uncomfortable either in the Advocacy Action office, or during any other work which people from Advocacy Action may be involved in, wherever this work is being carried out. We define these attitudes and behaviours as including:
 - Insults, name calling, jokes or comments relating to the groups mentioned in our equal opportunities statement.
 - Graffiti or clothing or badges which may offend or give negative images of these groups.
 - Leaflets, pin-ups, magazines, books, or ideas which may offend or give negative images of these groups.
 - Encouraging a person to join an organisation which is likely to offend or give negative images of these groups.
 - Unwanted touching or sexual advances, either physical or verbal.
 - Physical attack or threat against another person.
2. Anyone experiencing or witnessing any such behaviour should try to calmly stand up for themselves. Remind the people concerned about the equal opportunities policy and the high standards of respect and tolerance that are expected of people involved in Advocacy Action.

3. If this doesn't work, the incident should be reported to an appropriate member of staff, or to a member of the Management Committee. All incidents will be taken seriously and will be formally recorded. People who continue to behave in ways that are incompatible with our policies will become subject to our formal grievance procedures and will eventually have to leave their place in Advocacy Action, whether in employment, training, or volunteering. Visitors to the project or representatives of external agencies may be barred from Advocacy Action's office if they seriously breach this policy, and contracts may be declared void.
4. We will publicise our Equal Opportunities Statement to everyone involved in the project including staff, members, volunteers, partner organisations, trainees and job applicants. We will be mindful of this statement when engaging contractors, consultants, and other agencies to work for us.
5. Advocacy Action works with a wide range of socially excluded people. We will seek to implement considerate monitoring processes to help us to ensure that we are properly serving all the diversity of local residents, and that as an organisation our staffing and membership also reflect this diversity. We will use our monitoring to identify any specific groups that are under-represented and help us to develop action plans to help redress the balance.
6. The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of all those involved in Advocacy Action. It is recognised, however, that paid staff have a specific duty to set the standard and to be an example. Voluntary members of the management team, and other frontline volunteers should also try to set an example of good practice in this area.
7. Advocacy Action is committed to positive action to alleviate and remedy the effects of discrimination. We accept that equal treatment of people is insufficient to achieve equal opportunities and that positive action is also required. Advocacy Action is therefore committed to positive discrimination as a very particular form of positive action, where positive action is encouraged by the law, i.e. training and employment opportunities for women or members of the BME population.

Advocacy Action recognises that it is part of a society that discriminates unfairly and unjustly against some individuals and groups. Discrimination results in disadvantages and lack of opportunities. Advocacy Action is resolutely opposed to discrimination and its effects.