



HEAR US
Croydon's Mental Health Service Users Group
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Hear Us

QUALITY MANUAL



SECTION A: Access to Service

A.3.1: Equality and Diversity Policy

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1. GENERAL STATEMENT

- a) Hear Us is committed to achieving equal opportunities in employment and the services it provides. No user of Hear Us's services, employee, trustee, volunteer (throughout this document, the term volunteer will include trustees) or job applicant should receive less favourable treatment based on the protected characteristics as outlined in the Equalities Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- b) As an employer and provider of a service to the community, Hear Us accepts the responsibility to promote equal opportunities and challenge discrimination wherever it occurs. This document sets out the main consequences of this commitment and the action to be taken in order to achieve equal opportunities.
- c) It is the responsibility of all staff, volunteers and service users to ensure that no other service user, volunteer, trustee or employee receives less favourable treatment than any other on the grounds stated in Para. 1.1 of this policy.
- d) Hear Us recognises that some clients and users of its services may, because of their past or present distress or illness, say or do things which would otherwise be unacceptable and incompatible with Hear Us's Equal Opportunities Policy. Hear Us will do all it can to challenge such behaviour. In cases where intervention is possible an approach will be adopted which aims to alter attitudes and behaviour while maintaining support for the distressed client. A record will be kept of such situations.
- e) Hear Us recognises its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 with regard to employment and the reasonable adjustments it must make to ensure that people with protected characteristics are not discriminated against in recruitment or in the workplace. Hear Us keeps all its policies under review to ensure that they do not discriminate against people.

2. RESPONSIBILITY



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- The Board of Hear Us has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy. However, all employees, volunteers and service users have a duty as part of their involvement with Hear Us to do everything they can to ensure that the policy works in practice.
- Hear Us will bring to the attention of all employees, job applicants, volunteers and service users the existence of this policy, and will provide such training as is necessary to ensure that the policy is effective and that everyone is aware of it. Reference to the policy should be included in contract documents with outside agencies.
- Those responsible for recruiting volunteers to work in Hear Us projects are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of Hear Us's Equal Opportunities Policy and adhere to it while working as Hear Us volunteers.

3. POSITIVE ACTION

- a) Hear Us believes that passive support for equal opportunities is not enough and that positive steps, within the law, shall be taken. Hear Us is committed to:
- Recognising and developing potential which has not been used before because of past discrimination and disadvantage.
 - Encouraging access and applications from under-represented groups.
- b) Every effort will be made to ensure that the services offered by Hear Us reflect the composition of the community it serves and we will publish details of service user statistics by gender, age and ethnicity.

4. DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

- a) If any service user, volunteer or employee feels that they have been, or are being discriminated against, in any way, they are entitled to pursue the matter with either:
- Their line manager in the case of staff
 - The equal opportunities officer
 - The manager/key worker of the project where the alleged discrimination occurred.



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- b) All instances or complaints of discriminatory behaviour will be treated seriously.
- c) Complaints or allegations of an unfounded or malicious nature will also be treated as serious and may involve using the disciplinary procedure.

5. RECRUITMENT

- a) In most circumstances, job vacancies will be advertised internally to encourage service users and volunteers to apply.
- b) Hear Us will ensure that job descriptions, person specifications and application forms reflect only the requirements of the job and do not imply sex or other stereotyping.
- c) All advertisements will state that Hear Us is seeking to be an effective equal opportunities employer. A copy of Hear Us's Equal Opportunities Statement will form part of all application packs.
- d) Hear Us will take such positive steps, within the law, to redress imbalances in its work force.
- e) Where Hear Us proposes to use temporary staff it will, where possible, employ people with mental health problems or other disabilities in the hope that they may then be found long-term jobs in Hear Us.
- f) Application packs/ads will make it clear that life experience as well as formal qualifications and work experience is valid.
- g) In the interests of operating an effective Equal Opportunities Policy, Hear Us will monitor certain information about job applicants. All such information will be treated as confidential and will be clearly separated from all processes concerned with the selection of staff.

Positive Disclosure and Barring (DBS) Disclosures and Recruitment of Ex-Offenders

As an organisation using the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) to assess applicants' suitability for positions of trust, Hear Us complies fully with the DBS Code of Practice and undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly. It undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a DBS check on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed. We actively promote equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and



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potential and welcome applications from a wide range of candidates, including those with criminal records. We select all candidates for interview based on their skills, qualifications and experience. A DBS check is only requested after a thorough risk assessment has indicated that one is both proportionate and relevant to the position concerned. For those positions where a DBS check is required, application contain a statement that a DBS check will be requested in the event of the individual being offered the position.

Where a DBS check is to form part of the recruitment process, we encourage all applicants called for interview to provide details of their criminal record at an early stage in the application process. We request that this information is sent to a designated person within Hear Us and we guarantee that this information will only be seen by those who need to see it as part of the recruitment process.

We ensure that all those in Hear Us who are involved in the recruitment process have been suitably trained in Equality and Diversity and can identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of offences. At interview, or in a separate discussion, we ensure that an open and measured discussion takes place on the subject of any offences or other matter that might be relevant to the position. Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment. All applicants are made aware of this policy so that they know if they are subject of a DBS Check they are aware of the existence of the DBS Code of Practice and we will make a copy available on request. We undertake to discuss any matter revealed in a DBS check with the person seeking the position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.

In the event of an individual becoming an employee of Hear Us, any failure to disclose such convictions could result in dismissal. Any information given will be kept completely confidential in line with the Data Protection Act and will be processed fairly and lawfully and only disclosed in appropriate circumstances. The information we may hold on individuals will be accurate, relevant, kept securely and not held longer than is necessary.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar individuals from working with us. This will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of any offences.

6. TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES



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- a) Subject to the requirements of doing their job, employees will be encouraged to go on courses relevant to their present job or personal development.
- b) Training courses will be non-residential and in working hours whenever possible.
- c) It is the responsibility of every individual member of staff to participate in equal opportunities training that is provided.

7. WORKING CONDITIONS

- a) **Pregnancy**
Hear Us recognises that pregnant women may need changes to their work conditions and will consider sympathetically any requests for such changes.
- b) **Antenatal Care**
Time off with pay will be given to both full and part-time pregnant employees to attend antenatal classes, including medical checks and relaxation/childbirth classes. Similar provision will be made for partners sharing responsibility for childcare to attend antenatal classes where necessary.
- c) **Flexible Hours and Job Sharing**
Working hours and arrangements will, whenever possible, be flexible for both full and part-time employees. Requests for job sharing or part-time working to meet employees' needs for shorter hours will be sympathetically considered, subject to operational requirements.
- d) **Accessible Buildings**
Hear Us will endeavour to ensure, as far as is practicable, that all its premises are fully accessible. When considering new premises, every effort will be made to ensure such premises are fully accessible.

8. USE OF LANGUAGE

- a) Staff, volunteers and service users will avoid and challenge the use of language which, in any way, belittles;
 - disabled groups and/or individuals with special needs
 - any race, culture or religion
 - a person's sexual orientation
 - women and/or men



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- a person's age
- b) Where the language used has a personal impact on others, and it has been made clear to the person concerned that their use of such language is unwelcome and/or offensive, disciplinary action may be taken if they persist with it.
- c) All materials used or developed by Hear Us will be judged in the light of the promotion of equal opportunities, and those considered to be discriminatory will not be used.

9. SEXUAL HARASSMENT

- a) No member of staff, volunteer or service user should be subject to sexual harassment.
- b) This is interpreted as unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature including:
 - verbal sexual abuse
 - physical contact
 - repeated remarks which an individual finds offensive
- c) If it has been made clear to the person concerned that their behaviour is unwelcome and they persist with it, then the service user, volunteer or employee who is the recipient of the behaviour will be entitled to make a formal complaint.

10. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES OFFICER/MONITORING OF POLICY

- a) The reason for having an Equal Opportunities Officer is to advise, inform and consult with management, staff and service users in order to progress and improve equal opportunities within Hear Us.
- b) The person appointed to this role should be committed to progressing equal opportunities within Hear Us in a positive manner.
- c) The Equal Opportunities Officer will :
 - Monitor and report on Hear Us's equal opportunities progress, development and practice and make an annual report to the Board of Hear Us.



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- Ensure staff, service users' and volunteers' awareness and understanding of equal opportunities issues and practice within Hear Us via training and development.
 - Advise and consult with Hear Us's Board and Finance and General Purposes Committees on equal opportunities to recommend and discuss courses of action.
 - Know or have access to appropriate information, legislation, policy, etc. for the purposes of carrying out their role.
 - Identify and advise on any Hear Us equal opportunities training needs and provision.
- d) If the Equal Opportunities officer is a member of staff Hear Us will allow adequate time off from his/her normal contracted duties to attend meetings and training events and perform this specific role. This time off will be negotiated with the Equal Opportunities Officer's line manager.
- e) If the Equal Opportunities Officer is a trustee Hear Us will encourage and pay the necessary expenses for him/her to attend meetings and training courses relevant to the role.
- f) It is not intended that the Equal Opportunities Officer should represent particular views, opinions or interests of individuals or groups, nor have the authority within this role to discipline either staff or service users, or raise a grievance on behalf of a particular individual or group.
- g) The Equal Opportunities Officer will be available in an advisory capacity in the case of a grievance involving equal opportunities issues.

Equality Act 2010: guidance

www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. It replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, making the law easier to understand and strengthening protection in some situations. It sets out the different ways in which it's unlawful to treat someone.



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Useful Contacts:

Arbitration Conciliation & Advisory Service (ACAS)

Tel: 0300 123 1100

www.acas.org.uk

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Phone: 0808 800 0082

Textphone: 0808 800 0084

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en>

The current Hear Us Equal Opportunities Officer is:

Tim Oldham

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