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Policy and Guidance	Equality & Diversity

1. Introduction

Ambition Aspire Achieve (AAA) is committed to equal opportunities as an employer and as a service provider. This policy is understood and supported by the Trustees and staff of AAA. The organisation is committed to a programme of action to make this policy effective and will bring it to the attention of all staff.

AAA will take all reasonable steps to employ, train, and promote staff on the basis of their experience, abilities and qualifications without regard to race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age or disability. AAA will also take all reasonable steps to provide a work environment in which all staff are treated with respect and dignity and that is free of harassment. AAA will not condone any form of harassment, whether engaged in by staff, client or by outside third parties who do business with us.

All AAA policies and procedures operate in line with this Equal Opportunities Policy and are designed to promote inclusion and a consistent approach to equality of opportunity across the organisation. This policy will be monitored periodically by AAA to ensure that it is being implemented effectively across the organisation.

2. Definitions

Direct Discrimination means treating a person less favourably than others (in the same circumstances) on the grounds of race, colour, national or ethnic origin, sex, marital status, sexuality, gender reassignment, disability, pregnancy or maternity, age, or religious belief.

Harassment means unwanted conduct that can reasonably be considered either to violate your dignity or to create an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive working environment. The motive or intent behind the conduct is not relevant.

Indirect discrimination means applying a condition or requirement which adversely affects one particular group considerably more than another as the proportion of the group who can comply with it is smaller than the proportion of another group who can comply with it.

Equalities refer to all work addressing discrimination and disadvantage in the many areas of inequality.

Diversity recognises and celebrates difference as something that is positive and beneficial to us all.

3. Principles/Diversity Statement

AAA embraces and celebrates diversity in the workplace. Diversity is about the culture of an organisation and the environment that people work in. AAA recognises that we are all different and that difference is not a threat. A truly diverse workplace is one where people are respected as individuals in their own right and valued for the positive benefits that a varied range of inputs, views and experiences can bring. Crucially it is about inclusiveness - we welcome the fact that you are different - as opposed to exclusiveness - 'if you don't change and become one of us, then you won't fit in'.

Although equality and diversity are two different concepts, one goes hand in hand with the other, because equality is an essential ingredient in achieving diversity.

AAA operates from one of the most diverse boroughs in the UK. Our workforce and volunteers reflect diversity. This is a strength which enables us to build on our achievements, creativity and good practice in order to benefit service users in the ways most appropriate to their needs and to support all staff and volunteers effectively in their work.

We are committed to, value and aim to promote equality of opportunity for all, to celebrate diversity and to challenge and prevent racism and other forms of discrimination or unfair treatment against any of our staff, job applicants, potential employees, volunteers, trustees or users of our services on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, gender, gender reassignment, disability, age, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, marital status, language, responsibilities for dependants, culture, way of life or part-time or fixed contract status.

The way we work, train and learn reflects both the mission and objectives of AAA and the spirit and intention of legislation that promotes equality and diversity.

AAA encourages all people it works with to contribute to an environment in which people feel comfortable expressing how they feel and what they need, knowing they will be treated with respect and that their contribution will be valued.

AAA will make reasonable adjustments to working practices, equipment and premises and offer, where appropriate, additional support to trustees, staff and volunteers to ensure they are able to take a full and active part in AAA's work.

AAA will at all times endeavour to deliver services in a way that genuinely recognises the importance of an inclusive society that brings opportunities and access, not barriers to individuals.

4. Responsibilities

The **Board of Trustees** is the ultimate decision-making body of AAA. It is responsible for the strategic direction of the organisation and for approving and ensuring the implementation of all company policies, supported by the AAA staff team.

The **Chief Executive** is responsible for:

- Monitoring the operation of the policy
- Ensuring that the policy is known, understood and adhered to by all staff
- Allocating the required resources to ensure the successful operation of the policy
- Ensuring that appropriate monitoring systems are in place to implement the policy
- Ensuring any necessary training is provided to enable the effective implementation of the policy.

AAA staff are responsible for:

- Behaving in a positive and non-discriminatory manner towards all colleagues, stakeholders and service users
- Treating all colleagues, stakeholders and service users with courtesy and respect
- Challenging inappropriate and discriminatory behaviour in others, including service users
- Remembering that while jokes or 'off the cuff' comments may not be intended to be offensive, they may be perceived as discriminatory and liable to reinforce negative images or stereotypes
- Participating in training to raise their levels of awareness and sensitivity
- Informing their line manager of any acts or omissions contrary to the policy
- Ensuring that the policy is known, understood and adhered to by our volunteers

5. Harassment

AAA will not condone any harassment of any employee, trustee, volunteer or young person participating in our programmes and activities, whether these acts are committed by our staff, trustees or other stakeholders. Nor will AAA condone any acts of harassment by employees against members of the public.

Harassment at work in any form, including on grounds of sex, ethnicity, marital status, disability, religion, pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or age is unacceptable. Serious cases may also amount to discrimination or even a criminal offence, involving personal accountability for those responsible.

AAA has in place grievance, disciplinary and other internal policies and procedures through which complaints may be pursued.

6. Practices and Procedures

6.1 Service Delivery

All staff who are responsible for developing and delivering AAA's services will ensure that all services and initiatives are managed and run with full regard to equality of opportunity.

All publicity and information materials will be designed and distributed to ensure that no section of the community may feel excluded or unable to access services appropriate to their need.

Where necessary AAA will adapt its services (e.g., use of adapted equipment/facilities for sports projects, adapted learning resources to meet need) to ensure children and young people are not excluded from activities and all service users are given equality of opportunity.

AAA recognises that ensuring good equalities and diversity in the delivery of their programmes and services means acknowledging and respecting the specific needs and experiences of particular disadvantaged community groups and providing services that meet their specific needs.

6.2 Recruitment, Selection and Employment Practices

AAA aims to ensure that no job applicant or worker receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national background, disability status, religion, sexual orientation, gender, age, marital status or HIV/aids status.

We have detailed and consistent procedures for recruiting and selecting employees. Those responsible for recruitment and selection are fully aware of our Equality & Diversity Policy and our Recruitment Policy and Procedures. They are required to undertake appropriate training.

All vacancies will be advertised internally as well as externally and such information will be made available to all workers.

Standard application forms are used. Information which does not directly relate to the applicant's ability to undertake the role is not asked for. Interviewing and selection is based solely on the applicants' ability to undertake the role as outlined in the person specification. Reference to non-essential experience or qualifications which may exclude particular sections of society are not included. We actively promote equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential and welcome applications from a wide range of candidates. We select all candidates for interview based on their skills, aptitude and ability, qualifications and experience.

Our commitment to equality of opportunity also applies to people with an offending background, other than when a

considered assessment indicates a potential risk to children and young people.

Recruitment of ex-offenders

As an organisation using the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks to assess applicants' suitability for positions of trust, AAA complies fully with the DBS Code of Practice and undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly.

For positions where a Disclosure is required, application information will contain a statement that a Disclosure will be requested in the event of the individual being offered the position.

Where a Disclosure is to form part of a job application process, we encourage all applicants called for interview to provide details of their criminal record at an early stage in the application process. This information will only be seen by those who need to see it as part of the recruitment process.

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 by candidates to reveal information that is relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar a candidate from working with us. This will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of the offence(s).

Where a volunteer who will be working with children or young people discloses or is found to have a criminal conviction, their permission will be sought to consult with the lead Safeguarding Officer at AAA, as part of an assessment process to determine whether they may be accepted onto the volunteer programme.

6.3 Training and Development

All workers have the right to be considered for training and development opportunities, redeployment or promotion based solely on their ability and the stated requirements of the role in question.

Part time and fixed term workers will be treated no less favourably than full time, permanent workers.

AAA employees are expected to comply with the Equality and Diversity Policy, and training will be given to employees on all aspects of the policy.

Staff and trustees involved in the recruitment process will receive appropriate guidance in the relevant legislation relating to the employment of ex-offenders (e.g. the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974).

6.4 Disciplinary and Grievance

Disciplinary and Grievance procedures are laid out in line with statutory requirements and any disciplinary or grievance procedure will be undertaken with full consideration of this Equality & Diversity Policy. Any complaints of discrimination can be raised through the grievance procedure. All such complaints will be taken seriously and fully investigated.

Complaints concerning sexual or racial harassment or bullying will be investigated in accordance with grievance procedures and disciplinary action will be brought against the offending worker if appropriate.

6.5 Special Equipment to Support Disabled Workers

AAA Achieve takes all reasonable steps to provide equipment and suitably accessible working arrangements to support workers with a disability. This is made explicit in recruitment literature.

Guidance for staff: What should I do if I have a concern?

Can you resolve it yourself? If you find an individual's behaviour unwelcome or offensive you are encouraged to make your feelings clear to him or her promptly, in an appropriate way. In most cases this will be sufficient to resolve matters. If this does not work, or if you want to raise your concern with someone else (e.g. because the conduct is serious or repeated or because of the identity of the individual involved), you should contact your immediate line manager or a member of the Board of Trustees to discuss whether to resolve the matter formally or informally.

Informal procedure: The line manager will make an informal and confidential approach to the relevant individual(s). It may be appropriate for an informal meeting to take place between you, the relevant individual and the line manager. If the inappropriate conduct continues, or if you or AAA consider it is not appropriate to resolve the issue informally, the formal procedure should be used.

Formal procedure: A formal investigation will take place under AAA's Grievance and Disciplinary Procedure during which you, the alleged harasser and any witnesses will be interviewed. You and the alleged harasser may be accompanied by a work colleague who is not otherwise involved. Confidentiality will be preserved as far as possible.

What are the possible outcomes?

If a formal grievance is upheld it is likely to lead to disciplinary action. In a serious case the result could be dismissal. The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for implementing this policy.