

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY**

IAS Bolton recognise that we live in a society where discrimination still operates to the disadvantage of many groups in society. We believe that all people 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.

We are committed to the promotion of equal opportunities within IAS, through the way we manage the service and provide services to the community. In order to express this commitment, we develop, promote and maintain policies that will be conducive to the principles of fairness and equality in the workplace.

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 disability, 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.

This policy will influence and affect every aspect of activities carried out at IAS i.e. direct work with families, workshops, support and information given and other functions linked to IAS, as determined by the IAS Minimum Standards.

In the provision of services and the employment of staff, IAS are committed to promoting equal opportunities for everyone. Throughout its activities, IAS 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.
- Volunteer workers.

### **How the policy will be implemented and who is responsible?**

The Head of Service and The Compass Partnership Advisory board have specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy. Each IAS Officer also have responsibilities and we expect all IAS staff to abide by the policy and help create the equality environment which is its objective.

In order to implement this policy we shall:

- Communicate the policy to employees, job applicants, volunteers and relevant others.
- Incorporate specific and appropriate duties in respect of implementing the equal opportunities policy into job descriptions and work objectives of all staff.
- Ensure that those who are involved in assessing candidates for recruitment or promotion will be knowledgeable in equality and non- discriminatory practice.
- Ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfil the objectives of the policy.

### **Conduct and general standards of behaviour**

All staff and volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and considerate manner at all times. IAS 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 IAS and can lead to disciplinary action being taken. IAS 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 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**

IAS will take seriously all complaints of unlawful discrimination on any forbidden grounds made by employees, trustees, service users or other third parties and will take action where appropriate.

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**

### *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. In valuing diversity, IAS are committed to go beyond the legal minimum regarding equality.

The *Equality Act 2010* harmonises and strengthens and replaces most previous equality legislation. The following legislation is still relevant:

- The Human Rights Act 1998.
- The Work and Families Act 2006.
- Employment Equality Treatment Framework Directive 2000 (as amended).

## **RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION**

The recruitment and selection process is crucially important to any equal opportunities policy. We will endeavour through appropriate training to ensure that employees, making selection and recruitment decisions will not discriminate, whether consciously or unconsciously, in making these decisions. 2. Job descriptions, where used, will be revised to ensure that they are in line with our equal opportunities policy. Job requirements will be reflected accurately in any personnel specifications.

We will adopt a consistent, non-discriminatory approach to the advertising of vacancies.

All applicants who apply for jobs with us will receive fair treatment and will be considered solely on their ability to do their job.

Short-listing and interviewing will be carried out by more than one person where possible.

Interview questions will be related to the requirements of the job and will not be of a discriminatory nature.

Selection decisions will not be influenced by any perceived prejudices of other staff.