

Adoption West: Equality Policy

Adoption West is committed to promoting equality, valuing diversity and to working inclusively with children, adopters and birth families.

We will foster a working environment in which the dignity of all individuals, employees and service users, is respected and promoted.

Our aim is to build a workforce that is truly representative of our service users and all sections of society, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

To that end the purpose of this policy is to provide equality and fairness for all in our employment, and all those for whom we provide a service. We will treat all complainants in the same way in line with the Equality Act 2010.

All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.

Adoption West will ensure its policies and practices comply with the Human Rights Act 1998 and Equality Act 2010 along with subsequent amendments and current legislation.

The Service Director and management team will be responsible for ensuring that all employed staff, volunteers, students and those working in partnership with Adoption West embrace the practice within this policy.

This policy will be given to all staff on appointment, and made available to adopters and partners on the Adoption West website. There will be regular reviews and monitoring of equality and diversity in the organisation to enable the management team to test the effectiveness of the policy and to improve and make changes as necessary.

**The policy’s purpose is to**

* provide equality, fairness and respect for all who use our services
* ensure that our services are accessible to all by suitable promotion, and information across the communities we serve
* provide equality, fairness and respect for all in our employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time
* oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities

Adoption West commits to:

* encouraging equality and diversity in the workplace as they are good practice and will ensure a better service to children, adopters and birth families
* creating a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued
* ensuring that the services we provide are relevant and accessible to people of all races and persuasions.

**Staff Responsibilities and Training**

Adoption West will train managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the equality policy. Responsibilities include

* staff conducting themselves in a respectful and fair manner in all interaction with service users and partner agencies
* staff conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination

All staff should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, service users, partners and the public.

All staff should take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, service users, partners, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation’s work activities.

Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation’s grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and any appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

Further, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence

Adoption West will

* include service users in the planning and development of services to ensure that services are inclusive and meet their needs
* make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation
* take decisions concerning staff based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act)
* review employment practices and procedures as necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law
* monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality and diversity, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality policy
* monitor how the equality policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice, review them annually, considering and taking action to address any issues

**Monitoring effectiveness of the policy**

Adoption West will monitor

* the diversity of the staff group and the effectiveness of recruitment of new staff to reach a diverse audience
* the outcomes and effectiveness of training for staff
* the diversity of those using our services and whether this reflects the groups within the communities we serve
* the range and diversity of services provided and whether they are reaching all the groups within the communities we serve
* feedback from service users on the services provided, and whether these are fair and accessible
* absences and staff leaving the organisation, and reasons for doing so
* complaints and grievances made by staff and service users

The management team will respond to any actions required, as a result of monitoring, through an action plan that

* identifies any actions required to address equality and diversity issues identified within the organisation
* identifies who will be responsible for carrying out these actions
* sets dates by when these actions will be implemented and completed
* sets targets to improve the organisation’s effectiveness in being open, accessible and non-discriminatory to all staff and service users

The action plan will be shared with staff and service users who will be invited to comment and contribute to improving the organisation.

**Compliance**

It is the responsibility of the management team to ensure that this policy is communicated, understood and acted upon. Managers must positively promote it by personal example and should not permit exceptions to the required behaviour.

All employees should familiarise themselves with the policy and must comply with it.

Failure to action compliance is likely to result in disciplinary action against both the

employee committing the breach and others who condone it.

**Making a complaint and breaches of policy**

A complaint of discrimination, harassment or victimisation should be made by following the Organisation’s Grievance Policy and Procedures.

Details of the organisation’s grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures are included in the Adoption West Procedures Manual

Service users may use the Adoption West Complaints Procedure. All complaints will be thoroughly investigated.