**Mind in Camden**

**Equality Policy**

Mind in Camden’s Equality Policy underpins all its activities. As a charity working for the benefit of vulnerable people at risk of social exclusion, equal opportunity and fairness are fundamental tenets of all that we do. Mind in Camden is committed to combating unfair discrimination in service provision, employment of staff, management of volunteers and use of contractors and suppliers. In providing services for vulnerable adults we have to ensure that people working with them do not present a threat to their well-being.

**The Legal Background**

Our policy incorporates the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and will be revised in response to any future legislation. The Act is based on nine “protected characteristics”:

* Age
* Disability
* Gender reassignment
* Marriage and Civil Partnership
* Pregnancy and maternity
* Race
* Religion or belief
* Sex
* Sexual orientation

The Act outlines the following measures to protect people from discrimination:

**Discrimination**

The Act prohibits unfair discrimination, or less favourable treatment, directly or indirectly on the grounds of a protected characteristic. It also includes not discriminating against people who are associated with someone with a protected characteristic e.g. a carer and it applies to discrimination by perception i.e. when people are treated unfavourably based on assumption of a protected characteristic that they do not have.

**Victimisation**

People who bring a complaint about discrimination either on their own or other people’s behalf only have to demonstrate that they have been treated badly and will not have to prove that their treatment was less favourable as under previous legislation.

**Positive action**

Positive action is allowed to help a group of people with protected characteristics who might be disadvantaged, under-represented or have different needs from the population as a whole. Positive action is voluntary and not compulsory. People with disabilities and transsexual people can lawfully be treated more favourably.

**Equality Practice**

**Responsibilities**

The policy will be a priority for the organisation. Whilst everyone takes responsibility for their own conduct, the Management Team will take overall responsibility for the policy’s implementation.

As an employer, Mind in Camden is responsible for actions taken by its employees and for anyone else carrying out work on its behalf including volunteers, agency staff, sessional workers, contractors and suppliers. Managers will ensure that staff, service users and anyone else engaged in paid or unpaid work are aware of the standard of behaviour expected.

**Communication**

Equal opportunities values will be communicated clearly to everyone who participates in Mind in Camden throughout their time here, through written information, instruction and general behaviour.

**Service Provision**

Mind in Camden’s services are for the benefit of people with mental health issues. We are committed to providing a service with equality of access to activities and facilities and to ensure that service users do not suffer unfair discrimination, harassment or victimisation from any source within our remit. We take positive action to encourage participation from under-represented groups using our services, for example, women and people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Service users have access to a complaints procedure to address issues that arise and there are mechanisms to help them to influence the running of the service e.g. through community meetings.

**Employment**

Commitment to equal opportunity in recruitment is achieved through a policy of open recruitment, varied recruitment panels and positive action for people with disabilities. There is no unfavourable discrimination in relation to terms and conditions of employment and all staff have access to training opportunities.

**Volunteers**

Apart from fulfilling the necessary safeguarding checks, volunteer applications are welcome from all sections of society. Volunteers are given training and support to fulfil their particular role.

**Monitoring and Review**

Management Team are responsible for regularly monitoring, reviewing and reporting on the policy to Management Committee, and for drawing up action plans to address any inequalities or unlawful discrimination found. Monitoring information will be treated anonymously, confidentially and in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

**Breaches**

Any breaches of the policy will be treated as a serious misdemeanour and dealt with according to the relevant procedures: the disciplinary procedure for staff; volunteers may be asked to leave; use of contractors may be discontinued, and service users may be banned from using the service. If someone feels they have been discriminated against, they should raise the matter as soon as possible; staff by using the grievance procedure, and volunteers and service users the complaints procedure.

**Equality Action Plan – summary**

In 2012 we created our first equality action plan which has been reviewed annually and new plans developed. However, we have been committed to equality for many years for example, we have:

* Created a new Visions, Values and Mission statement and Strategic Plan in 2012 underpinned by a commitment to address inequality and discrimination where we can.
* Involved service users in the project design and on-going development of the day service
* Encouraged service users to become volunteers and work towards qualifications e.g. City & Guilds
* Run services for people who have been traditionally discriminated against, for example, groups for black and minority ethnic groups and women.
* Consulted service users, volunteers and staff on policy development and the creation of business and strategic plans
* Involved service users in recruitment panels
* Have service user members on our Management Committee
* Developed links with black and minority ethnic community groups
* Conducted research in 2012 into why people from BME backgrounds were not accessing the Minor Tranquilliser Service.
* Been flexible and adaptable with staff who have disabilities e.g. through Access to Work
* provided work experience placements for disadvantaged people
* Made reasonable adjustments to support service users, staff and volunteers, for example, Braille signs at our Crossfield centre; modified computers, and provided other equipment.
* Been accredited by: Investors in People (a quality mark for staff and volunteer management); the Charity Commission (for excellence in charity management) and the Job Centre’s two ticks symbol (recognition of our approach to disability awareness).
* Given extra supervision support for those who self-define as having mental health issues
* Developed work around spirituality: the Voice Collective project has been making more links with community faith groups and the paranoia training includes spirituality training. In 2012, eight staff attended the Intervoice International Congress which had spirituality as one of its themes. We made provision for a Muslim volunteer to say prayers in a private space during her volunteering sessions.
* Run training courses on spirituality and hearing voices, and on cultural perspectives and voice hearing

**Review of Equality Action Plan 2012-13**

* Obtain some posters/literature promoting a welcoming attitude e.g. for LGBT people – *we are currently working on developing some booklets within our Voice Collective project for LGBT people and making links with relevant organisations.*
* Put the Equality Action plan and an electronic EO suggestion box on the new website *– the new website has recently been launched and these will be added.*

**Review of Equality Action Plan for 2013-14**

* Write a new policy on disability - *We have written a new policy on disability that was agreed by Committee in July 2013*
* Continue to develop links with LGBT groups - *Voice Collective has written a booklet about LGBT and made links with other organisations*
* Evaluate the EO suggestion box on the website - *We discussed the purpose and value of having a suggestion box on the website and decided it was not the best forum for raising issues*

**Equality Action Plan for 2014-15**

* Create a new LGBT group in the Phoenix service *– we had some preliminary discussions with a service user/volunteer and developed some plans to launch*
* Create links with faith groups and include spirituality within the Phoenix service and Voice Collective – *we have a prayer group in the Phoenix service and we have had groups discussing multi faith issues. We also do a lot of work around beliefs, including running workshops such as ‘Philosophy for life’.*
* Aim to encourage a wider age range of users to the service including hosting a service for young mums – *we provide a free room for Cocoon to meet on Saturday mornings. This is a project for mums who are experiencing post-natal depression*
* Continue to broaden our work with different nationalities e.g. the Balkan project; Voice Collective work in Ireland *– this work continued during the year, mainly within the Hearing Voices project*

**Equality Action Plan for 2015-16**

* To review the way we collect and use equality monitoring information from service users and to make sure what we collect is consistent across the organisation
* To continue to explore how to improve our links with groups such as the local Bangladeshi community
* To review our catering arrangements e.g. to consider whether to use halal meat