**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, equality and fairness are fundamental tenets of our work.  By providing services for people who may be vulnerable, it is our responsibility to ensure that anyone working or volunteering for, or on behalf of, Mind in Camden does not present a threat to their well-being. Similarly, people who work or volunteer for us should also enjoy a positive, affirming environment.

Whilst much has been done in the public arena to raise mental health awareness, we still find that people who experience mental ill-health may encounter misunderstanding and social challenges. Challenging discrimination and stigmatisation when we see it, both within our organisation and the wider community, is fundamental to Mind in Camden’s ethos.  Our history shows that we have consistently taken positive steps to develop projects in new areas of work intended to redress discrimination, stigmatisation and the social exclusion of these vulnerable people in our community. Discovering what these new areas are comes from our ethos of listening, sharing and learning.

**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**

Equality 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 women and participation from under-represented groups using our services, for example, 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. People who feel that they have been discriminated against should raise the matter as soon as possible; staff by using the grievance procedure, and volunteers and service users the complaints procedure.