

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY AND PROCEDURES (EOP)

This policy and procedure arises from:

Adoption Support Agencies National Minimum Standards (England) Care Standards Act 2000 (Standard 12 – Fair and Competent Employer)

1 INTRODUCTION

Adoption Support Agency of Registered Therapists (ASART) is committed to demonstrating respect for human rights. We believe that diversity benefits and adds value to ASART's services. Having a diverse workforce better represents the people we serve. Differences in culture and range of different life experiences bring creativity, vitality and greater innovation to the organisation.

ASART Associates will be encouraged and supported to take personal ownership and responsibility for full implementation of the EOP.

We shall use all methods to ensure that all:

- Associates experience fairness and equity of treatment in the workplace.
- Service users receive fair and equal access to ASART's services.
- Associates and service users are treated with dignity and respect.

ASART will be active in removing barriers that can prevent certain groups obtaining:

- A position within ASART
- Access to ASART's services

It is ASART's Policy that everyone should be treated fairly and without discrimination in relation to their human rights regardless of sex, race, colour, age, disability, sexuality, language, HIV status, religion, birth or other status.

ASART has adopted the Stephen Lawrence inquiry definition of Institutionalised Racism. ASART will apply this definition in the widest sense, extending it beyond racism to all individuals, when working to remove discrimination on any grounds.

ASART will not tolerate processes, attitudes and behaviour that amount to discrimination, including harassment, victimisation and bullying through prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping. This extends to behaviour which perpetuates stereotyping: i.e. one race or group of people having superiority over that of another group.

Furthermore, the Race Relations Act 1976 gives public authorities a general duty to promote race equality as local authorities subscribe to our services we too share in this duty of care to service users and Associates. It is therefore

ASART's responsibility to ensure that external trainers, consultants, therapists, paid and voluntary Associates adheres to this policy.

2 MONITORING

At the core of ASART's Equal Opportunities Policy (EOP) is our monitoring procedure which is the collection, storage and analysis of data about Associates and service user's ethnic background. It is a bench mark of good practice used to assess the effectiveness of our Equal Opportunities Policy and for no other purpose. Ongoing monitoring and regular analysis of such records provides the basis for appropriate action to eliminate unlawful direct and indirect discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity.

In the area of recruitment, monitoring enables us to examine the general make-up of our workforce and allows us to analyse how our personnel practices impact on different minority groups.

In service delivery, monitoring can tell us which groups are using our service, and how satisfied they are with them. ASART as an organisation can then consider ways of reaching underrepresented groups and make sure that our services are relevant to their needs and provided fairly. The services of translators/interpreters will be employed where necessary. If people have special requirements we will make every effort to meet their needs ourselves or find alternative appropriate help. Furthermore, an effective monitoring procedure can also serve to reinforce our reputation as a fair provider of services.

Thus monitoring allows us to:

- Highlight possible inequalities
- Investigate their underlying causes; and
- Remove any unfairness or disadvantage.

3 DEFINITIONS

3.1 The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry definition of Institutionalised Racism:

"...the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin." As stated above, this definition has been extended beyond racism to all individuals, when working to remove discrimination on any grounds.

3.2 Direct & Indirect-discrimination as defined under the Race Relation (Amendment) Act 2000

Discrimination may be direct or indirect or it may take the form of victimisation.

Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another on racial grounds. This may take the form of: refusing a service to people from a specific ethnic minority group; ignoring racial harassment of Associates; assuming that all black mental health service users/adolescents/offenders are aggressive and therefore subjecting them to tighter controls than their white counterparts.

Indirect discrimination occurs when a rule is applied equally to everyone but it can be met by a considerably smaller proportion of people from a particular racial group; the rule is to their disadvantage; and it cannot be justified on non-racial grounds.

Victimisation occurs when a person is disadvantaged because they have made a complaint of racial discrimination; or are thought to have done so; or because they have supported someone else who has made a complaint of racial discrimination.

As with the Stephen Lawrence definition of Institutionalised Racism, ASART has extended the definition of direct, indirect discrimination and victimisation beyond race to incorporate all individuals in our pursuit of zero tolerance of discrimination on any grounds.

4 COMMITMENT

ASART realises that to make all of the above a part of our culture, we must all be provided with the necessary support and training to enable us to effectively challenge oppressive practice.

Appropriate action will be taken to redress the effects of any policy or procedure that in anyway contradicts the EOP.

Development activities incorporating human rights and equalities issues will be provided to bring about greater awareness in these areas for all Associates.

We will all work towards ensuring that the working environment is free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

It will be made clear through policy and practice that discrimination is unacceptable and will be treated as a serious, disciplinary offence.

Any complaints of discrimination including harassment, victimisation and bullying will be dealt with promptly and thoroughly.

Fairness and equity of treatment will be ensured in all our dealings with each other.

Policies and procedures will be disseminated to all Associates.

Effective monitoring will be employed so that management can take any necessary action and inform future policy and procedures.

Associates training will be provided to make Associates aware of the issues regarding equal opportunities and how it relates to their work.

5 RECRUITMENT AND PROMOTION OF ASSOCIATES

The recruitment process will take into account the need to attract members from underrepresented groups, primarily through its selection of advertisement media.

Individuals will be assessed purely on merit, performance and potential and without regard to stereotypes and assumptions.

Reasonable adjustments will be made to equipment provided for Associates and service users with disabilities to ensure equality of access to therapeutic work and services. In addition, should an Associate become disabled in the course of their work, every effort will be made through reasonable adjustment, retraining or redeployment to enable them to remain a member of ASART.

Recruitment literature will not imply that there is a preference for one group of applicants as against another unless there is a genuine occupational requirement as provided under the Race Relations Act 1976 section 29

The use of language in advertisements, person specification job description and membership requirements will be clear and concise. This will enable potential applicants to realistically assess their suitability for a position.

6 EXPECTATIONS

All Associates will be expected to treat everyone fairly, equitably and with respect. They will not use discriminatory practices that would result in individuals or groups being overlooked or excluded.

We shall know that we have succeeded when we all work in an environment where we all feel valued and where we believe that we are treated fairly and with dignity and respect.

7 EQUALITY IN SERVICE PROVISION

- All Associates must treat service users fairly, equitably and with respect.
- Training must equip ASART Associates with the skills to promote equality in service provision.
- ASART will explore the implications of the key decisions taken to ensure equality.

- Service users will be consulted with regards to service provision. Services will be monitored through annual user evaluations to determine the effectiveness of its services for addressing the needs of its ethnically diverse service users, and to inform future policies and services.
- According to its complaints procedure, Associates will rigorously act upon complaints in a timely manner and determine whether there are any underlying equality issues.
- Associates will use complaints to raise awareness of equality issues.
- Associates will implement changes that any complaints and investigation show to be appropriate.
- Associates will take appropriate action against any service user who harasses or acts in a discriminatory manner towards other service users or ASART Associates.

