

Service Six

Equal Opportunities & Diversity



Date: April 2017

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Policy Title: Equal Opportunities & Diversity

What this policy covers

Service Six recognises the benefits of a diverse workforce and is committed to providing a working environment that is free from discrimination.

Service Six will seek to promote the principles of equality and diversity in all its dealings with employees, workers, job applicants, clients, customers, suppliers, contractors, recruitment agencies and the public.

All employees and those who act on Service Six's behalf are required to adhere to this policy when undertaking their duties or when representing Service Six in any other guise.

Your entitlements and responsibilities

Service Six believes that the diversity of all people is an asset and that:

Discrimination against any person or group is morally and legally unjustifiable, and; that each member of the community as a citizen, service user, and service provider or as an employee of Service Six is entitled to expect fair and equal treatment at all times.

We aim to:

- provide accessible services that meet people's needs, regardless of background and lifestyle and delivered in a way that is efficient, effective and of an excellent quality;
- provide services that are delivered by a workforce that reflects the communities that we serve and at all levels of staff and management;
- ensure that we maintain and deliver fair and equal recruitment policies and practices. Providing a work environment that is safe, accessible, free from harassment and discrimination. A place where individuals values, beliefs, identity and cultures are respected;
- add value to people's lives, ensuring that all citizens have the opportunity to reach their full potential by reducing inequality and social exclusion;
- ensure proportionate take up of our services by all communities in the county;
- ensure fair and equal treatment for service users and employees.

CORE PRINCIPLES

Equity and Social Justice

Being fair, reasonable and just in all areas and activities, service delivery, staff recruitment and development; decision making, community development and media relations.

Equality

To recognise and challenge inequality in all of its forms and to take steps to eliminate disadvantage, discrimination and deprivation.

Inclusion and Partnership

To work with partners in the statutory, voluntary, and private sectors

To work in partnership with communities of interest ensuring there is meaningful involvement and influence in decision making and service development.

Shared responsibility

To ensure personnel at all levels and in all services are clear about their individual and collective responsibility to proactively address inequality, challenge discrimination, promote diversity and social inclusion and work towards equality for all.

Legal responsibilities

We will abide by our legal obligations and duties including those defined under the following legislation:

- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Race Relations Act 1976 as amended (2000)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010

And will work within guidance and Codes of Practice from the:

- Commission for Racial Equality
- Equal Opportunities Commission
- Disability Rights Commission

The Charity will;

Our Equal Opportunities Statement commits us to:

- Improving equalities practice at all levels;
- Developing equalities objectives and targets within all service areas which lead to measurable improvements;
- Developing and promoting anti-discrimination policies and practice at all levels and in all of our involvement and interaction with the public;
- Comply fully with our legal obligations under equality laws and guidance.

Our Equality Statement aims to:

- Ensure that our services are developed and delivered so that they meet the needs of all young people, including those at risk of social exclusion;
- Ensure that services are accessible to all who need them and that staff and managers are trained to understand how to make this happen;
- Ensure that as far as possible, we enable people to fully participate in consultation over the development, planning and delivery of services;
- Ensure that we work effectively with partners to develop and deliver on equality, inclusion and diversity objectives;
- Ensure that we respond quickly to legislation and national policy initiatives and guidance on anti-discrimination measures and practice;
- Ensure that we effectively monitor the implementation of our action plan in achieving our goals;
- Ensure that we actively work towards eliminating barriers in our own systems and Procedures;

- Ensure that our work is sustainable in its outcomes and impact

Responsibilities of all working for or in the Charity:

- All working in or for the Charity will cooperate fully with this equal opportunities policy;
- Not to discriminate;
- Not to attempt to encourage others to discriminate;
- Not to physically or psychologically harass, abuse or intimidate others;
- To raise awareness with a Manager of the Charity about any act of discrimination

Responsibilities of the service users:

- All service users will cooperate fully with this equal opportunities policy;
- Not to discriminate;
- Not to attempt to encourage others to discriminate;
- Not to physically or psychologically harass, abuse or intimidate others;
- To raise awareness with a member of staff or Manager about any act of discrimination and where necessary refer to the Charity's grievance procedure as appropriate;
- Where the grievance procedure is fully utilised and the service user is still unsatisfied with the outcome/s the service user can choose to approach the Charity's commissioning bodies and /or in circumstances whereby the service user is a client within the therapeutic services; the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy

PROCEDURES TO ADDRESS ACCESSIBILITY LIMITATIONS

1. POLICY

Service Six's commitment to equal opportunities is expressed in our flexibility of approach and tailoring of interventions to client need. We endeavour to match the right practitioner (according to requirements of skills, specializations, language spoken, etc.) and the right mode of intervention with the clients' needs.

At the initial contact and assessment stage, questions are aimed at facilitating access to the service by identifying specific client needs. Users are asked standard questions to identify their ethnic origin and to specify whether they have any disabilities or any other access issues. This informs managers in arranging suitable support, and is recorded to enable an analysis of access needs which may emerge over time and inform the further development of services offered.

Therapeutic Services

Following assessment of therapeutic needs an agreement can be reached about the most appropriate service to be offered (e.g. individual, group, couples, family counselling). Sometimes there is a need to be flexible and creative in order to provide a service which can best meet the client's specific needs. In such cases we seek to negotiate with the client how best we can help to meet their needs with the resources available to us, at times this may involve liaison with other agencies to explore further support.

Where it is evident that the service cannot meet the client's therapeutic needs, the assessor will signpost appropriately to local or national sources of help and support.

In areas where there are limits to accessibility to Service Six's services, the following strategies are designed to address some of these:

2. INITIAL CONTACT

Most potential clients make initial contact to access our services by telephone or email. For clients unable to use the telephone effectively, there is a facility to make contact by email and the address is provided on our website, which is included on publicity materials.

Where a client is unable to use the telephone, all arrangements can be made by email or by post. The BT Type-talk service can be used where a client may have a hearing impairment; separate procedures are provided for staff conducting assessments to follow in this event.

3. PHYSICAL BARRIERS

Where all attempts to provide convenient face to face suitable counselling have failed (including exploring alternative locations), we may be able to offer another alternative, such as telephone counselling.

In our experience, telephone counselling has a proven record of success; offering convenience in many respects and enabling a wide range of clients to access services who would otherwise be unable to do so.

4. ARRANGEMENTS OF SESSIONS

Service Six's standard policies regarding arrangements of sessions and procedures following cancellations and DNA's can be waived where the need warrants it. In such cases practitioners are encouraged to consult with managers to ensure clients are not unfairly discriminated against and to explore client need and negotiate agreed practices. This includes clients whose physical health may impact on their ability to attend sessions as arranged.

5. MINORITY GROUPS

Occasionally requests are made for a counsellor from a particular minority group e.g. ethnic group or specific sexual orientation. Whilst we try to accommodate where possible, as an alternative, we encourage clients to consider seeing a practitioner who may be experienced in working with the relevant issues.

Where a client requests a non-English speaking counsellor, we try to accommodate where possible. This may involve a delay in finding a suitable face to face counsellor or an alternative offer of telephone counselling may be necessary.

Special arrangements may be possible, including use of translators although this needs to be negotiated in each case and separate policies and procedures apply to such work.

6. WEBSITE INFORMATION

Service Six's website is continually redesigned to help highlight and address accessibility issues. It will provide access to online information for users in formats conforming with equality of access guidelines and legislation. It is intended this will greatly supplement the services we provide and make information more widely accessible to potential service users.

Access information and strategies will also be published on this site, with opportunities for feedback from clients, potential users and anyone accessing the site.

