

Welwyn Hatfield Women's Refuge and Support Services Equality and Diversity Policy

Introduction and Scope

Welwyn Hatfield Women's Refuge and Support Services (hereafter referred to as WHWR) is a charity that supports women and children who have experienced domestic violence or abuse. Our aim is to enable women and children using services to take control of their lives and to develop their existing and latent talents, by recognising their cultural, physical, social and emotional needs. Our commitment to fair treatment, valuing diversity and promoting equal opportunities are fundamental to the work of WHWR.

This Equality and Diversity Policy applies to all aspects of WHWR's services, facilities and activities, and to everyone who is involved with WHWR. Consistent with the Equality Act 2010 all employment, voluntary and Trustee positions are open only to women. This Policy is supported by others including the Transgender Policy and the Policy on Criminal Records.

Policy

WHWR will take all steps necessary to meet our legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation.

All prospective, current and previous service users, employees, volunteers and Trustees will be treated lawfully and fairly regardless of their 'protected characteristics' of age, disability, gender reassignment, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or beliefs. We will also treat everyone fairly regardless of their socio-economic status. Any unlawful direct discrimination based on a person's actual or perceived protected characteristics, or on the protected characteristics of their associates, is prohibited.

We will ensure our policies, rules and requirements are objectively justified and will keep these under review to prevent any unlawful indirect discrimination. We will seek to assess the equality impact of WHWR's work in order to identify how we can further promote equality.

We seek to promote an inclusive ethos in which everyone is treated with dignity and respect. All forms of harassment or bullying, whether verbal, physical, sexual, emotional or virtual, are unacceptable and are prohibited. This includes behaviours that create a hostile, offensive or humiliating environment as well as unwanted advances, threats or promises made either with the intention of, or having the effect of, intimidating or undermining another person's wellbeing and safety.

WHWR takes very seriously any harassment of employees by a third party during the course of employment and is committed to taking such steps as are reasonably practicable to prevent third party harassment from occurring.

WHWR will anticipate the needs of disabled people when planning and delivering services and activities. We will make reasonable adjustments to enable disabled people to use our services, participate in activities and work for WHWR as staff, volunteers or Trustees. Disabled applicants and employees, volunteers and Trustees should inform WHWR so we can agree any reasonable adjustments to the selection process, their role, or their environment, which will help to overcome the effects of the disability.

We will work towards providing inclusive services that meet the needs of all service users and in which everyone is respected and valued. For this reason support planning will usually be led by the woman's needs as she perceives them. We actively encourage women and their children to participate in the decision making process regarding the day to day running of WHWR's accommodation through e.g. house meetings and children's meetings. To help us assess the quality of our services and the benefits to women and their children we will use relevant data, e.g. the monitoring reports prepared for our funders, and users' feedback. The outcomes will be made known to the Board.

As part of ensuring that our services reflect and meet the diverse needs of women WHWR aims to recruit staff, volunteers and Trustees from all sections of the community. We advertise all employment vacancies and also opportunities for volunteering and joining the Board. We will continue to seek applications from women who are currently-under-represented. All stages of application and selection will be monitored and reported to the Board of Trustees.

Whilst the Board of Trustees is responsible for this Policy it is the personal responsibility of all employees, volunteers and Trustees to behave lawfully and fairly, to promote good practice and challenge any discrimination or harassment.

Equal opportunities training is mandatory for all staff, volunteers and Trustees as is compliance with this Policy.

WHWR is committed to the success of this Policy. Any complaints of breaches of our Policy should be made using the relevant complaints or grievance procedure. Victimisation of a person for making, or for supporting, a complaint of discrimination, harassment or whistleblowing is prohibited. All complaints will be taken seriously and investigated fully. Evidence of a breach of this policy and/ or unlawful behaviour will be dealt with promptly and appropriately, using the disciplinary procedures and sanctions as necessary.

Policy reference	TBC
Author	P&P Sub Group
Approved by the Board	06/04/2016
Review date	04/18