

# **Aberdeen Citizens Advice Bureau**

## **Equality and Diversity Policy**

**Policy Pol 011**

## **1. Introduction**

**1.1** Aberdeen CAB is committed to providing a supportive and inclusive culture for:

- All those who need our services
- Our volunteers
- Our staff and
- Other stakeholders.

We recognise the positive value of diversity, promoting equality and fairness, and challenging discrimination.

We welcome our legal duties not to discriminate as a service provider and an employer. We aim to go beyond the narrow scope of legislative compliance and follow best practice, making equality, fairness and diversity a fundamental part of all our activities. This may be dependant on availability of resources.

We recognise people with different backgrounds, skills, attitudes and experiences bring fresh ideas and perceptions, and we wish to encourage and harness these differences to make our services more relevant and approachable.

**1.2** Aberdeen CAB will not discriminate or tolerate discriminatory behaviour on the grounds of race, colour, gender, gender identity (transgender), disability, nationality, national or ethnic origin, religion or belief, marital / partnership or family status, sexual orientation, age, trade union membership, or any social characteristic.

## **2. Scope**

**2.1** This policy relates to all aspects of the work undertaken by Aberdeen CAB including: employment and recruitment and selection, meeting clients' needs and service delivery, dealing with volunteers, suppliers, supporters and other associated third parties.

## **3. Legal obligations**

**3.1** In valuing diversity, Aberdeen CAB aims, wherever resources allow, to go beyond the legal minimum regarding equality. Currently legislation and associated codes of practice are taken into account, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Equality Pay Act 1970
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Employment Rights Act 1996
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Work and Families Act 2006
- Civil Partnership Act 2004 (as amended)
- The employment Equal Treatment Framework Directive 2000 (as amended)

## **4. Meeting clients' needs**

**4.1** We are committed to treating all clients equally and fairly and to not discriminating unlawfully against them. We will also, wherever possible, take steps to promote equal opportunity. We will strive to ensure that clients:

- Are able to access the service in ways that suit them
- Are given help that is relevant to their problem and situation
- Are treated fairly, with dignity and respect, and without discrimination
- Have their needs listened to, and met whenever possible.

**4.2** Aberdeen CAB is committed to meeting the diverse needs of clients. We will take steps to identify the needs of clients in our community and develop policies and procedures setting out how we will meet clients' needs and for ensuring the services we provide are accessible to all. We will take account, in particular, the needs of clients with a disability (including mental health problems) and clients who are unable to communicate effectively in English. We will consider whether particular groups are predominant within our client base and devise appropriate policies / procedures to meet their needs.

## **5. Employment (paid staff)**

### **5.1 General statement**

As an employer, Aberdeen CAB will treat all employees and job applicants equally and fairly and not unlawfully discriminate against them. This will, for example, include arrangements for recruitment and selection, terms and conditions of employment, access to training opportunities, access to promotions and transfers, grievance and disciplinary processes, selections for redundancy, references and any other employment related activities.

### **5.2 Recruitment and selection**

We recognize the benefits of having a diverse workforce and will take steps to ensure that:

- We endeavour to recruit from the widest pool of qualified candidates practicable
- Employment opportunities are open and accessible to all on the basis of their individual qualities and personal merit
- Where practicable, positive action measures are taken to attract applicants from all sections of society and especially from those under-represented in the workforce
- Selection criteria and processes do not unlawfully discriminate
- Where appropriate and necessary lawful exemption (genuine occupation requirements) will be used to recruit suitable staff to meet the special needs of particular groups
- Any third parties acting for Aberdeen CAB in respect of employment are made aware of the requirements not to discriminate and act accordingly.

### **5.3 Training and development**

We will ensure that all employees are encouraged to achieve their full potential. Selection for all training and career development opportunities will be purely on the basis of merit. Appraisals of performance will be conducted objectively and on time.

### **5.4 Meeting individual needs**

Aberdeen CAB will do its utmost (within organizational resources and other constraints) to meet the needs of individuals at work, for example:

- Recognising caring and domestic responsibilities
- Working patterns – wherever possible training courses and meetings will be planned to allow attendance by staff working non-standard hours / working patterns
- Disability – reasonable adjustments will be made where necessary to remove barriers and enable disabled staff to carry out their roles
- Religious practices – time off and suitable facilities for prayer will be provided wherever possible. Requests for annual leave to celebrate religious festivals will be accommodated wherever possible.

## **6. Volunteers**

### **6.1 General statement**

Volunteers contribute significantly to the diversity of the organization. They can expect to be treated fairly, with dignity and respect, and without discrimination. They are likewise expected to treat others fairly, with dignity and respect, and without discrimination.

## **7. Implementing the policy**

### **7.1 Responsibilities**

#### **7.1.1 All staff**

At all levels of the organisation staff are expected to have read and understood this policy, to ensure they behave in accordance with its principles and requirements, to encourage the same level of behaviour in colleagues and immediately report any breaches witnessed, whenever it is reasonable for them to do so.

#### **7.1.2 All managers**

Managers are responsible for promoting this policy and ensuring it is understood and complied with by staff in their area, dealing with breaches and complaints (whether reported or not) seriously, speedily, sensitively and confidentially and contributing ideas for the advancement of diversity principles within the organisation. Managers are expected to be proactive in identifying circumstances in which elements of the policy can benefit individual volunteers, and encourage and support volunteers in making use of such benefits.

#### **7.1.3 All volunteers**

At all levels of the organisation, including trustees, volunteers are expected to have read and understood this policy, to ensure that they behave in accordance with its principles and requirements.

### **7.2 Conduct and general standards of behaviour**

All staff including volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and considerate manner at all times. Aberdeen CAB will not tolerate behaviour such as:

- Rudeness
- Isolating, ignoring or refusing to work with certain people
- Telling offensive jokes or name calling

- Displaying offensive material such as pornography or sexist / racist cartoons, or the distribution of such material via email / text message or any other format
- Any other forms of harassment and victimisation.

Aberdeen CAB encourages staff to resolve misunderstandings and problems informally wherever possible, depending on the circumstances. However, whether dealt with informally or formally, it is important for staff who may have caused offence to understand that it is no defence to say that they did not intend to do so, or to blame individuals for being over sensitive. It is the impact of the behaviour, rather than the intent, that counts, and that should shape the solution found both to the immediate problem and to preventing further similar problems in the future.

### **7.3 Complaints of discrimination**

Aberdeen CAB will treat seriously all complaints of unlawful discrimination on any grounds made by employees, volunteers, clients or other third parties and will take action where appropriate.

All complaints will be investigated in accordance with the organisation's grievance or complaints procedure and the complainant will be informed of the outcome in line with these procedures.

We will also monitor the number and outcomes of complaints of discrimination made by staff, volunteers, clients and other third parties.

### **8. Monitoring**

Aberdeen CAB will monitor and record equal opportunities information about staff and volunteers.

We will store equal opportunities data as confidential personal data and restrict access to this information. Equal opportunities information will be used exclusively for the purposes of equal opportunities monitoring and will have no bearing on opportunities or benefits.

We will monitor all elements of:

- Recruitment and selection processes
- Promotion and transfer
- Training
- Terms and conditions of employment
- Take up of benefits (e.g. flexible working requests)
- Grievance and disciplinary procedures
- Resignations, redundancies and dismissals
- Complaints and performance management procedures.

### **9. Review**

This policy will be reviewed not less than once a year or more regularly if we identify any non-compliance or problem or in the light of emerging legislation that could impact on this policy.