



OFF THE RECORD TWICKENHAM

Equal Opportunities/Diversity Policy

PRINCIPLES AND AIM

Off the Record (OTR) welcomes young people of all races, social or economic status, ethnicities, genders, abilities, religions, and sexual orientation. You will find a safe space free from discrimination, patronisation or harassment.

OTR embraces the diversity of its workforce and is dedicated to creating a working environment in which diversity, amongst both staff and service users, makes a positive contribution to achieving our charity's goals.

Our Vision and Values Statement reinforces our emphasis on valuing fairness, diversity and equal opportunities, and it is expected that these beliefs will underpin all areas of our work. Our Equal Opportunities/Diversity Policy influences all other relevant OTR policies such as our Recruitment Policy, Disciplinary Policy and our Staff Contracts. In addition:

1. OTR believes that all have the right of access to our service regardless of race, colour, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability, parental or marital status and age (though for some of our services there is a specific age range as we are a youth agency). This applies to all staff and service users.
2. By implementing this policy in all areas of OTR's work, we aim to ensure that no-one involved with this service, be they Trustee/Director, paid worker, volunteer, partner agency or service user, receives less favourable treatment on the grounds stated above.
3. We acknowledge that discrimination does take place in society and we commit ourselves to take positive action to ensure that this agency promotes equality of opportunity for all and respects and encourages diversity.

Legislation

Both direct and unjustifiable indirect discrimination are unlawful under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (amended in 1986), the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995:

1. **Direct discrimination** takes place when a person is treated less favourably than others due to their race, religion, colour, national or ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, parental or marital status and age, where these are not relevant or justifiable.
2. **Indirect discrimination** occurs where conditions or requirements are applied to all which adversely affects one group more than another.
3. **Harassment** is when an employee discriminates against another employee by subjecting them to a 'detriment', which means putting someone at a disadvantage in the nature or quality of their employment.
4. **Victimization** is when a person has made a complaint or allegation of discrimination or gives evidence or information, and is then treated less favourably than others.

Positive Action and Genuine Occupational Qualifications

OTR is committed to do all in its power to make the service available to all sections of our community. If this necessitates working in a different way to bring the service to groups which are disadvantaged within the community then that course will be adopted.

The SDA and RRA provide that in certain jobs a person's race or sex can be a genuine occupational qualification (GOQ) for that job; e.g. where a person of a particular sex is needed to preserve decency or privacy, or where providing personal services to promote the welfare of a specific racial group is best provided by a person of that racial group (RRA).

While positive discrimination is unlawful, there are conditions in which limited positive action in respect of recruitment campaigns and training for employees is permitted, to encourage employment where proportionately low numbers of a particular sex or race are currently represented amongst the staff.

PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES TO ENSURE DIVERSITY

Recruitment and Selection

OTR recognises the benefits of drawing on the skills of creative and talented individuals from a wide range of backgrounds that will play their part in making the organisation successful.

OTR will aim to ensure that job applicants will not receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origins, religion, gender, disability, sexuality, age, marital status, political beliefs or any other factor that is irrelevant to the selection process.

Induction, Training and Development

OTR believes that all staff should have access to appropriate induction and development opportunities in order to carry out their jobs successfully and to be able to contribute as widely as possible to the positive achievements of the organisation. The provision of induction, training and development will be made transparent and fair to all staff. OTR will:

- Promote and explain the Equal Opportunities/Diversity Policy and Procedures to staff when they join the organisation
- Provide information and training to all staff to promote OTR's commitment to equality and diversity
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the training and development opportunities that are open to them and are encouraged to develop themselves
- Monitor training and development activities to ensure equality of access across all staff groups
- Recognise an understanding of, and commitment to, diversity as a specific competence
- Ensure that development and performance management activities such as appraisal are transparent and based on competence.

Employment Terms and Conditions

OTR will offer employment terms and conditions that reflect current legislation and good practice. It will specifically:

- Use agreed salary scales as the basis of its reward scheme for staff
- Appoint staff within an agreed framework of terms and conditions
- Make staff aware of the policies which encourage flexible ways of working
- Consider new ways to promote flexible ways of working and work/life balance
- Be aware at all times of equality and diversity and the range of staff needs when designing and introducing new terms and conditions.

Bullying, Harassment and Grievances

Staff have a right to work in an environment free from prejudice and harassment. Any employee who feels they have been treated unequally will be taken seriously and may use the Grievance Procedure. Any staff found to have harassed or abused an employee will be disciplined.

THE ROLE OF EMPLOYEES

All OTR employees have a responsibility to ensure that the policy is put into practice at all times and have a responsibility to:

- Understand the value and benefits of diversity:
- Promote equality of opportunity and avoid discrimination:
- Attend OTR's relevant training courses;
- Familiarise themselves with this policy, follow it, and ensure that any staff for whom they are responsible do so as well;
- Draw to the attention of their manager any instances of apparent discrimination or any perceived problem in relation to OTR's working practices in relation to diversity;
- Work in a way which demonstrates a commitment to diversity and get involved in activities that support equality

THE ROLE OF MANAGERS

In addition to the role that all employees have in relation to diversity at OTR, managers have particular responsibilities to:

- Ensure that this policy is implemented in the management of staff;

- Promote a professional and positive work environment by ensuring that this policy is put into practice by challenging behaviour, actions or decisions which breach it;
- Raise awareness in diversity, act as role model for others and develop personal skills in order to handle issues relating to dignity at work

SERVICE TO CLIENTS

All staff will undertake to develop a way of working which is sensitive to the client's position as regards race, colour, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability, parental or marital status and age. This will include recognition of the effects of oppression as well as sensitivity to difference.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND MONITORING

Although the overall responsibility for this policy will rest with the Directors, and the responsibility for its implementation and monitoring with the Co-ordinator, all staff, and managers in particular, have a responsibility to be aware of and to uphold these Policies and Procedures. The Policy will be monitored on a yearly basis. Statistics will be kept on an anonymous basis on service users on the basis of sex, age, status, racial or ethnic origin and disability.

CHALLENGES/COMPLAINTS UNDER THIS POLICY

All staff and service users should be treated with dignity and respect at work. All individuals should feel able to challenge issues around diversity as long as the challenge is addressed in an appropriate and constructive way. Mechanisms for reporting breaches of the Equal Opportunities Procedure are the Complaints Procedure (which should be clearly advertised) for clients and service users, and the relevant Grievance Procedure for paid staff and volunteers.

IMPROVEMENTS TO OFF THE RECORD'S PRACTICE

If there is any provision or practice that an individual feels should be altered at OTR they can address this either by approaching the Trustees or Manager. OTR will regularly survey the views of its staff to seek to get their opinions on its approach to diversity and how it can improve.