

## **Equal Opportunities Policy**

### **1 Statement of Policy**

1.1 AdvoCard is committed to the principles of equal opportunities in employment and service delivery and will continue to pursue the elimination of direct and indirect discrimination.

1.2 AdvoCard accepts that in society, individuals and groups have been and continue to be disadvantaged. As a result, AdvoCard asserts its commitment to taking positive steps to redress the balance.

1.3 AdvoCard accepts the statutory requirements laid down in the Race Relations Act 1976 and Amendment Act 2000, Sex Discrimination Act 1975 & 1986 including Gender Reassignment Regulations 1999 Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The Scotland Act 1998, The Employment equality Regulations 2003 The Equality Act 2006 and other related legislation

1.4 The active promotion of this policy is specifically directed at eliminating discrimination against people on the grounds of race, colour, religion, ethnic or national origin, disabilities, history of ill health, gender, age, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy, maternity, paternity, trade union activity, politics, belief, responsibility for dependents, employment status, financial status and criminal history.

1.5 AdvoCard is convinced that it is morally wrong to hinder equality of opportunity and recognises that passive policies will not in themselves provide equality of opportunity. Consequently, AdvoCard will actively promote equality of opportunity within the following framework.

## **2 Implementation**

2.1 The main objectives of the policy are to:

2.1.1 Promote equality of employment opportunities

2.1.2 Ensure that AdvoCard promotes the policy in the form of membership, service delivery, publicity and publications etc

2.1.3 Highlight AdvoCard's commitment to taking positive action to ensure equality of opportunity

2.1.3 Actively encourage applications from people of under-represented groups to become workers (including volunteers and paid employees) and management committee, so that AdvoCard reflects the community in which it works

2.1.4 Apply relevant supportive employment procedures and practices and provide appropriate training programmes

2.2 AdvoCard is committed to an immediate and ongoing programme of action to achieve these objectives, and will make available resources to ensure the full and effective implementation of this policy. This programme of action will be determined on a 12 monthly basis.

## **3 Responsibilities of AdvoCard as an Employer**

3.1 AdvoCard will undertake its responsibilities as an employer by:

3.1.1 Implementing and co-coordinating the policy through the Project Manager.

3.1.2 Reviewing and developing its employment and service delivery procedures and practices with workers and management members

3.1.3 Reviewing and developing training courses and programmes in association with workers and management committee members

3.1.4 Providing guidance and information to workers and management members

3.2 AdvoCard makes the following commitments to ensure effectiveness of the policy:

3.2.1 Consulting on the compliance of the policy with relevant agencies, including trade unions and equalities commissions

- 3.2.2 Co-operating with equalities commissions regarding matters of law
- 3.2.3 Ensuring that its policy is made known to all employees, management committee members and job applicants
- 3.2.4 Providing training and guidance for employees, as appropriate, to ensure that they understand and are able to discharge their responsibilities in law and under AdvoCard's policies
- 3.2.5 Examining and regularly reviewing employment and service delivery procedures and practices with a view to promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating discrimination
- 3.2.6 Regularly monitoring policy implementation and identifying possible areas for corrective action
- 3.2.7 Ensuring that workers' actions in the provision of services are carried out in a non-discriminatory manner in accordance with the terms of this policy
- 3.2.8 Using the positive action provisions of the *Race Relations Act 1976*, *Sex Discrimination Act 1975* and *Disability Discrimination Act 1995*, and all subsequent amendments and related legislation, where appropriate, to ensure equality of opportunity in employment and service delivery

#### **4 Employment Procedures and Practices**

4.1 The following areas will be reviewed and procedures and guidelines developed to ensure that they comply with the principles of AdvoCard's policy:

- 4.1.1 Recruitment and selection (including sources of recruitment, selection, content of application forms, selection criteria, short listing, interviewing)
- 4.1.2 Grievance, disputes and disciplinary procedures (including discrimination, victimisation, harassment)
- 4.1.3 Terms and conditions of employment (including arrangement of hours worked, flexible working, part-time and full-time status, pay grades and structures, arrangements and adaptations to meet specific needs.)

## **5 Recruitment and Selection**

5.1 AdvoCard is committed to awareness of its recruitment reaching the widest labour market and attracting the highest quality and number of candidates to any employment vacancies by:

5.1.1 Taking positive steps to advise under-represented groups of all vacancies and of its Equal Opportunities policy

5.1.2 Simultaneously advertising vacancies internally and externally

5.1.3 Impressing upon those involved in the selection process that it is of crucial importance to the effectiveness of this policy

5.1.4 Endeavouring, through appropriate training, to ensure that those making selection decisions will not discriminate, whether consciously or unconsciously, during the selection process

5.1.5 Carrying out the selection process according to objective, job related criteria

5.1.6 Recording reasons for selection and rejection of candidates so that there is documentary evidence of decision-making

5.1.7 Considering *genuine occupational qualifications and requirements*, where appropriate

5.1.8 Considering recruitment of ex-offenders according to the *Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy*

5.1.9 Ensuring that equal opportunities apply to the retention and promotion of workers

5.2 AdvoCard asserts that, following due consideration to issues outlined, it will recruit based on the merits of candidates

5.3 Where AdvoCard services have a selective criteria attached to them the same will apply.

## **6 Training**

6.1 AdvoCard will ensure that workers and management committee members are trained to implement the Equal Opportunities Policy.

6.2 Training is an important factor leading to Equal Opportunities policy being effective. In the first instance, induction is particularly important to

give new workers and management committee members an understanding of the organisation. When training needs are identified, opportunities will be made available.

6.3 Encouragement will be given to groups or individuals with specific training needs to undertake additional training. Workers involved in implementing this aspect of the policy will be trained, if necessary, in identifying and meeting those needs.

## **7 Responsibilities of AdvoCard Workers**

7.1 Workers acting on behalf of AdvoCard have responsibilities in law and in terms of Advocard policy for assisting in the prevention of discrimination.

7.2.1 Co-operate with measures introduced by AdvoCard to promote equal opportunities and eliminate discrimination

7.2.2 Not discriminate against others directly or indirectly including acts and omissions

7.2.3 Not induce or attempt to induce others to practise discrimination

7.2.4 Bring any suspected discriminatory acts or practices to the attention of management

7.2.5 Not victimise any individuals who have made complaints or have provided information about discrimination

7.2.6 Not harass, abuse or intimidate others on any grounds or otherwise act in a discriminatory manner

7.2.7 Ensure that actions are not undertaken in dealings with members of the public which are discriminatory in terms of this policy

7.2.8 Ensure that all work of AdvoCard reflects a commitment to equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice highlighted in the *Fair Treatment Policy*

7.3 Suspected discriminatory acts or omissions will be viewed seriously and subject to a formal management investigation. Where

discrimination is established, AdvoCard will carry out disciplinary procedures, according to policy, which might include dismissal and the possibility of recourse through the law.

## **8 Monitoring**

8.1 AdvoCard will develop and maintain procedures and systems for monitoring and reviewing the progress of the Equal Opportunities Policy in practice by:

- 8.1.1 Collecting relevant information and statistics on the composition of the workforce, job applicants, service users and management committee, as appropriate, primarily through management-led self classification
- 8.1.2 Ensuring access to monitoring information is otherwise strictly private and confidential, in line with the *Data Protection Policy*

## **9 Review**

9.1 AdvoCard will review the Equal Opportunities Policy annually.

## **10 References to AdvoCard Policies and Procedures**

Data Protection Policy  
Fair Treatment Policy  
Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy  
Recruitment & Selection Policy

Disciplinary Procedure  
Grievance Procedure

Terms and Conditions of Employment

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