

Fair Treatment Policy

1. Introduction

AdvoCard recognises its management, legal and ethical responsibilities to all stakeholders through its commitment to fair treatment and anti-discriminatory practice. AdvoCard is motivated to build positive working relationships to ensure that advocacy is provided by well supported people within an open and sensitive working environment for the benefit of those using our service. AdvoCard expects responsibility for the implementation of this policy to be shared by all.

2. Aims of Policy

2.1 The policy aims to:

- a. promote expected standards of practice
- b. highlight unfair and discriminatory behaviours
- c. develop an anti-discriminatory working culture
- d. identify practical actions

2.2 The policy applies to:

- a. AdvoCard as an employer
- b. AdvoCard employees
- c. AdvoCard volunteers
- d. AdvoCard Management Committee members

2.3 The policy has scope to address unfair treatment concerning:

- a. AdvoCard's business partners and associates
- b. AdvoCard's service users

2.4 AdvoCard will reserve the right to take necessary action against individuals or organisations (identified in 2.2 and 2.3) that practice discrimination, by considering:

- a. disciplinary action

- b. withdrawal of advocacy services
- c. severing financial and business concerns
- d. complaining to employers and national bodies
- e. legal action

3. Fair Treatment

- 3.1 AdvoCard asserts its commitment to all stakeholders to:
- a. promote equality of opportunity
 - b. value individuality and diversity
 - c. comply with anti-discrimination laws
 - d. aspire to ethical practice above and beyond legislation
- 3.2 Stakeholders will commit themselves to:
- a. not making unwanted physical contact and invading personal space
 - b. not intimidating and threatening
 - c. not using abusive communication
 - d. not discriminating on the grounds of prejudice
 - e. not performing or encouraging illegal actions
 - f. not ignoring or colluding with unfair treatment
 - g. actively challenging unfair treatment
 - h. bring unfair treatment to the attention of management
- 3.3 Examples of 'unfair treatment' could be harassment, bullying or victimisation.
- 3.3.1 Examples of harassment could be spreading malicious rumours or unwelcome physical contact.
- 3.3.2 Examples of bullying could be the unfair allocation of blame or public humiliation.
- 3.3.3 Examples of victimisation could be being isolated by others or being picked on or singled out.

4. Resolving Concerns

- 4.1 AdvoCard endeavours to create a positive working culture where employees can feel free to express the challenges they face in

working with diverse people. AdvoCard acknowledges there is a great deal of anxiety around working with equality and diversity issues often intensified by the notion of “political correctness” as a result of significant changes in societies and that people may not feel comfortable talking about some sensitive issues. AdvoCard believes it is important that a person should have the opportunity to express themselves without condemnation; but also that they are sufficiently open-minded to be informed about the issues and challenged about their expressed views in a way that seeks to raise a persons’ awareness of the need for positive language and behaviour. Consideration needs to be given to whether it is an appropriate situation or environment to express personal views.

4.2 Individuals wishing to make a complaint as a result of offence caused by another person will have their complaint dealt with in a serious manner (refer to Complaints Procedure). The Manager will need to investigate the impact upon the offended person and establish whether there was intent to offend. In the first instance, local resolution between people involved should be sought. However, if this is not possible and it is concluded that there was intent to offend, then disciplinary procedures need to be seriously considered with reference to the appropriate Grievance, Disciplinary and Complaints procedures.

4.3 If malice was not intended and offence was caused through ignorance or naivety, then there is still the possibility of considering disciplinary procedures, but this may be more likely to be identified as a learning need. AdvoCard acknowledges that punitive action in the form of disciplinary procedures might lead to a cessation in overt discriminatory behaviours, but believes that this is insufficient to effect a change in the prejudiced attitudes of the person who has caused offence. AdvoCard strives for people to be committed to its anti-discriminatory practice and therefore confirms its duty to undertake to train the person to the standards it wants them to practice. AdvoCard will ensure that training will be provided as an essential part of the induction programme and ongoing development (refer to Equal Opps s.6).

5. Promoting Diversity

5.1 AdvoCard's selection and recruitment procedures will ensure:

- a. Media used to advertise vacancies has the potential to reach a diverse population of applicants (given the restraints of resources)
- b. Diversity of applicants will be quantitatively monitored to provide a way of measuring how successfully AdvoCard is reaching individuals from under-represented groups
- c. Person specifications and scoring criteria used in the selection process will encourage members of the panel to value a wide range of relevant skills gained by applicants through:
 - I. employment; including voluntary work and carer status
 - II. education; including training, lifelong learning and development, international studies
 - III. personal experience
- d. Only candidates who can demonstrate a sound understanding of equal opportunities and anti-discrimination will be considered for recruitment
- e. Part-time work and Job Sharing are considered and that part-time workers are treated according to the same working terms and conditions as full-time workers
- f. Candidates with convictions will be considered with regard to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act and other relevant legislation such as that relating to the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

5.2 AdvoCard is committed to sharing information and experiences responsibly with people and agencies. AdvoCard will engage with equalities groups, use expertise and resources available to reach out to people - and the groups that support them - who are under-represented.

5.3 AdvoCard will ensure people are not excluded because of differences in communication. AdvoCard is committed to facilitating effective communication through:

- a. Interpretation and translation of languages

- b. Braille
- c. Signing
- d. Technology, such as hearing loop
- e. Valuing candidates who have skills in alternative methods of communication
- f. Looking into other viable aids

5.4 AdvoCard's premises are accessible for people with mobility issues. AdvoCard will additionally take all reasonable actions to:

- a. to undertake necessary adaptations to facilitate access for all people to work in and use premises
- b. people who have mobility issues are met in accessible places if AdvoCard's premises are not convenient or suitable
- c. people who have difficulty leaving their home – due to mental health or disability issues – have the opportunity to meet at home (subject to home visiting procedures) or have access to support from AdvoCard to arrange and pay for travel (subject to budget and an assessment of need)

5.5 AdvoCard makes contributions to expenses for childcare in order to encourage parents and carers to access our service and with the hope that any financial impact is minimised.

5.6 AdvoCard will review this policy annually.

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