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# Equal Opportunities and Diversity

**1 Legal Background**

1.1 The Equality Act 2010 (“The Act”) replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act that simplifies and harmonises the law, establishes consistency, and strengthens its provisions in some important ways. The Act protects learners and staff from discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics, which are:

* Age
* Disability
* Gender reassignment
* Pregnancy and maternity
* Race
* Religion or belief
* Sex (gender)
* Sexual orientation

The Act prohibits direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of the above protected characteristics.

1.2 Street Reach operates within the provisions of The Act. Detailed guidance on these is at https://www.gov.uk/equality-act-2010-guidance.

**2 Definitions**

2.1 Discrimination can take one or more of the forms as set out below. Discrimination in any of these forms is unacceptable, regardless of whether there was any intention to discriminate or not.

* Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have (see perception discrimination below), or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic (see discrimination by association below).
* Perception discrimination is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic
* Discrimination by association is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.
* Indirect discrimination can occur when there is a condition, rule, policy or practice in an organisation that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic. Indirect discrimination can be justified if it can be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. Being proportionate means being fair and reasonable, including showing that less discriminatory alternatives to any decision have been considered.
* Discrimination also covers actions which amount to abuse and/or harassment of people or groups of people because, for example, they are a member of a national, racial or ethnic minority group, a woman, a lesbian, a gay man or have a disability.

2.2 Victimisation occurs when a person is treated less favourably or is discriminated against because she/he has pursued or intends to pursue their rights in respect of alleged discrimination.

2.3 Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.

2.4 Institutional racism is the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It manifests itself in processes, attitudes or behaviour that disadvantage people of an ethnic minority.

2.5 A racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person. If the victim doesn’t want to complain, another person may do so.

**3 Statement of Intent**

3.1 Street Reach recognises that many people in our society experience discrimination or lack of opportunity for reasons that are not fair, including, but not limited to, the provisions of The Act. Additional characteristics that are not protected within the Act but which may be recognised by Street Reach include national and ethnic origin, political beliefs, HIV status, marital status, responsibility for dependants, appearance, geographical area, social class, income level or criminal record. This list is not exhaustive.

3.2 Street Reach recognises that equal opportunities must be actively promoted, implemented and monitored. It aims to create a culture that respects and values each other’s differences. It sees these differences as an asset to its work as they improve its ability to meet the needs of those it works with.

3.3 All trustees, staff and volunteers, and all contracted external trainers, facilitators and consultants, are required to support this equality opportunity and diversity policy.

3.4 Street Reach endeavours to ensure that the profile of the Board of Trustees reflects as wide a section of the local population as possible. Trustees’ Indemnity Insurance protects trustees regardless of personal circumstances.

**4 Staff and volunteer training and development**

4.1 Induction for trustees, staff and volunteers will include a briefing on this policy. Where appropriate, training will be made available on cultural and disability awareness and other subjects relevant to equality and diversity.

**5 Interaction with Street Reach service users**

5.1 Street Reach aims to provide a service that is open and accessible to all groups of young people. To this end, trustees work to achieve accessibility for all by:

* Seeking funding so that core services remain free at the point of contact.
* Setting realistic costs, accessibility needs and timescales for additional events, remaining alert to the specific needs of those for whom these may be difficult.
* Remaining alert to the changing needs of the community and responding to these needs, re-targeting or relocating the service as necessary.

5.2 Street Reach expects all its service users to treat each other, staff, volunteers and trustees with courtesy and respect.

5.3 If a service user behaves in an abusive way or engages in harassment, including racist, anti-disability, sexist, ageist or homophobic attitudes, the Street Reach staff will advise the young person and, if the behaviour continues, walk away, ceasing to engage. The approach will be the same on subsequent visits and, if the situation escalates, the Police will be called.

**6 Purchasing**

6.1 Street Reach reserves the right not to purchase goods and services from agencies whose activities are contrary to the principles outlined in this policy.

**7 Complaints**

7.1 Anyone who believes that they have not been treated fairly in accordance with this policy may complain either formally or informally, in accordance with the Street Reach Compliments and Complaints Policy or, where appropriate, in accordance with the Street Reach Whistleblowing Policy.

7.2 All personnel retain a statutory right to complain to the courts or to seek advice from the Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission, the Equal Opportunities Commission or any other appropriate body.