



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

1. OUR COMMON UNDERSTANDING

- 1.1 The Trustees of Step 2 recognises that in society certain groups and individuals have suffered and continue to suffer discrimination. Step 2 is positively committed to opposing such discrimination against people on the grounds of race, colour, religion, gender, age, disability, responsibility for dependents, marital status, sexuality, social class or offending background. The Trustees of Step 2 acknowledges that it has a duty to ensure that the work that it does reflects this commitment to equal opportunities and that it is not unfairly discriminating in the way in which it delivers services to local people or in its employment and management practice.
- 1.2 The Trustees of Step 2 will seek to promote equal opportunities in the employment of staff. It aims to ensure that no job applicant, employee, volunteer or service user receives less favourable treatment on account of their race, colour, religion, gender, age, disability, responsibility for dependants, marital status, sexuality, social class or offending background, or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable.
- 1.3 The Trustees of Step 2 will ensure that the work it does takes full account of the needs of those groups that are particularly disadvantaged within society and that work is undertaken that will promote equal opportunities and fair treatment within the area of benefit covered by Step 2 and its related projects.
- 1.4 This policy will be actively pursued at all levels of the project. It is the responsibility of the Trustees and Staff to ensure that this policy is implemented. In particular, every applicant will be given a copy of this policy.

- 1.5 The Trustees of Step 2 will take positive steps to ensure that it is representative of the target community.
- 1.6 The Trustees of Step 2 understands that discrimination may be applied to anyone whose beliefs, life-style or culture is different from the majority.

If you feel that we are not meeting the above aims, please contact a member of staff or ask for a copy of our complaints procedure.

2. DEFINITIONS

2.1 Discrimination:

- i. refers to any behaviour or practice which reflects an assumption of superiority of one group over another
- ii. is behaviour which disadvantages people on the basis of their real or perceived membership of a particular group
- iii. includes such behaviour as less favourable treatment, unfair exclusion, and asking discriminatory questions.

2.1.a **Direct discrimination** takes place when a person treats another person, on the basis of an attribute or characteristic. These could include gender, marital status, nationality, religion, health, appearance, family responsibilities, sexuality, ethnicity, age or disability.

2.1.b **Indirect discrimination** takes place when a person imposes a condition, requirement or practice which is unreasonable or disadvantages a member of a group or individuals are treated as being the same, although they are different. By not taking differences into account, one group or individuals benefits at the expenses of the others.

3. AIMS

- 3.1 This policy aims to ensure that no employee, trustee, client or volunteer associated to *Step 2* discriminates against somebody else or is discriminated against.
- 3.2 *Step 2* will provide supportive environments which are free from discriminatory practices and harassment and which promote personal respect and physical and emotional safety.

4. SERVICE PROVISION

- 4.1 *Step 2* aims to ensure that all services and projects are accessible and relevant to all groups and individuals in the community within agreed targeted age groups. Its primary concern being to extend its services to all young people in its operational area.
- 4.2 Physical access and safety should be a key consideration when *Step 2* acquires new premises, when premises are selected for events and when use of premises belonging to other agencies is made.
- 4.3 *Step 2* will endeavour to redress any existing discriminatory imbalances in its service provision by prioritising projects and resources which support groups and individuals who are being discriminated against in society.
- 4.4 *Step 2* promotes the use of positive language and members of staff are expected to challenge constructively the use of language which is offensive or constraining in its representation of people.
- 4.5 *Step 2* seeks to provide positive images of different potential client groups in its projects, amongst its staff and in any publicity materials.
- 4.6 Prejudice, discrimination and harassment is unacceptable and it is the responsibility of those who encounter it to challenge it and to make clear that it is being challenged. Challenging unacceptable behaviour is not the sole responsibility of those who experience harassment, but is the prime responsibility of others who are aware of it.
- 4.7 Information which facilitates participation at every level must be presented routinely and in an accessible format. The responsibility for and commitment to communicate effectively lies with every individual.

5. RECRUITMENT OF EX-OFFENDERS

- 5.1 As an organisation using the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure service to assess applicants' suitability for positions of trust, *Step 2* complies fully with the CRB Code of Practice and undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly. It undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a disclosure on the basis of conviction or other information revealed.
- 5.2 We actively promote equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential and welcome applications from a wide range of candidates, including those with criminal records. We select all candidates for interview based on their skills, qualifications and experience.
- 5.3 Because of the nature of the organisation, an enhanced disclosure is requested for every employee. All application forms, job adverts and recruitment briefs will

contain a statement that an enhanced disclosure will be requested in the event of the individual being offered the position.

- 5.4 We encourage all applicants called for interview to provide details of their criminal record at an early stage in the application process. We request that this information is sent under separate, confidential cover to the chair of Step 2 and we guarantee that this information will only be seen by those who need to see it as part of the recruitment process.
- 5.5 Step 2 is only concerned with 'unspent' convictions as defined in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 or those convictions which would lead to a person being banned from working with children as specified in the Protection of Children Act 1999 and the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.
- 5.6 We ensure that all those in Step 2 who are involved in the recruitment process have been suitably trained to identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of offences. We also ensure that they have received appropriate guidance and training in the relevant legislation relating to the employment of ex-offenders, e.g. the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- 5.7 At interview, or in a separate discussion, we ensure that an open and measured discussion takes place on the subject of any offences or other matter that might be relevant to the position. Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment.
- 5.8 We make every subject of a CRB disclosure aware of the existence of the CRB Code of Practice and make a copy available on request.
- 5.9 We undertake to discuss any matter revealed in a disclosure with the person seeking the position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.
- 5.10 Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar a person from working with Step 2. This will depend on the circumstances and background of their offences.
- 5.11 Step 2 uses Bradford South & West Primary Care Trust (S&W PCT) as an umbrella body (one which countersigns applications and receives disclosure information on behalf of other employers or recruiting organisations). S&W PCT handle, use, store, retain and dispose of disclosure information in full compliance with the CRB Code and in full accordance with this policy. Step 2 does not retain any disclosure information itself.
- 5.12 Please see appendix 1 for the CRB Recruitment Flow Chart which sets out Step 2's approach to the recruitment of ex-offenders.

6. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

All members of staff who have responsibility for recruitment should work towards creating equal access to paid and voluntary work opportunities. This means making positive decisions about the style and location of advertisements, about the content of job descriptions, about the composition of interview panels, about the questions asked at interview and about the process by which the decision to appoint is made.

- 5.1 An advert, job description and personnel specification will be drawn up for each vacancy specifying essential and desirable skills, attitudes and experiences.
- 5.2 Adverts will include the following statement "*Step 2* is committed to equal opportunities".
- 5.3 *Step 2* will take positive action in recruitment where this will promote equality of opportunity.
- 5.4 *Step 2* requires its paid and voluntary staff to take personal responsibility for their own attitudes and values, for promoting an anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive style of working and for challenging oppressive behaviour.
- 5.6 *Step 2* seeks to enable all workers to participate effectively in training and meetings
- 5.7 The supervision and appraisal processes will encourage members of staff, in a supportive environment, to look at their own attitudes and ways of changing them if appropriate.
- 5.8 *Step 2* will strive to provide equal opportunities training for all staff and committee members.

7. GENERAL POINTS

- 6.1 The Trustees are ultimately responsible for the implementation, monitoring and ongoing development of this policy. All staff, and those using Step 2's services, are expected to co-operate in the process and be committed to the policy. Step 2 also requires that those being employed by or working within Step 2 must be in sympathy with the Step 2 ethos.
- 6.2 A member of staff who behaves in a discriminatory way will face disciplinary action in accordance with the organisations disciplinary procedures.
- 6.3 Positive efforts will be made to ensure that the membership of the trustees reflect the community we serve.
- 6.4 *Step 2* welcomes feedback and constructive criticism of its service by those groups who face discrimination in the community.

- 6.5** The Equal Opportunities Statement will be displayed as a poster in Step 2. Efforts will be made to do this in a way young people understand. Copies of the statement, and of the Equal Opportunities Policy, will be available from members of staff at Step 2.
- 6.6** We will look for ways to get young people's suggestions and opinions of what we do.
- 6.7** Forms on which young people can make complaints will be displayed in the drop-in and accessible to all young people.
- 6.8** Step 2 reserves the right to require a user to leave the premises if that person makes discriminatory comments or behaves in a discriminatory way, or is threatening or violent.
- 6.8.1** Only in exceptional circumstances, namely a persistent refusal to stop behaving in this way, would Step 2 withdraw services from a person on a more long-term basis. Such a decision would be made by the Trustees of Step 2, which would consider whether or not such a withdrawal of service is justified, and, if so, for what period of time the service should be withdrawn.