

Respect for Equality and Diversity

First Step Trust (FST) is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and actively opposing discrimination against individuals or groups within our society on the grounds of gender, race, ethnic or national origin, disability, sexual preference, age or social class.

SFirst Step Trust recognises that the capacity for growth both for FST and for people working for FST is dependent on maintaining and developing equality of opportunity, opposing any discriminatory practice and nurturing an environment that recognises the value of a diverse workforce.

TFirst Step Trust operates within a framework of positive action that assists people with mental health problems or other disabilities to become employed, to work, to train and to manage their own support systems in the community.

First Step Trust endeavours to ensure that decisions on employment, training and development of the workforce are informed by these principles, are based on merit, individual development needs and support the goals of FST.

The Board of Directors has the primary responsibility to ensure the equal opportunities policy is effective and to monitor its impact within the organisation. However, it is the duty of all workers and those participating in FST's activities to accept their personal responsibility for the implementation of the policy.

To achieve these ends, FST will:

- ensure the members of its workforce, both voluntary and salaried, are given training to understand their responsibilities with respect to the equal opportunities policy
- ensure all workers and participants in services provided are treated with respect for their diversity, and for their rights as individuals and members of specific groups.
- ensure equality of opportunity is available to all workers, and, where appropriate, special training through positive action to progress within FST
- aim to reflect the local community within the composition of its workforce and those who make use of its services, actively seeking to engage any groups that are under-represented
- require all projects within FST to undertake the same commitment to promote respect for diversity, equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practices.

These objectives will most crucially be reflected in the way in which FST recruits its workforce and provides promotion and training, handles disciplinary and grievance processes and in the creation of the work environment. Oppressive and discriminatory behaviour will be challenged and dealt with firmly by FST.

The Trust's Chief Executives have responsibility for co-ordinating and monitoring the operation of the policy and the management of diversity to combat prejudice, stereotyping, harassment and discrimination in all First Step Trust work settings. The Chief Executives will also report at regular intervals to the Board of Directors on the implementation and monitoring of the equal opportunities policy.

These commitments are made in the context of fulfilling our legal responsibilities under any equality-related legislation and European Union directives.

Managing diversity and ensuring the fair application of equal opportunity principles is a continuous process, not a once off initiative. As First Step Trust evolves as an organisation these principles will also need to be revisited in the light of changing social, legislative and ethical considerations.

First Step Trust will support this statement with more detailed policies, procedures and codes of conduct covering areas such as:

- Equal Opportunities
- Grievance & Disciplinary
- Complaints procedures
- Harassment at Work
- Recruitment and selection
- Workers' training and development

These commitments are made in the context of fulfilling responsibilities under

- The Race Relations Act 1976 and amendments
- The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and amendments
- The Disability Discrimination Act Parts 1 - 4
- The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (amended 1986)

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