



## 1. Scope of Policy

The Youth at Risk Equal Opportunities Policy applies to the selection, training, management and treatment of employees, volunteers (including board members), contractors service users and any other participants on Youth at Risk programmes.

It is based on the Equality Act (2010) and will, as part of its annual review, take account of all subsequent changes to existing legislation.

## 2 Statement of intent

Youth at Risk has a strong simple belief. *All* service users can have a worthwhile future, beneficial to themselves and their communities. Part of the work supporting service users involves helping them overcome a range of obstacles and barriers, including all forms of discrimination. Youth at Risk therefore believes that all staff, volunteers, contractors and service users should be treated with dignity and respect. To that end, the Youth at Risk **Bullying and Harassment Policy** is incorporated into this document as Appendix 1.

Youth at Risk is committed to the principle and practice of equal opportunities, both in its employment practices and the delivery of the services it provides. It aims to provide equality and fairness for all job applicants, employees (whether full-time, part-time, fixed-term or temporary), volunteers, contractors and service users, and opposes all forms of discrimination on the grounds of age, colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religious belief, social class, sex, sexual orientation or disability. As part of this commitment Youth at Risk is working towards family-friendly/carer-friendly approaches.

As an employer and provider of services to the community Youth at Risk accepts the responsibility to promote equal opportunities and challenge discrimination wherever it occurs. This document sets out the main consequences of this commitment and the action being taken in order to achieve equal opportunities.

Youth at Risk recognises that some users of its services may, because of their past or present distress or illness, say or do things which would otherwise be unacceptable and incompatible with Youth at Risk's Equal Opportunities Policy. Youth at Risk will do all it can to challenge such behaviour. In cases where intervention is possible an approach will be adopted which aims to alter attitudes and behaviour while maintaining support for the distressed service user.

## 3. Responsibility

The Youth at Risk Board has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.

All employees, volunteers, contractors and service users have a duty as part of their involvement with Youth at Risk to do everything they can to ensure that the policy works in practice. Thus, it is the responsibility of all staff, volunteers, contractors and service users to

ensure that no other employee, volunteer, contractor or service user receives less favourable treatment than any other on the grounds stated in section 2 of this policy.

#### **4. Objectives**

Youth at Risk believes that passive support for equal opportunities is not enough and that positive steps to promote equality of access must be taken. Youth at Risk is therefore committed to:

- i. respecting the individual's abilities and legal rights
- ii. recognising and developing potential which has not been used before because of past discrimination and disadvantage
- iii. supporting access by under-represented groups
- iv. creating a working environment where individuals can develop their full potential in order to contribute to Youth at Risk's goals

#### **5. Positive Action**

Youth at Risk will work to the Equal Opportunities Policies of third parties which, for example, refer service users or provide a venue. These constraints notwithstanding, Youth at Risk will promote equality of opportunity by undertaking a range of positive action.

Youth at Risk will make reasonable adjustments to ensure that the workplace is fully accessible for all employees and job applicants. When identifying venues and new premises, every effort will be made to ensure such premises are fully accessible. Information about disabled access will be prominent.

Information (including signage), written and spoken will be clearly communicated in as many languages as necessary. Where appropriate, written materials (including publicity) will be available in large print and use inclusive images. Translators and sign language interpreters will be used when required.

Working with clients Youth at Risk will ensure that the selection of young people taking in programmes will be based on need and eligibility alone.

In the recruitment of volunteers Youth at Risk will seek to mirror the gender/ethnic mix of the group of service users to be supported. This may include working with local community groups on the recruitment strategy.

Every effort will be made to ensure that the services offered by Youth at Risk reflect the composition of the communities it serves and will publish details of service user statistics by gender, age, ethnicity and religious affiliation. If the data show that people from a particular racial or other group are under-represented in particular areas of work, lawful positive action training and encouragement will be considered for service users, volunteers and/or staff from those groups, to improve their chances of applying successfully for vacancies in these areas.

Where relevant, dietary differences will be catered for appropriately.

#### **6. Recruitment and Selection**

Decisions on recruitment, selection, training, promotion and career management are based solely on objective, job-related criteria.

The following guidelines are used when recruiting new staff:

- i. Job descriptions and person specifications will be drawn up or reviewed for each vacant post in order to avoid direct or indirect discrimination against potential candidates, including sex or other stereotyping
- ii. All posts will be advertised internally (where appropriate) and externally, and where possible, placed in a diverse range of media. All advertisements will state that Youth at Risk is seeking to be an effective equal opportunities employer. A copy of Youth at Risk 's Equal Opportunities Statement will form part of all application packs.
- iii. Application from all sections of the community will be welcomed, irrespective of race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins
- iv. Application forms are anonymised before being passed on to the manager accountable for selection of candidates for interview
- v. Application forms sent to job candidates will be accompanied by an equal opportunities monitoring form. All such information will be treated as confidential and will be clearly separated from all processes concerned with the selection of staff
- vi. Timing of interviews will be as flexible as possible to accommodate candidates with family commitments
- vii. Initial interviews will be carried out by two members of staff and candidates will be assessed against specific criteria related to the job description and person specification, agreed in advance by the interviewers
- viii. If it is appropriate to carry out a second round of interview, there should be at least one different interviewer at each round. Second interviews will be conducted by at least two people

Youth at Risk is willing to employ ex-offenders as staff or volunteers. Additional policies concerning this group are to be found in the Staff Handbook, section 12 ***Policy and Procedures for the Employment of Ex-Offenders***

## **7. Pay and Terms and Conditions**

Youth at Risk will endeavour to ensure that discrimination does not occur in relation to rates of pay for similar work. Youth at Risk will ensure that flexibility is exercised in terms of working hours and other terms and conditions of employment so that they do not directly or indirectly discriminate against any employee or groups of employees. Staff who wish to be considered for job share arrangements, career breaks or secondments should first consult their line manager.

The Youth at Risk ***Flexible Working Policy*** and ***Maternity Paternity and Parental Policy*** set out details of more specific working arrangement and conditions.

Before leaving Youth at Risk all staff will have an exit interview with a member of the Management Executive. The purpose of the interview is to obtain feedback from the employee on any aspect of the organisation which can be improved or enhanced.

## **8. Promoting the Equal Opportunities Policy**

Youth at Risk will bring to the attention of all employees, job applicants, volunteers, contractors and service users the existence of this policy and will provide such training as is necessary to ensure that the policy is effective.

All employees will receive induction training during which the equal opportunities policy and its practice and application will be discussed with line managers. It is the responsibility of every individual member of staff to participate in any equal opportunities training that is provided.

Reference to the policy will be made in all advertisements for job vacancies and a copy of the policy will be sent to all job applicants as part each job application pack.

A copy of the policy will be put the Youth at Risk web site.

Reference to the policy will be included in contract documents with outside agencies and contractors. All contracts between Youth at Risk and contractors to supply goods, materials or services will include a clause prohibiting unlawful racial discrimination or harassment by contractors and their staff, and by any sub-contractors and their staff. The clause will also encourage contractors and potential contractors to provide equality of opportunity in their employment practices.

The "Groundrules" document that every service user signs obliges each individual to "be respectful to other people ... at all times." The Lead Trainer for each cohort of young people is responsible for ensuring that each young person reads and signs this document.

Volunteers are asked to confirm that they have understood and will comply with relevant policies which are set out in the Policies and Information Sheet for Volunteers.

## **9. Dealing with Complaints**

Employees who feel that they have experienced discrimination in any way are encouraged to use the Youth at Risk **Grievance Procedure** to resolve the situation. Individuals who are not meeting Youth at Risk's Equal Opportunity standards will be offered guidance in order to identify any training needs. Where an individual does not benefit from advice and training Youth at Risk will use the Disciplinary Procedure to resolve the situation.

Any employee found to be practicing discrimination, whether intentionally or not, faces disciplinary proceedings. Youth at Risk ensures that no applicant, employee, volunteer, service user or other participant receives less favourable treatment on the grounds stated above, and that Youth at Risk practices and procedures do not discriminate indirectly.

Volunteers are not subject to Youth at Risk's disciplinary procedures, nor do they have access to the grievance procedures. However, volunteers and service users are entitled to use the **Youth at Risk Complaints Procedure** (attached as appendix 2).

If any service user, volunteer or employee feels that they have been, or are being discriminated against, in any way, they are entitled to pursue the matter with either:

- i) their line manager in the case of staff
- ii) the Equal Opportunities Officer
- iii) the Operations Manager of the project where the alleged discrimination occurred and/or the Head of Operations.

All instances or complaints of discriminatory behaviour will be treated seriously.

Complaints or allegations of an unfounded or malicious nature will also be treated as serious and may involve using the Youth at Risk disciplinary procedure.

## **10. Monitoring of the Equal Opportunities Policy**

The role of the Equal Opportunities Officer is to advise, inform and consult with management, staff and service users in order to progress and improve equal opportunities within Youth at Risk. The person appointed to this role should be committed to progressing equal opportunities within Youth at Risk in a positive manner.

The Equal Opportunities Officer will :

- i. Monitor and report on Youth at Risk's equal opportunities progress, development and practice and make an annual report to the Board of Youth at Risk.
- ii. Ensure staff, service users' and volunteers' awareness and understanding of equal opportunities issues and practice within Youth at Risk via training and development.
- iii. Advise and consult with Youth at Risk's Board on equal opportunities to recommend and discuss courses of action.
- iv. Know or have access to appropriate information, legislation, policy, etc. for the purposes of carrying out their role.
- v. Identify and advise on any Youth at Risk equal opportunities training needs and provision.
- vi. Be allowed adequate time off from his/her normal contracted duties to attend meetings and training events and perform this specific role.

It is not intended that the Equal Opportunities Officer should represent particular views, opinions or interests of individuals or groups, nor have the authority within this role to discipline either staff or service users, or raise a grievance on behalf of a particular individual or group. The Equal Opportunities Officer will be available in an advisory capacity in the case of a grievance involving equal opportunities issues.

The current Equal Opportunities Officer is:

**Ellie Garraway** who is contactable at  
The Old Warehouse  
31 Upper King Street  
Royston  
SG8 9AZ  
Tel : 01763 421120

**Reviewed and Updated July 2010**

## Appendix 1: BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

### Bullying and Harassment

#### A.1 Policy

Youth at Risk is committed to providing a culture of fairness and opportunity at work and all areas of its service delivery. Youth at Risk endeavours to ensure that all employees, volunteers and service users are treated with dignity and respect and that they are able to operate in an environment which is free from harassment.

Any form of harassment or inappropriate behaviour which causes offence, whether intentional or not, will be treated very seriously and where appropriate lead to disciplinary action, which could include dismissal, being taken.

#### A.2 Definition

Bullying and harassment is defined as any offensive behaviour through vindictive, malicious or humiliating attempts to undermine the competence, effectiveness, confidence and integrity of an individual or group of individuals.

Examples of bullying and harassment include:

##### *Racial Harassment:*

- Racially derogatory remarks or racist jokes.
- The display of racially offensive material or graffiti.
- Insulting behaviour, threats or physical assault.
- Deliberate isolation or non co-operation at work.

*Religious Discrimination:* Discriminatory behaviour which fails to acknowledge the rights or needs of people with different beliefs or practices.

##### *Sexual Harassment:*

- Unwelcome remarks of a sexual nature such as jokes, innuendo, teasing, verbal abuse.
- The display of pin ups, pornographic pictures or sexually suggestive subject matter.
- Unwelcome remarks about a person's dress, appearance or marital status.
- Behaviour which condemns or ridicules a person because of their sexuality.
- Unwelcome physical contact or demands for sexual favours.

*People with Disabilities:* Harassment, undignified treatment, ridicule or exclusion of people because of their disability, vulnerability or perceived reduced independence.

*Age:* Ridiculing or demeaning behaviour focused towards people because of their age.

*Bullying:* The intentional intimidation or belittling of someone, for example, through the misuse of power or position, which leaves them feeling hurt, upset, vulnerable or helpless.

*Victimisation:* Where a person is treated less favourable than other people because, for example, that person has brought proceedings, given evidence or complained about the behaviour of someone who has been harassing or discriminating against them, or they have assisted someone who has brought such a complaint.

*Harassment does not mean*

- Mutually acceptable friendship or flirtation
- Enjoying a joke at work providing its not at someone else's expense

### **A.3 Malicious Complaints**

Although such complaints are very rare, any complaint made solely out of malice may result in disciplinary action being taken against the complainant.

### **A.4 Responsibilities of Management**

It is the responsibility of all managers to take steps to ensure that all staff under their control are aware of and understand Youth at Risk's policy, that all employees are treated fairly and that no one is bullied or harassed.

Managers need to be observant and alert to the kind of behaviour that might indicate a problem, for example where one employee is always critical of another, where an employee(s) are always left out of social interactions.

Managers must deal with any form of bullying or harassment at an early stage whether or not they have been made officially aware of it.

It is the responsibility of the Operations Manager of each project to ensure that all contractors, volunteers and service users are aware of the understand Youth at Risk's policy and that it is implemented appropriately.

### **A.5 Responsibilities of Employees**

All employees, contractors, volunteers and service users should be made aware that they are expected to comply with Youth at Risk's policy.

Employees should be aware that it is the personal responsibility of everyone not to bully or harass another employee.

If an employee is aware that a work colleague is experiencing bullying or harassment, it is their duty not to allow it to continue by reporting it to their line manager or HR Officer.

### **A.6 Procedure**

#### **Purpose of Procedure**

The purpose of the Procedure is to provide a means whereby employees can raise complaints relating to bullying and harassment, in confidence, in an endeavour to resolve the matter in the knowledge that they will be taken seriously and treated sympathetically.

## **Informal Procedure**

1. In the first instance, wherever possible the complainant should ask the alleged bully or harasser to stop, pointing out that their behaviour is unwelcome and is causing offence.
2. If the employee finds that this course of action is not possible because it is too embarrassing or difficult, or the bullying or harassment already complained about continues, then the complaint should be referred to the immediate line manager or the HR Officer.
3. If the alleged bully or harasser is the employee's immediate line manager, then the complaint should be referred to the next line manager or the HR Officer.
4. The employee will be responded to, orally, wherever possible within the next five working days.
5. If the alleged behaviour is more serious, or the matters complained of informally have not been resolved, then the employee may follow the formal procedure set out below.

## **Formal Procedure**

1. If matters complained of informally have not been resolved or the alleged behaviour against an employee is of a more serious nature, then the employee should formally register their complaint, in writing, to a member of the Management Executive, providing details of the allegations and any attempts they have made to resolve the matter informally.
2. A confidential investigation will be undertaken to determine the facts.
3. Where appropriate, the complaint will be pursued through the Disciplinary Procedure.

## **Seeking Help**

Informal, confidential advice is available from any member of the Management Executive Team.

Volunteers are not subject to Youth at Risk's disciplinary procedures, nor do they have access to the grievance procedures. However, volunteers and service users are entitled to use the **Youth at Risk Complaints Procedure** (attached as appendix2).

## Appendix 2: COMPLAINTS POLICY

- 1) In the event that a young person or volunteer makes a complaint about their treatment during the Intensive elements of the course the project manager and course manager shall both be immediately informed.
- 2) The course and project manager shall nominate either one of themselves or another member of Youth at Risk or local authority staff to supervise the investigation into the complaint. That person shall be known as the “complaint supervisor”.
- 3) The complainant shall be seen by the complaint supervisor together with one other person (an assistant) of the same sex as the complainant as soon as practicable and a full written account of the complaint obtained.
- 4) The complaint supervisor will make a note of the complaint and immediately inform the course manager and project manager of it.
- 5) The complaint supervisor, project manager and course manager will decide between them on the appropriate course of action, with timescales for actions to be completed. Their decision will be recorded in writing.
- 6) The complaint supervisor and their assistant will inform the complainant within three days of receipt of the complaint of the action that is to be taken and the timescales. A written record of this meeting shall be maintained.
- 7) The complaint supervisor shall ensure that the actions are implemented and the complaint fully investigated. They shall maintain a written record of all the steps taken.
- 8) At the conclusion of the investigation the complaint supervisor shall review all the available material and assess the complaint in the light of that material within one week of receipt. A written record of their conclusion shall be made.
- 9) The complaint supervisor shall ensure that the complainant is informed of the conclusions of the investigation either in a meeting (such meeting to be confirmed in writing) or in writing alone, as soon as practically possible.
- 10) In the event that the customer wishes to implement its own complaints procedure it shall immediately inform YAR of this and YAR may decide to suspend its own investigations and or co-operate with that conducted by the customer.
- 11) In the event of a complaint being investigated pursuant to clause 10) above the customer shall keep the YAR liaison officer fully informed.
- 12) In the event that a young person or volunteer makes a complaint about their treatment other than during the Residential programme then the project manager shall be responsible for the management and investigation of the complaint and in doing so shall comply with the appropriate complaints procedure currently adopted by the customer. If no such policy exists then it may choose to use this procedure.