

Equality and Diversity Policy

Created by: Aware
Edition No: 2
Reviewed by: Emma Barnes
1st Edition Effective from: November 2014
Revision Date: July 2018
For Revision: July 2020

At Aware we believe Equality & Diversity is a key driver of our success in delivering our services. Our aspiration is to ensure that our behaviours and actions support Equality & Diversity and make it an integral part of how we run our organisation.

Direct discrimination occurs where a person is treated less favourably than another person is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation based on one of the grounds as specified in this policy. Indirect discrimination is taken to occur where an apparently neutral provision, requirement, policy or rule puts a person with one characteristic at a particular disadvantage compared with others without that characteristic. For example the height requirement for Gardaí or firefighters which had to be changed to enable women to enter the services.

Purpose

This Policy outlines Aware's commitment to creating and maintaining a diverse and inclusive organisation.

Our aim is to ensure that all ,existing and potential, volunteers are treated in a fair and equitable manner regardless of their gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, age, disability, race, religion and membership of ethnic groups. Aware also aims to attract a diverse volunteer group and utilise the skills, knowledge and abilities available.

Aware is committed to equality of opportunity, and operates non-discriminatory practices in relation to access to volunteering, conditions of volunteering and access to training and experience.

Decisions regarding a volunteer's suitability for a role will not be made with reference to the above grounds unless these are legitimate criteria given the particular situation. (For example in the Support Line, fluency in English is essential to being effective in the role of Support Line Volunteer.)

Procedure

Access to volunteering with Aware:

All recruitment and selection drives will be open to all applicants who meet the identified criteria.

All applicants for volunteering roles with Aware shall be given clear, accurate information in advertisements, role descriptions and interviews to enable them to gauge their suitability for the role.

Recruitment decisions will be made against specified criteria as required for the particular role.

Aware will seek to ensure that the recruitment process is free from any direct or indirect discrimination on any of the grounds set out in this policy.

Where an applicant indicates that they have special needs to facilitate their participation in the recruitment and selection process, reasonable accommodation will be provided where possible or feasible.

All prospective volunteers shall be informed that Aware operates an Equality and Diversity Policy. Such information will be conveyed on the Aware website. Our equality and diversity policy is available to access on the volunteer section of our Aware website and can be made available in full to potential volunteers upon request.

The staff or management who conduct the recruitment interviews will follow set interview questions and conduct the interview in an unbiased way regardless of the applicant's race, gender, marital status, and to ask only questions which relate to the volunteering role and that are non-discriminatory.

Access to Training and Experience:

Every attempt is made to ensure learning materials, where possible, portray positive and diverse images of people while reinforcing anti-discriminatory language and images of all individuals and groups.

Training will be provided to all selected volunteers appropriate to the role they fulfil or for which they have been accepted.

Where an individual's disability impedes their ability to fully participate and engage in training activities, reasonable accommodation will be provided where possible.

Every effort will be made to arrange training at times to suit those who are working. There is an expectation that all volunteers will make themselves available, to engage in additional training at least once a year.

Conditions

Aware will provide all volunteers with initial induction training to support them in their role and ongoing support throughout their time volunteering with Aware.

Aware endeavours to provide a volunteering environment free from bullying, harassment or sexual harassment.

Role Titles

Gender neutral volunteer titles will be used.

Reasonable Accommodation:

Reasonable accommodation shall be provided in order to facilitate a person with a disability to apply for volunteering roles with Aware, to attend for interview, to engage in volunteering and to participate in training activities as applicable.

This commitment is subject to the feasibility of such accommodation.

Any complaints in this respect should be brought to the attention of the Service Coordinator /Manager. Any volunteer who feels that there has been a breach of this policy or procedure may raise the matter through Aware's grievance procedure in the Volunteer Policy. No volunteer will be subject to adverse treatment as a consequence of raising a complaint in relation to this policy. Aware will monitor its organization for incidents of victimization following a complaint.

Aware will take appropriate disciplinary action towards a Volunteer or Staff Member who fails to follow this Equality and Diversity Policy.

Disability

We recognize that disabilities may not always be visible and equally respect the needs of all people with disabilities including individuals with mental health conditions and will:

- Work to ensure that our practices do not restrict use of our services or the contribution people with disabilities can make to our work.
- Make regular assessments of the accessibility of our sites and will actively seek opportunities to improve access to our premises and services for people who have disabilities.

Gender Discrimination

Direct Gender Discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably on the grounds of gender than a person of another gender would be in the same circumstances.

Aware will take action to promote gender equality.

- We will ensure that we do not apply any direct or indirect discrimination to our volunteers on the basis of gender and marriage.

Harassment

Bullying

Bullying is defined as repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others in the course of their volunteering, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individuals' right to dignity in their volunteering role.

Formal Procedure for dealing with bullying

Preferably the complaint will be dealt with informally but where this is not practical, desirable or appropriate, the complaint will be dealt with formally.

The complaint should be made to the service manager/ coordinator in writing, containing;

- The details of the alleged perpetrator
- The nature of the alleged bullying, i.e. the conduct constituting bullying
- Dates/times/locations of where the bullying occurred
- Names of witnesses to any incidents
- Details of any action taken to stop the bullying
- Consent to your identity and the facts of the bullying being disclosed to the alleged perpetrator. This is required to allow Aware to investigate and to take action where appropriate

Procedure in dealing with the Complaint

Preferably the complaint will be dealt with informally but where this is not practical, desirable or appropriate, the complaint will be dealt with formally.

- The investigation will be conducted by an independent manager/s, or an agreed third party.
- The investigation will be conducted within the normal limits of confidentiality.
- The investigator/s will meet with the complainant to learn more and to put the alleged perpetrator's response to them.
- A meeting will take place with the investigator/s, alleged perpetrator and complainant. All evidence will be made available to all parties before the meeting to give all concerned the opportunity to prepare their response.
- The complaint will be investigated in an agreed timeframe.
- On completion of the investigation, the investigator/s will submit a written report to management containing the findings of the investigation.

There may be three outcomes to the report

- Complaint is upheld
- Investigation is inconclusive
- Complaint is found to be malicious or vexatious

If the complaint is upheld:

- Management will take appropriate action, which may include formal disciplinary action or other action deemed necessary to prevent a recurrence of the conduct
- Aware will consider providing further supervision, retraining or reassignment.

Where the investigation is inconclusive

- Complaint will not be upheld
- There will be no negative inference to any party to the complaint
- Both parties will be expected to continue to work according to best practice, conducting themselves in an appropriate way

Where the complaint is found to be malicious

- A disciplinary hearing will be held with the complainant to explore this further

Appeal

Either party may appeal the decision, outlining in writing to management the reason for the appeal. Such appeals will be heard by a manager not previously involved in the investigation and independent advice and support may be sought.

Sexual Harassment

Aware wishes to make it quite clear that sexual harassment is unlawful and views harassment very seriously.

The definition adopted by Aware is:

Repeated and unwanted verbal or sexual advances, sexually explicit derogatory statements or sexually discriminating remarks which are offensive to the volunteer involved, which cause the volunteer to feel threatened, humiliated, patronised or harassed or which creates a threatening or intimidating environment.

Complaints of sexual harassment will be dealt with under the procedure for dealing with bullying.

Race and Ethnicity

Aware employs and serves people from diverse racial and ethnic groups. We will implement positive action initiatives to recruit volunteers from a wide range of ethnic groups

Direct discrimination consists of treating a person differently and less favourably on the grounds of their racial origin.

Indirect discrimination consists of treating everyone the same but in a way, which results in some people not being able to comply where others from another racial background can.

Demands of Religion (e.g. prayer times and religious holidays) and of culture (traditional dress) are accepted within reason based on the service being provided.

Racial Harassment

Incidents of racial harassment include:

- Physical assaults/threats against a person or group because of colour or ethnicity.
- Racist insult/joke/name calling.
- Racist graffiti/any other written insult.
- Provocative behaviour (e.g. wearing racist badges or insignia).
- Racial comments in meetings/conversation/workshops.
- Attempting to recruit for racist organisations or groups.
- Racist literature (leaflets, comics, magazines) brought into the organisation's premises.
- Providing a platform for racism.

Aware reserves the right of admission to services where a volunteer is subjected to racial harassment.

Sexual Orientation

Aware is committed to creating a safe working environment for all volunteers and service users regardless of their sexual orientation.

Aware is a place where people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex among our volunteers and service users feel it is safe and comfortable to be open about their sexual orientation.

Additional Support

Aware will seek to overcome indirect discrimination by:

- Provision of information about relevant support organisations.
- Making clear its expectations of volunteers in the conduct of their duties in any circumstances where they represent Aware.

Monitoring, review and responsibility

The Board through its staff will be responsible for implementing the equality and diversity policy.

Any complaint or grievance should be made to the Service Co-ordinator/Manager who will refer the matter to the CEO of Aware who may forward it to the Board of Aware, whichever is the most appropriate.

The equality and diversity policy will be reviewed July 2020 or as soon as practicable. All aspects of the policy are monitored as an ongoing practice. A review will be carried out by the management committee.

Reviewed by: Emma Barnes

Date: 3rd Aug 2018.

Approved by: Bod O'Meara

Date: 3/8/2018.