

Agreed by Board: 22nd September 2020
Review date: 22nd September 2022

Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy



Lewisham Speaking Up has an **equal opportunities and diversity policy** to make sure everyone is treated fairly.



Equality means everyone having the same chances to do things. Some people may need extra help to get the same chances.



Diversity means that we know we are all different and that is a good thing. We will challenge anybody who is treated unfairly because they are different.



Discrimination is when you are treated unfairly or bullied because of:



Age



Disability



Gender identity



Marriage or Civil Partnership



Pregnancy and maternity



Race



Religion or belief



Sex



Sexual preference

These are called '**protected characteristics**'.



This policy is to make sure all people who work or volunteer at LSU are protected. No discrimination will go unchallenged.



If you think somebody is treating you or somebody else unfairly or badly, you can tell:



your line manager



the CEO



or the Chair or Co-Chair of Trustees

Policy approved by the Board of Trustees on 22nd September 2020

To be reviewed every two years.

Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy

Equality

Equality means ensuring every individual has equal opportunities. By being conscious of and actively challenging bias or prejudice we make sure no-one is treated less favourably because of who they are or what makes them different from other people. This requires a proactive approach to make reasonable adjustments that address the visible and invisible barriers people face.

Diversity

Diversity means having differences within an organisation or setting. Diversity recognises we are all different in many ways. People with differing identities, backgrounds and experiences should all have equitable access to resources and decision-making.

Our statement of Intent

Lewisham Speaking Up is committed to providing both a working environment and advocacy services where employees, volunteers, and beneficiaries of our services can realise their full potential and contribute positively irrespective of their sex, gender, sexuality, marital status, civil partnership, parent status, pregnancy, race, disability, age, religion, or political belief. We are committed to providing a harmonious environment that respects, values, and celebrates each other's differences, that promotes dignity, equality and diversity, and that encourages individuals to develop and maximise their true potential.

We aim to remove any barriers, bias or discrimination that prevent individuals or groups from realising their potential and contributing fully to our organisation's performance and to develop an organisational culture that positively values diversity.

We are committed wherever practicable, to achieving and maintaining a workforce and a Board that broadly reflects the local community in which we operate.

Every possible step will be taken to ensure that individuals are treated fairly in all aspects of their employment, engagement or whilst volunteering at Lewisham Speaking Up.

Lewisham Speaking Up will challenge discrimination should it arise among employees or volunteers, or during our advocacy activities. It aims to provide equality and fairness for all job applicants or employees whether part-time, full-time, fixed term or temporary. It aims to ensure that no job applicant or worker receives less favourable treatment because of a protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation).

How we will bring this policy to life in the working environment

This will be achieved by (although this is not an exhaustive list) by:

Gender

All genders are fully and properly represented and rewarded for their contribution at all levels of Lewisham Speaking Up through:

- Challenging gender stereotypes
- Supporting employees in balancing their life at work and at home
- Supporting employees who become pregnant and taking active steps to facilitate their return to work after parental leave.

Trans-Gender Status

People who plan to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone gender re-assignment are protected against all forms of discrimination and harassment. Lewisham Speaking Up will take positive steps to support a trans-gender person and ensure they are treated with dignity and respect.

Marital Status

- People are treated fairly and equally in the workplace irrespective of their marital, civil partnership or family status.

Race

The racial and cultural diversity of our communities is represented at all levels of Lewisham Speaking Up through:

- understanding, respecting and valuing different racial / cultural backgrounds and perspectives
- challenging racial stereotypes
- recognising the value of differences in the workforce

Disability

The abilities of disabled people are recognised and valued at all levels of Lewisham Speaking Up through:

- focusing on what people can do rather than on what they cannot
- challenging stereotypes about disabled people
- making appropriate adjustments in the workplace to help disabled people achieve their full career potential. This will be achieved through consultation with the employee to ascertain what extra support they might need in order to do their job, e.g. additional practical or technical support
- recognising the value of differences in the workforce

Age

Age diversity within the workforce is promoted and valued through:

- recognising the value of differences in the workforce
- Challenging age stereotyping

Religious Belief and Political Opinion

- People are treated fairly in the workplace irrespective of their religious beliefs and practices or political opinions by recognising individuals' freedom of belief and right to protection from intolerance and persecution.

HIV

- Discrimination against an employee or potential employee on grounds that he or she has, or is thought to have, HIV or AIDS is not acceptable, and confidentiality will be respected in line with the wishes of an individual with HIV or AIDS.

Sexuality

People are treated fairly in the workplace irrespective of their sexuality through:

- Respecting different lifestyles
- Challenging negative stereotypical views.

General Application of Policy

We all have a responsibility to embrace and support this vision and must continue to challenge behaviour and attitudes that prevent us from achieving this. Using fair, objective and innovative employment practices, our aim is to ensure that:

- All employees and potential employees and volunteers are treated fairly and with respect at all stages of their employment.
- All employees and volunteers have the right to be free from harassment and bullying of any description, or any other form of unwanted behaviour, whether based on sex, trans-gender status, marital status, civil partnership status, pregnancy, race, disability, age, political or religious belief or sexuality.
- All employees and volunteers have an equal chance to contribute and to achieve their potential, irrespective of any defining feature that may give rise to unfair discrimination.

Specifically, Lewisham Speaking Up aims to ensure that no employee or job applicant is discriminated against, either directly or indirectly. This commitment applies to all the aspects of employment outlined below:

Recruitment and Selection

The selection process is of crucial importance in this policy and must be carried out according to objective job-related criteria. The recruitment and selection process including the method of advertisements, job descriptions, interview and selection procedures will be subject to regular review. LSU will endeavour through appropriate training to ensure that employees making selection decisions will not discriminate whether consciously or unconsciously in making these decisions. These principles also apply to any process adopted for selection of redundancy.

Terms and Conditions of Employment

LSU will ensure that terms and conditions of employment and access to employment related benefits and facilities will not discriminate.

Training

Equal opportunities must be integrated into all training concerned with selection skills, staff assessment, coaching, staff development and the management or supervision of staff. LSU's policy will form part of the induction training of all staff.

Promotion

It is in LSU's interest to provide equal opportunities for promotion and career development to all employees. Managers must continually assess the promotion potential of all employees and all promotion decisions must be made in accordance with objective selection criteria.

Grievance and Discipline

Employees who believe that they have experienced unfair or unlawful discrimination or racist or sexist abuse or harassment should raise their concern through the grievance procedure. Where such grievances may concern the normal line of supervision or management, individuals may approach a more senior manager.

Breaches of LSU's equal opportunities policy and procedures and any unfair or unlawful discrimination will not be tolerated and will be dealt with under LSU's disciplinary procedures. In serious cases, this could lead to dismissal of the relevant individual.

Employees, volunteers, or beneficiaries who witness any discrimination, racist or sexist abuse, harassment, or bullying against an employee, volunteer, or beneficiary, can use LSU's Whistleblowing policy and procedure to report any such incident.

Monitoring

Equal Opportunities practice is developing constantly as social attitudes and legislation change. *Lewisham Speaking Up* will keep its policies under review and will implement changes where these could improve equality and opportunity. This commitment applies to all the employment policies and procedures not just those specifically connected with equal opportunity. The objectives of monitoring are:

- to identify areas of and reasons for under-representation of particular groups in the workforce;
- to assess the effect of employment procedures and practices and identify any unintentional impact on particular groups;
- to enable appropriate corrective action to take place, including defining targets for future change;
- to enable the Organisation to review and reshape its equal opportunities policy and programme of action.

In order to monitor effectively it is necessary to use data provided by employees for measuring the effectiveness of the Organisation's equal opportunities policy. An explanation of how the Organisation will use the data and information received from the employees and how long, if any period of time it will retain the information will be explained in a privacy notice issued to all employees. This will now be required under changes in data protection regulations in force from May 2018. Please see Data Protection Policy for further information and documents to issue to employees.

Positive Action

Under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 it is allowable to use positive action specifically in the process of recruitment and promotion. This means that employers can discriminate in favour of a minority candidate who is as qualified as another candidate for a role in order to redress issues of under representation.

Positive Action is a legal term, which refers to a number of methods designed to counteract the effects of past discrimination and to help abolish stereotyping.

Action can be taken to encourage people from particular groups to take advantage of opportunities for work and training. This can be done when under-representation of particular groups has been identified in the previous 12 months.

Positive Action is often confused with Positive Discrimination. In recruitment terms, Positive Discrimination would generally mean employing someone because they come from a traditionally disadvantaged group irrespective of whether they have the relevant skills and qualifications. This is unlawful and is not supported by Lewisham Speaking Up.

Positive Action is not about giving more favourable treatment to particular groups in the recruitment process. Selection for recruitment must be based solely on merit.

It is important to note that Positive Action is not a legal requirement for employers but does provide a means to embrace equality in the workplace.

How Does Positive Action Work?

In order to use positive action provisions Lewisham Speaking Up will first establish that the candidates are of **equal merit**. This will be achieved by establishing a set of criteria against which candidates will be assessed when applying for a job. This will take into account a candidate's overall ability, competence and professional experience together with any relevant formal or academic qualifications, as well as any other qualities required to carry out the particular job.

The Equality Act 2010 imposes the following conditions, and provides that an employer may take positive action only if:

- A is as qualified as B to be recruited or promoted; and
- The employer does not have a policy of treating persons who share the protected characteristic more favourably in connection with recruitment or promotion than persons who do not share it.

For more information on how to use Positive Action, please refer to the following guidelines from the Government Equalities Office:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85046/positive-action-recruitment.pdf

Employees Responsibilities

Whilst the Organisation recognises that the overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy lies with the Board of Directors, all employees, whatever their position within the Organisation, have a responsibility for ensuring its effective implementation in their day to day activities and working relationships with colleagues.

Individual employees at all levels:

- Must accept personal responsibility in law and in relation to the policy to ensure that discrimination does not occur, refrain from taking discriminatory actions which are contrary to whether the letter or spirit of this policy and co-operate with any measures introduced to develop equal opportunities;
- Must respect the sensitivities of others and ensure that their behaviour does not cause offence, or discriminate against fellow colleagues, contractors, job applicants, beneficiaries in the course of their employment with Lewisham Speaking Up;
- Are required to offer support to a known victim of discrimination;
- Are required to draw to the attention of management any apparent instances of discrimination;
- Will not directly support the discriminator by ignoring the incident(s)
- They do not instruct, induce, or attempt to induce or pressurise other employees to act in breach of this policy;

If an Employee is Accused of Discrimination

If an employee is accused of acting in a discriminatory manner towards a fellow employee, or a job applicant, the complaint will be fully investigated.

- In the course of the investigation they will be given a proper opportunity to rebut the allegation, and provide an explanation of their actions.
- If it is concluded that a false claim has been maliciously made against them the person or persons responsible may be subject to disciplinary action.
- If it is concluded that they have acted in a discriminatory manner, their manager will consider what action to take. This may range from counselling to formal disciplinary action, including dismissal in serious cases.

Management Responsibilities

Where problems or complaints arise managers must take these seriously and make sure they are fully investigated and that any necessary follow-up action is taken. This may include initiating disciplinary action against employees who have committed acts of discrimination.

This policy and accompanying action programmes must be communicated widely and effectively to all employees and to potential employees. It is the responsibility of management at all levels to ensure that such communication takes place.