



## **Equal Opportunities Statement and Code of Practice**

### **Policy Statement**

Autus is an equal opportunities organisation. Our policy aims to ensure that our passion for equal opportunities and diversity brings benefits to both our business and the communities we serve, in particular by ensuring that no one receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of sex, age, class, race, background, religion, nationality, ethnic or national origins, disability, learning difficulties, marital status, care commitments or sexual orientation.

We are committed to fulfilling our duties under the Equalities Act 2010 and recognise that there are additional practices we can adopt to be inclusive to groups not covered by legislation.

### **Our Code of Practice**

Our equal opportunities and diversity policy statement is the basis of our code of practice and a firm foundation upon which we intend to plan, implement and continuously review actions to improve our performance in consultation with our staff, partners and associates and the communities we serve. By ensuring that it is clearly communicated and implemented in all we do, we hope it will ensure that our anti-discrimination measures are always as effective as they can be.

### **Policy**

Autus recognises that certain groups in society suffer discrimination and are denied equality of opportunity. We are committed to opposing all forms of discrimination within the organisation and will tolerate no form of discrimination. We will actively work towards promoting equality of opportunity for all, irrespective of:

- Class
- Race, colour, nationality or ethnic background
- Physical disability, learning disability or mental health need
- Age
- Gender or marital status
- Sexual orientation
- Unrelated criminal record
- Religious belief
- Trade Union activities

### **Types of Discrimination**

In the Equality Act (2010), these are some of the types of discrimination mentioned:

#### **Direct Discrimination**

Direct Discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of their age, disability, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sex. (These are also known as protected characteristics)

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You do not have to have a protected characteristic to be discriminated against. If someone believes you have a characteristic and treats you less favourably because of it, this is perceptive discrimination.

Example: Dismissing someone because of a protected characteristic, denying them training or promotion or deciding not to employ them or take them on as a volunteer.

### **Perceptive Discrimination**

This is direct discrimination against someone because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic, even if the person the discrimination is aimed towards does not actually possess the characteristic.

Example: When an employer believes an employee is gay and treats him/her less favourably

### **Indirect Discrimination**

This occurs when an organisation's practices, policies, rules or procedures apply to everyone but it has a worse effect on some people than others and can result in them being put at a disadvantage.

Example: Failing to provide religiously appropriate food when catering for the young people.

### **Victimisation**

Victimisation is also a type of harassment and also a type of bullying. It can also occur when someone is treated badly because they have made a complaint or supported someone else making a complaint.

Example: When a young person is made to look or feel silly, or an employee is not allowed to have training available to everyone else.

### **Harassment**

This is any repeated, intentional behaviour directed at an employee that is intended to degrade, humiliate, embarrass, or otherwise undermine their performance. It can come from any member of an organisation at any level.

Types of Harassment:

- Psychological harassment

This is humiliating or abusing a person that can lower their self-esteem and caused them torment. This can be in the form of verbal comments, actions or gestures

- Racial harassment

This is harassment suffered by individuals or groups because of their colour, race, nationality, or ethnic or national origins. The harassment may be verbal or physical and can also include attacks on property'.

- Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is one of the more commonly recognised forms of harassing behaviour. This kind of harassing behaviour may consist of sexual language, threats, or gestures, although when touching is involved, this is sexual assault.



### **Clear and fair communication**

We will seek to display our policy prominently and include it whenever possible in the printed / 2D materials / 3D resources we produce. We will ensure our publicity information reflects our equal opportunities policy and photographs and case histories reflect the diversity of our business and the communities it benefits. We use best endeavors to ensure our recruitment drives and advertising do not artificially restrict the number of applicants from any one group. We will ensure that all advertisements are clear and unambiguous and associated application/response processes avoid informal screening or minimize barriers to applications from some groups.

### **Staff recruitment, training and support**

We will ensure that interviews are only undertaken by staff fully trained in our equal opportunities policy. Our recruitment processes will be designed to ensure that the recruitment process in general and interviews in particular are conducted in a way which enables applicants to perform as well as they can and avoidable barriers to this are removed / reduced. The skills specified in job descriptions will only be strictly relevant to the requirements of the job and try to ensure that these are not unnecessarily restrictive so as to exclude particular groups, since this would be indirectly discriminatory and therefore unlawful. We will ensure the criteria for selection are consistently applied to all applicants and reasons for rejection or exclusions are recorded and feedback/referrals given to unsuccessful applicants. All new staff will be trained in this policy and code of conduct through a detailed induction and regular performance reviews, supported by a staff handbook which will also include information about support for staff performance, codes of conduct and disciplinary procedures.

### **Employment**

In relation to our employees we will:

- (a) not discriminate on the basis of sex, age, class, race, background, religion, nationality, ethnic or national origins, disability, learning difficulties, marital status, care commitments or sexual orientation, part-time or fixed term contract status, in the allocation of duties between employees employed at any level with comparable job descriptions.
- (b) put in place any reasonable measures and/or adjustments within the workplace for those employees who become disabled during employment or for disabled appointees.
- (c) ensure that all employees are considered solely on their merits for career development and promotion with equal opportunities for all.
- (d) ensure that all employees are provided with appropriate training regardless of sex, age, class, race, background, religion, nationality, ethnic or national origins, disability, learning difficulties, marital status, care commitments or sexual orientation, part-time or fixed term contract status
- (e) encourage all employees to discuss their career prospects and training needs with their Line Manager as part of the Objectives Review process.

### **Criteria applied to the work we undertake**

We will promote equal opportunities and diversity through our work supporting the

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development of partnerships, preparing funding applications and managing new projects that open access to training, education, support and development to individuals and organisations who are suffering disadvantage and/or are most at risk of being excluded. We will continuously review the diversity of our partnerships, improve and expand our research and information base about the needs of particular groups and develop innovative approaches to ensure these can be better met in the future. We also ensure that all our staff, partners and associates are supported to ensure that they are up-to-date with latest equal opportunities and diversity good practice so they can ensure it effectively underpins all they do. All the different media and technologies we use to deliver and promote the work we do, will be designed to maximize access and participation through consultation with our diverse user base and through effective application and promotion of adaptive technologies.

### **Bullying and Harassment**

Matters of bullying and harassment relating to the heads of discrimination are dealt with under the Bullying and Harassment Policy.

### **DBS Disclosures**

Since our projects often involve work with vulnerable adults and young people, existing and new staff may from time to time be required to undergo DBS checks required either by Autus or by one of the organisations with whom we partner. Autus uses an umbrella organisation Attend to carry out our DBS checks. More information can be found in our Safeguarding Policy and Ex-Offenders and DBS Policy.

### **Whistleblowing Statement**

Autus recognises that workers may be the first to see irregularities or unlawful activity but may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the organisation, and they may also fear harassment or victimisation.

### **Complaints/ Challenges under this policy**

We will ensure that:

- all staff, trustees and service users are free to make complaints and are supported in doing so and suffer no discrimination, harassment or victimisation as a result of making a complaint.
- any grievances and complaints are taken seriously and investigated thoroughly by the Equal Opportunities Champion in the first instance. (Where any grievance is against the Champion the CEO will oversee the investigation.

**Staff:** to make a complaint under this policy staff must use the Autus Grievance and Disciplinary Procedure

**Service Users:** to make a complaint under this policy service users should use the Customer Care Policy and associated complaints form.



## **Public Interest Disclosures**

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 protects workers who raise concerns and make certain disclosures in the public interest, from victimisation or harassment. In accordance with that Act and because the organisation is committed to quality and transparency in whatever contracts / projects that are undertaken, Autus encourages employees to raise serious concerns about any aspect of the company's work in confidence and without fear of reprisals.

The type of concern which is in the public interest may include:

- a criminal offence
- failure to comply with legal obligations
- financial or non-financial maladministration or malpractice or impropriety or fraud
- professional malpractice
- a risk to the health or safety of any individual
- environmental damage
- a miscarriage of justice
- improper conduct or unethical behaviour
- attempts to suppress or conceal any information relating to any of the above

Should you have a matter to raise which falls under whistleblowing, please put it in writing marked 'confidential' to the Director.

The following are not matters which fall under whistleblowing:

- issues about your own conditions of service: these should be addressed via the Grievance Procedure or Bullying and Harassment Procedures, depending on the nature/seriousness of the complaint; or
- a matter raised by you as or on behalf of a customer / beneficiary of one of our projects: these should be addressed via the Customer Care Policy Complaints Procedure.

Anonymous allegations will be considered and investigated at the discretion of the Director, having regard for the seriousness of the issue raised, the credibility of the complaint, the prospects of being able to investigate the matter, and fairness to any individual mentioned in the complaint.

## **Related policies**

Customer Care Policy  
Safeguarding  
Bullying and harassment  
Ex -Offenders and DBS