

Equality & Diversity Policy

This policy explains the Intech Centre's vision and commitment to equality of opportunity and respect for diversity in its role as a provider of quality services to the customers, clients, learners, employees and stakeholders.

Intech Centre recognises the importance of diversity hence it seeks to promote this by valuing the uniqueness of each individual.

A Glossary of Terms has been included at the end of the document to explain some of the terms used in this policy.

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1. Access to this Policy

This document can be made available in large print on request from the Senior Manager, 362 Essex Road, Islington, N1 3PD, info@intechcentre.com

Reference is made within this policy to other related Intech Centre policies. These can also be found on our website or can be obtained from the above address.

2. Our Vision

Intech Centre is committed to the vision of having a safe, cohesive, healthy, and inclusive centre environment. This vision is guided by a number of core values including treating people with equality and valuing diversity; building strong, cohesive centre environment and promoting good community relations; and involving and listening to learners, customers, employees and the stakeholders.

The overall aim of this policy is to: -

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination;
- Promote equality of opportunity;
- Promote equality of access; and
- Promote good relations between diverse group of stakeholders

3. The Legal Framework

Intech Centre acknowledges its responsibilities as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality Act was introduced on 1st October 2010. It brings together over a hundred separate pieces of legislation, providing a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all.

The nine main pieces of legislation that have been merged are:

1. Equal Pay Act 1970
2. Sex Discrimination Act 1975
3. Race Relations Act 1976
4. Disability Discrimination Act 1995
5. The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
6. The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
7. The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
8. The Equality Act 2006, Part 2
9. The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007

We will ensure that our policies and procedures are compliant with any forthcoming legislation; Codes of Practice and guidance published by national equalities bodies and Commissions.

4. Types of Discrimination

Discrimination occurs when a person or group of people are treated on certain grounds less favourably than another. For example, this might occur on the basis of a person's age, disability, gender, gender re-assignment, marital status, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, culture, sexual orientation or other differences. It must be remembered that individuals can experience less favourable treatment for more than one reason.

There are instances when the law allows for people to be treated differently. This is when a particular requirement or condition is objectively justifiable e.g. where the holder of the job provides individuals with personal services and those services can only be provided by a particular sex or the same racial group.

Discrimination can be direct, indirect, associative, perceptive, intentional or unintentional, and can be caused by individuals, groups or institutions. See the Glossary of Terms at the end of this policy for a more detailed explanation of different types of discrimination.

The Equality Act imposes a duty on employers and service providers to make "reasonable adjustments" to accommodate people's disabilities. To promote diversity, we endorse the Social Model of disability which addresses the disadvantages faced by those with disabilities of whatever kind in employment, access to goods, facilities, services and premises.

Institutional racism is defined in the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report as "the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping."

At an institutional level, prejudices become embedded in policies, practices, procedures and criteria for decision making. These discriminate with the effect of excluding some people in favour of others. This could lead to unequal treatment, inequitable distribution of opportunities, power and resources, which in turn could deprive some people of a better quality of life.

This collective failure of an organisation to provide appropriate and professional service or employment condition can also be because of a person's age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion and belief.

At an individual level, a person may hold negative attitudes and use language that could result in inappropriate discriminatory behaviour or outcomes, which are unacceptable.

5. Achieving Equality

Intech Centre will integrate equality of opportunity and respect for diversity into all aspects of its activity.

To achieve our aims we will:

- Positively promote equality of opportunity and respect for diversity within Centre;
- Challenge all forms of unfair discrimination, whether intentional, unintentional, institutional or otherwise;
- Develop a Corporate Equalities Scheme and Action Plan to implement this Policy;
- Undertake Equality Impact Assessments on service provision and employment and take appropriate action;
- Establish clear targets for improvement within service areas and employment;
- Engage with and listen to the views of our stakeholders and service users, to assist in the development of our equality agenda;
- Incorporate equality of opportunity into all policies, plans and strategies from the start;
- Develop services that are appropriate and accessible to all members of the community;
- Seek to create a workforce profile that reflects our diverse community at all levels;
- Provide appropriate training and development in equality and diversity issues for our employees;
- Review, self-assess, audit and report progress annually on our equalities work;
- Work to develop procedures to respond to and address all forms of harassment and victimisation;
- Work with our partners in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors to ensure the best outcomes for people who live, work and visit Worcestershire.

6. Equality and Diversity in Service Provision

Service users and potential service users can expect Intech Centre to aim to:

- Design and deliver appropriate, accessible and effective services and facilities to all stakeholders;
- Provide clear and accessible information about our services, in a variety of appropriate formats
- Use effective systems for challenging, reviewing and monitoring our service delivery and to ensure that quality and equality are continuously evaluated and improved and to ensure that all sections of our services are receiving fair access and outcomes;
- Ensure that all our employees understand what equality in service provision means by providing specific training;
- Engage with and listen to all sections of the stakeholders in identifying needs and in decisions on the way Intech Centre plan and deliver its services;
- Monitor and evaluate service up-take in relation to age, disability, gender and race.

7. Equality and Diversity at Work

Intech Centre recognises the importance of representative workforce. Therefore Intech Centre aims to tackle inequalities and discrimination in the workplace. In order to ensure that equality underpins all aspects of our employment policies, procedures and practices, we aim to:

- Ensure that our employment, training and development policies, procedures and practices comply with this policy and do not discriminate intentionally or unintentionally against any group or individual;
- Monitor our employment processes by age, disability, gender and racial group and take action to address any inequalities that are apparent;
- Recruit employees in a manner which is fair and open;
- Ensure employees are aware of their personal responsibility to apply this policy;
- Eliminate discrimination in the provision of training and development to ensure that all employees can realise their full potential and contribute to the development of Intech Centre;

- Ensure that all employees undertake relevant training in equal opportunity issues to raise their awareness, understanding and importance of equal opportunities in the work place and in service delivery;
- Ensure that the content of all training and development activities reflect our commitment to equality of opportunity and diversity;
- Promote a culture of fairness and respect in all employment policies, procedures and practices;
- Provide appropriate training and development opportunities to all employees;
- Take positive action to encourage under-represented groups to apply for posts or specific training;
- Ensure pay structures reward all employees fairly;
- Recognise that employees have the right to work in a supportive, safe and harassment-free environment and all complaints are dealt with robustly;
- Ensure that we have an equal pay policy in place;
- Make reasonable adjustments, wherever possible, to enable the employment and redeployment of staff with disabilities;

8. A shared responsibility

Within Intech Centre, all employees have a part to play in challenging discrimination and in implementing this policy. If anyone witnesses a discriminatory incident at work, they have a duty of care to others to challenge such behaviour and practice.

The Senior Manager is responsible for providing leadership in the implementation of this policy. All employees are responsible for promoting equality and are accountable to the electorate for ensuring equality of opportunity and respect for diversity in all our services and employment. The Senior Manager is also responsible for providing leadership in the implementation of this policy and for ensuring that service planning and performance management systems incorporate specific equality objectives in terms of service delivery and employment. Additionally, he is also responsible for ensuring that employees are adequately informed, trained and supported to ensure that their duties are carried out in accordance with this policy.

All employees are responsible for ensuring that they play their part in implementing this policy. They will also be responsible for improving their awareness of the barriers to equality in service provision and employment, for working towards the elimination of these barriers and for performing their duties in accordance with this policy.

Any breach of this policy will be dealt with through the procedure described in section 10. Serious offences such as harassment will be treated as misconduct or gross misconduct.

9. Monitoring and Measuring Progress

Intech Centre will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy through consultation with the stakeholders, internal grievance process and Self-Assessment Report. This will include monitoring the extent to which we are meeting the aims as set out in this policy.

The Intech Centre will review this policy, at least annually, to ensure it is appropriate and responsive to relevant legislation. Amendments to the policy and scheme will be made, where appropriate, in the light of experience or changes in guidance and/or legislation.

10. How to provide feedback

Intech Centre welcomes your feedback (comments, compliments and complaints) on how well we are implementing this policy in the services we deliver to the public.

For general comments and compliments, or if you believe that you have been the subject of unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation by Intech Centre then you should contact us by:

- Telephone – 020 7354 5655;
- Writing to – Senior Manager, Intech Centre, 362 Essex Road, Islington, N1 3PD
- E-mailing – Salih@intechcentre.com

All feedback will be handled in accordance with our complaints procedure

If a member of staff feels that they have been discriminated against, victimised or harassed, they should speak to their Line Manager in the first instance. For advice about individual rights and copies of relevant procedures, they should look at the Staff Handbook on the Intranet.

All allegations of this nature will be taken very seriously, investigated and appropriate action taken.

11. Staff Training

Equality & Diversity is part of our staff recruitment process. All centre staff are required to read, understand and apply the policy. Everyone is required to undertake equality & diversity training within 3 months of their employment. Annual refresher training is part of staff continuous professional development.

12. Glossary of Terms

Action Plan

A practical and realistic plan, with an agreed timetable showing how the policy will be implemented and by whom.

Age

The Government wants to prohibit unfair practices based on inaccurate assumptions, in order to remove the barriers which people of all ages face if they want to work or undertake vocational training.

Associative Discrimination

Also known as discrimination by association, this is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic. This applies to race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, disability, gender reassignment and sex.

Cohesive Communities

A cohesive community is one, which enjoys:

- A sense of belonging for all members of the community;
- The different backgrounds of people are valued and appreciated;
- Equal access to the opportunities life presents;
- Working towards developing relationships between people from diverse backgrounds in work, schools, and local neighbourhoods.

Corporate Representations Procedure

The Representations Procedure enables us to show our customers that we are listening and are prepared to make changes when appropriate; it helps us to monitor customers' views as a form of quality control; it provides staff with clear guidelines for working with customers and enables us to give praise where it is due.

Direct Discrimination

This is treating a person, without justification, less favourably than another, particularly because of one's feelings, assumptions or prejudices about the characteristics, attributes or circumstances of that person. This can include certain forms of harassment or abuse.

Disability

The definition of a disability is broad: "A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day -to-day activities." Under the Equality Act, "substantial" is taken to mean "more than minor or trivial" rather than "very large".

Diversity

Diversity literally means "variety". Valuing diversity means valuing people and recognising that everyone is unique/different but of equal worth.

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 provides a cross-cutting legislative framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all; to update, simplify and strengthen the previous legislation; and to deliver a simple, modern and accessible framework of discrimination law which protects individuals from unfair treatment and promotes a fair and more equal society.

Much of the Equality Act came into force in October 2010, however other provisions in the Equality Act will come into force at different times to allow time for the people and organisations affected by the new laws to prepare for them. For the latest information about the Equality Act, visit the Government Equalities Office website.

Equality of Opportunity

This means treating people fairly without bias or discrimination, and always within the law. Everyone should be entitled to the same opportunities without regard to race, gender, sexual orientation, religion/belief, disability, age or personal circumstances.

Harassment

Unwanted conduct, which has the purpose of violating another person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Indirect Discrimination

This is applying, without justification, a request or condition which, on the face of it applies to everyone but which in practice, forms a greater obstacle to a person, or group of persons, with particular characteristics, attributes or circumstances.

Monitoring

The process of collecting, analysing and evaluating information to measure performance, progress or change.

Perceptive Discrimination

Also known as discrimination by perception, this is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. This applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic.

Prejudice

Literally means "pre-judgement", forming a view about a person in advance. For example, racial prejudice is having a negative opinion or attitude about an individual or group based solely upon their race or skin colour.

Racism

All those ideas, beliefs, actions, customs, practices and policies that have the effect of disadvantaging and/or discriminating against people because of their skin colour, culture or ethnic origin.

Social Exclusion

This term describes what happens to people who are deprived of good quality housing, suffer unemployment, low incomes, poor health or live in areas of high level crime.

Unwitting Racism

This can arise because of lack of understanding, ignorance or mistaken beliefs. It can arise from well-intentioned but patronising words or actions. It can arise from unfamiliarity with the behaviour or cultural traditions of people or families from minority ethnic communities.

Victimisation

Treating people less favourably because of action they have taken under or in connection with the new legislation – for example, made a formal complaint of discrimination or given evidence in a tribunal case.

Whistleblowing

A procedure by which employees of the Intech Centre can formally raise serious concerns about inappropriate conduct or activities within the organisations