

Pluss

Equality and Diversity Policy

Purpose: This equality and diversity policy sets out Pluss' commitment to tackle discrimination and promote equality and diversity in all areas of our business as well as ensure compliance with UK and European legislative requirements.

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Version	Date	Summary of Change
1.1	01.04.2012	Reviewed and updated
1.2	01.04.2014	Reviewed
1.3	01.08.2015	Reviewed
1.4	01.06.2016	Reviewed
1.5	01.11.2017	3rd Party Harassment definition has been removed. Scope has been expanded to include volunteers and contractors Section 7.0 Non-Compliance of Policy has been added
1.6	01.06.2018	Updated to meet ESF requirements.



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1.0 GLOSSARY

Equality

Equality relates to treating people equally although they may belong to certain groups. Equal Opportunities relate to a legal framework which makes it illegal to discriminate against people on the grounds of group membership i.e. sex, race, sexual orientation, age etc.

Diversity

Diversity relates to the individual differences that people have and how these are understood. In terms of organisations, it is about respecting, valuing and benefiting from a varied workforce.

Protected Characteristics

These are 9 protected characteristics. These are personal circumstances, arising from the Equality Act 2010, which cannot be used to treat people unfairly:

- **age** - where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18 - 30 year olds).
- **disability** - a person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
- **gender reassignment** - the process of transitioning from one gender to another.
- **marriage and civil partnership** - marriage is defined as a 'union between a man and a woman'. Same-sex couples can have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must be treated the same as married couples on a wide range of legal matters.
- **pregnancy and maternity** - pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.
- **race** - refers to the protected characteristic of Race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.
- **religion or belief** - religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.
- **sex** - a man or a woman.

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- **sexual orientation** - whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

Direct Discrimination

This is where someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic.

Discrimination by Association

Direct Discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.

Discrimination by Perception

Direct discrimination against someone because the others think they possess a particular protected characteristic.

Indirect Discrimination

This can occur when you have a rule or policy that applies to everyone but disadvantages a particular protected characteristic.

Positive Discrimination

This is when a person is employed on the basis of a protected characteristic without being the most suitable candidate for the role, in order to raise the numbers of an under-represented group.

Harassment

Employees can now complain of behaviour they find offensive even if it not directed at them.

Victimisation

Someone who is treated badly because they have made / supported a complaint or grievance under the act.

Bullying

This is the use of force or coercion to abuse or intimidate others. It can include verbal harassment or threat, physical assault or coercion and may be directed repeatedly towards particular victims, perhaps on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexuality, or ability.

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Prejudice

A preconceived, usually unfavorable, judgment towards a person because of gender, social class, age, disability, religion, sexuality, race/ethnicity, language, nationality or other personal characteristics.

Institutional Discrimination

“The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their race, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion/belief. It can be detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour, which amounts to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping which disadvantage people.”

The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry: Macpherson Report, February 1999

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Pluss believes that no one should be treated less favourably on the basis of their protected characteristics, such as sex, racial or ethnic origin, colour, religion, disability, marital status, sexuality or age. Pluss believes that everyone should be valued as individuals.

Pluss is committed to providing equality of opportunity for all employees in all of its services. We are committed to providing services which embrace diversity and which promote equality.

In order to achieve our commitments, we will seek to redress any discrimination and disadvantage through positive action measures (see 8) where appropriate and possible. Our aims will be embedded in our day-to-day working practices with all our Participants, work colleagues and partners.

- We will not tolerate any form of unfair discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation with any such act being challenged and dealt with appropriately. We will create a working environment where everyone is treated fairly and without prejudice.
- We value the benefits that a workforce, which reflects the community at large, brings to the organisation and we are committed to providing support and encouragement to all employees to develop and use their talents and abilities.

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3.0 PURPOSE

This equality and diversity policy sets out Pluss' commitment to tackle discrimination and promote equality and diversity in all areas of our business as well as ensure compliance with UK legislative requirements.

4.0 SCOPE

This policy is applicable to **all** employees, volunteers and contractors engaged to provide services for the company, irrespective of whether such a contract is for temporary, fixed term or are of a permanent duration and to both internal and external candidates. The policy is non-contractual and does not form part of an employee's contract of employment.

Pluss has a commitment to promoting equality and diversity whilst delivering European Social Funding activity through ESF Programmes where Pluss is a prime contractor outlined below:

- Work and Health Programme CPA4 (Southern)
- ESF 1420 Leeds (Calderdale, Kirklees, Wakefield) (20)
- Building Better Opportunities (BBO) Cornwall Coast to Coast
- Building Better Opportunities (BBO) South East Cornwall
- Building Better Opportunities (BBO) Devon
- Building Better Opportunities (BBO) Somerset
- Building Better Opportunities (BBO) Calderdale, Kirklees, Wakefield

This commitment includes delivery through sub-contractor partners detailed in contract specific action plans.

5.0 COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

Pluss recognises the importance of the Equality Act and also as a provider of Government contracts the Public Sector Equality Duty. Pluss will demonstrate its commitment by;

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

And will do so by;

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- Adhering to the Equality Act 2010 a piece of legislation that was put into effect to ensure that people are treated fairly within the workplace and not discriminated on the grounds of any protected characteristic.
- Pluss will ensure that recruitment and selection processes are fair and equal. This recruitment and selection policy seeks to ensure that the best candidate is chosen for each job vacancy regardless of sex, race, disability or other protected characteristic as outlined in the Equality Act 2010. For full detail please refer to the policy.
- Encouraging recruitment and promotion from groups currently under represented in the organisation.
- Working towards having a workforce that reflects the local population and the communities in which we work.
- Including a positive statement about equality of opportunity in our job advertisements.
- Only asking for relevant criteria in person specifications.
- Making reasonable adjustments for applications, candidates and employees in respect of disability/long term health conditions, and where possible and appropriate, other personal needs.
- Developing a culture at Pluss which values people from all sections of society and supports the contribution each individual can make.
- Ensuring that unlawful discrimination does not occur in terms and conditions of employment, learning and development opportunities and promotion.
- Treating our Participants, colleagues and partners with dignity and respect.
- Providing support and encouragement to employees to develop their careers and increase their contribution to the organisation through the enhancement of their skills and abilities
- Building in legislative requirements and best practice to all our service delivery and employee policies and procedures, and supporting these with appropriate training and guidance.
- All employees will be informed of all relevant policies and the complaints procedure during their induction period and at other relevant training. The policies are listed on page 9.
- Making sure that awareness of discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation is an integral part of the organisational culture. This will be supported by training programmes and by other means that are designed to be incorporated into the corporate Self Assessment Report.
- Our publications and leaflets will be in accessible and appropriate formats.
- Monitoring representation and performance of difference groups (sex, race, disability, and age)
- Development and implementation of corporate Equality and Diversity action plan. In addition contract specific Policy statements and related action plans.

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6.0 RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITIES FOR EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

Everyone has a responsibility to promote this policy and to ensure that their actions do not lead to unlawful discrimination. Specifically, within Pluss the following have responsibility:

The Pluss Leadership Team (PLT) through the Human Resources Function:

- Establishing appropriate equal opportunities policies
- Making sure the policies keep up with changes in the law
- Actively dealing with and resolving; any reported breaches of policy, or complaints received. Pluss will make sure these policies are promoted and implemented within the organisation.

Managers:

- Leading by example through their personal behaviour
- Encourage and promote that their staff understand this policy and are supported to put it into practice.
- Take immediate steps to address the behaviour and conduct of any employee whose actions breach current legislation.
- To create a team culture where every individual is treated with respect and feels safe and supported to challenge unlawful direct or indirect discrimination.

External contractors and organisations:

- Pluss engages with a wide variety of individuals, organisations, contractors, consultants and suppliers. It is essential that we expect their commitment and co-operation to adhere to the Pluss equal opportunities and diversity policy.
- We will require that external contractors and organisations conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with our values and commitment to equal opportunities.
- We will require that external contractors and organisations have a working commitment to promoting equality within their own organisations and are encouraged to use this policy.

Employees:

- Not to harass, abuse, bully or victimise other people.
- Not to discriminate unfairly against other people on the basis of their race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, or any other protected characteristic
- Not to encourage others to practice discrimination, or do anything that suggests that discrimination is acceptable behaviour.
- To treat other people with dignity and respect.
- To respect other people's views and opinions, even if they are not agreed.
- To comply with the law regarding equality and diversity at work.

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- To follow organisational policies and codes of conduct.
- To challenge and report any discriminatory acts or behaviour witnessed.

7.0 NON- COMPLIANCE WITH POLICY

Pluss will not tolerate any behavior which breaches our equality and diversity policy. Any concerns/breaches of policy should be reported to the Head of HR in the first instance, at which point an investigation will be launched if appropriate and managed under the Company's Discipline and/or Grievance policy.

Any breaches will be regarded as misconduct except for serious offences such as discrimination on protected grounds; serious offences including harassment, bullying, or victimisation will be treated as potential gross misconduct and may lead to disciplinary action including dismissal from employment without notice.

8.0 MONITORING & REVIEWING PERFORMANCE

Pluss HR department actively monitors and reports to the Pluss Leadership Team on the demographics of its workforce, and if it is identified that one of the protected characteristics, as defined in the Equality Act 2010, is under-represented within Pluss, it will actively encourage individuals from under-represented groups to apply for roles – as well as supporting them through the selection process. The selection process itself is no different, and must be based solely on merit. 'Positive action' does not seek to remove competition for jobs.

Information on candidates protected characteristics will be collated from Pluss' Diversity Monitoring Form via the e-recruitment system, thus enabling Pluss to take positive action measures, where it feels it is appropriate, to improve equality and diversity of its workforce. This information will not be used in the selection process but could be used during the decision process. Candidates are not obliged to supply information relating to any protected characteristic it is a voluntary request. The information collected will be held securely and in line with General Data Protection Regulations.

HR will also monitor the ethnic origin, age, gender and disabled status of employees raising grievance and/or harassment complaints or those receiving disciplinary sanctions.

9.0 POSITIVE ACTION

Positive action is not the same as positive discrimination, and does not involve treating particular groups more favourably when recruiting.

The Equality Act provides that an employer may, in relation to recruitment and selection and in only limited circumstances, treat a

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person who has a protected characteristic more favourably than a person who does not.

'Positive action' refers to a range of measures and initiatives that employers can lawfully take to actively encourage individuals from under-represented groups to apply - as well as supporting them through the selection process.

10.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Pluss ensure that equality impact assessments are carried out on major change projects.

11.0 POLICY REVIEW/OTHER POLICY LINKS

This policy will be reviewed in line with legislative and government changes, contractual requirements, best practice guidelines and updated in line Pluss' policy review timetable.

This policy links to the following Pluss documents

- Recruitment & Selection Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Employee Handbook
- Health & Safety Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Discipline Policy
- Training & Development Policy

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