

ASHIANA NETWORK
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

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Next Review	October 2015

Scope

Equality and diversity is an integral part of all of the policies and practices of Ashiana Network. This policy should be read in conjunction with all other Ashiana Network policies, procedures and mandatory documents.

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, trustees, service users, and visitors, also to all engagements with funding bodies, partner organisations, sub-contractors and suppliers

While we will adhere to the legislation, Ashiana Network also strives to develop equality and inclusion strategies and practices beyond our statutory requirements.

This policy forms part of the terms and conditions of employment for staff.

The Ashiana Network qualifies the term ‘South Asian, Turkish and Iranian women’ as any woman of Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, Turkish or Iranian descent.

Aim

The aim of this policy is to ensure that diversity is valued and celebrated at Ashiana Network. We aim to ensure fair treatment for all involved with Ashiana Network and recognise and remove any unfair barriers to equality of opportunity in our resources, service provision and employment.

Values

Ashiana Network is a progressive organisation committed to advancing women’s equality, social justice and human rights. Ashiana is an organisation working within feminist principles. Ashiana works from a rights based approach and the premise that violence against women and girls (VAWG) is gender based violence and a human rights issue.

Our Core Values:

- Professionalism
- Innovation
- Excellence
- Commitment
- Empowerment

Ashiana Network firmly believes that strengthening the women's sector helps challenge discrimination against women and improves their lives of women.

Ashiana will:

- actively challenge any discrimination against women within our own organisation and other;
- proactively work with, learn from and support other equalities organisations and will ensure our work is based on an equalities framework;
- work in an open, honest, accountable and transparent way with staff, volunteers, members and other stakeholders;
- ensure that our activities, services and information are accessible;
- Work collaboratively with other organisations to address gender inequality and we acknowledge the expertise of women's organisations.

Main Principles

Ashiana Network recognises that certain groups and individuals are discriminated against and that discrimination can be direct or indirect and takes place at personal and institutional levels. Ashiana strongly believes that such discrimination is wrong. It is committed to ensuring that its policies and practices provide equal treatment to all in the allocation of housing, provision of services and the employment of staff and contractors. It accepts the need to adopt positive policies to take account of past and present discrimination against certain groups and individuals in society, and to comply with the terms of the Race Relations Act, Sex Discrimination Act and Disabled Persons (Employment) Act.

Ashiana serves a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual community. It operates in an area with a large Black, Minority, Ethnic and Refugee (BME) population. Ashiana provides housing and support to women that present with a multiplicity of problems and complex issues. We work with women presenting with a combination of the following:

- Domestic Violence/sexual violence
- Harmful practices such as forced marriage and honour based violence
- Mental health needs including moderate/severe depression, self-harming
- Disabled women; including mild/moderate learning difficulties
- Language needs
- Cultural/religious needs
- Insecure immigration/NRPF
- Trafficked women
- Young women and girls
- Women from a range of ethnicities; including South Asian, Turkish, Iranian, Afghani, Moroccan, Eastern European, African/Caribbean.

The organisation's services, policies and practices need to reflect the needs and experiences of the community. It is necessary for all staff, volunteers, members of the Board and service users to adhere to, and positively promote, the organisation's Diversity and Equalities Policy. Adherence to the Diversity and Equalities Policy is a condition of service for all staff, and of recruitment to the Board of Management.

This statement covers the main areas of the organisation's work. It highlights the methods by which policies ensure equality of opportunity and treatment are being implemented.

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 Ashiana Network is committed to supporting, developing and promoting equality and diversity in all of its practices and activities and aims to establish an inclusive culture free from discrimination and based upon the values of dignity, courtesy and respect. The organisation will support and develop the staff through providing all with access to facilities, personal and career development opportunities, on an equal basis regardless of ethnic origin, national identity, disability, age, sexual orientation, religious belief or socio-economic background.
- 1.2 This commitment supports the organisational principles of Ashiana Network and upholds the ethos of establishing a culture based on dignity, courtesy and respect.
- 1.3 This policy builds upon the foundation of equality legislation and anti-discrimination guidance and strives, not only to comply with legal requirements, but to use these to ensure that Ashiana Network endeavours to exemplify best practice.
- 1.4 Ashiana Network values diversity and recognises that the institution is greatly enhanced by the disparate range of backgrounds, experiences, views, beliefs and cultures represented within its staff. Ashiana Network aims to embrace diversity in all of its activities and proudly acknowledges that variety and difference are intrinsic to the wellbeing and future development of Ashiana Network.
- 1.5 The Equality and Diversity policy underpins the Mission of Ashiana Network and is integral to the success of the organisation as a leading BMER Women's movement working to end violence against women and children.
- 1.6 This is an over-arching policy designed to outline the fundamental principles of Ashiana Network's commitment to equality and diversity and will be supported by specific action plans for each of the following: Gender, Race, Disability, Religion and/or Belief, Sexual Orientation, Age and Dignity at Work.
- 1.7 The policy applies to all staff posts, to all staff employed on a full time or part-time basis, to all staff on permanent or temporary contracts, and to agency staff undertaking duties in the name of Ashiana Network and to sub-contractors undertaking work on the Ashiana Network site.

2. Statement of Intent

- 2.1 Ashiana Network recognises that many people in our society experience discrimination or lack of opportunity for reasons which are not fair. These include: race, religion, creed, colour, national and ethnic origin, language, political beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability (including mental illness), HIV status, marital status, responsibility for dependants, appearance, social class, income level or criminal record.
- 2.2 Ashiana Network takes the position that everyone should be treated fairly, without discrimination and should have his or her human rights respected. Where we find discrimination and lack of opportunity in our own policies and practice, we shall challenge these, and where we find this in other organisations that we work with, we shall encourage them to do the same.
- 2.3 Ashiana Network is striving to create a culture that respects and values the individual and each individual's differences. We believe that each individual has the right to the opportunity to fulfil their potential, and that each person within this organisation has a contribution to make.
- 2.4 It is a requirement of employment with this organisation, and/or of contracting with this organisation that all employees, volunteers, committee members, member organisations and contractors consent to support the objectives of this Equality and Diversity Policy. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action, ineligibility for membership or termination of the contract.

3. Legislative Background

3.1 Under Equality legislation it is unlawful to:

- Discriminate directly against anyone and treat him/her less favourably than others on account of race, disability, gender, sexual orientation or religion or belief;
- Discriminate indirectly against anyone by applying a criterion, provision or practice which disadvantages people of a particular race, gender, sexual orientation or religion or belief or disadvantages people with disabilities;
- Subject someone to harassment on account of race, disability, gender, sexual orientation or religion or belief;
- Victimise someone because s/he has made, or intends to make, a complaint or allegation or has given or intends to give evidence in relation to a complaint of discrimination of grounds of sexual orientation, religion or belief;
- Discriminate against someone in certain circumstances on account of race, disability, gender, sexual orientation or religion or belief after the working relationship has ended.

We do not only recognise the different equality strands covered by legislation but are also opposed to all unlawful and unfair discrimination (direct or indirect). The areas currently recognised in the law are:

- Age
- Conviction history

- Disability
- Sexual Orientation
- Family and caring responsibilities
- Gender
- Gender identity
- Marital or civil partnership status
- Race, colour, nationality, national or ethnic origin
- Religion, religious belief or non-belief, or other beliefs

4. Objectives

- To develop and promote a culture of equality and diversity throughout the institution;
- To develop and promote a culture of dignity, courtesy and respect;
- To support all staff, regardless of race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief;
- To prevent all forms of unlawful discrimination;
- To deal with all forms of discrimination consistently and effectively;
- To ensure that the Equality and Diversity policy influences and informs the culture of Ashiana Network.
- To meet the aims of this policy by ensuring that equality and good diversity practice is mainstreamed through all that we do.

5. Responsibilities of all

It is incumbent upon all members of Ashiana Network to behave with dignity, courtesy and respect and to act in a non-discriminatory manner at all times.

Ashiana Network is actively committed to encouraging and promoting the positive contribution of our diverse staff and service users. Under this policy it is therefore the responsibility of all Trustees, managers, staff and volunteers to:

- read this policy, meet the expectations contained within and seek clarification for anything that is unclear;
- attend appropriate equality and diversity training provided by Ashiana Network;
- set a positive example in the treatment of others;
- challenge any behaviour that could be interpreted as breaching this policy;
- be pro-active in ensuring this policy is adhered to in their decision making and through the active challenge of policies and practices that do not adhere to the spirit or letter of this policy;
- promote an environment in which women from all backgrounds feel welcome, valued and respected;
- Promote equality and diversity in the delivery of Ashiana Network services and in everything that we do.

5.1 Role of Staff

- Actively to encourage non-discriminatory practices and to report any incidences of behaviour that fail to comply with this policy;
- To support the aims of Ashiana Network's Equality and Diversity policy;

- To undertake appropriate equality and diversity training.

5.2 Role of Human Resources

- To provide appropriate equality and diversity awareness and training for all staff;
- To support the Director and Senior Management/Management Committee in implementing the policy;
- To ensure that recruitment advertising, selection and appointment procedures, performance management processes and disciplinary grievance processes are fair and transparent and are consistently applied;
- To monitor equality data and to publish the findings of monitoring activity, as appropriate.

5.3 Role of the Director/SMT

To ensure that all members of staff within Ashiana Network receive the appropriate equality and diversity training;

- To investigate all matters of alleged discrimination, harassment and inappropriate behaviour promptly and thoroughly;
- To ensure that selection and appointment procedures, performance management processes, staff development opportunities and disciplinary and grievance processes are fairly and consistently applied to all staff;
- To treat all applications for flexible practices on a fair and equitable basis and to provide reasonable and objective reasons when such requests are refused;
- To ensure that equality and diversity issues are considered as part of the organisation's business and planning processes.
- Be a role model;
- Encourage a culture where staff and others feel able to challenge inappropriate behaviour;
- Promote and implement the principles of this policy through all service provision, policy and practice;
- Support and implement action to improve equality and diversity at Ashiana Network.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities under the policy;
- Ensure that appropriate action is taken where there has been a breach of this policy;
- Support and direct those who may have experienced discrimination, harassment or bullying to additional support as appropriate
- Oversee the development and operation of this policy;
- Update the organisation on any changes affecting the policy;
- Ensure that the policy and its related procedures, mechanisms and agreed action plans are implemented effectively;
- Ensure that the organisation is adhering to good practice;
- Ensure the appropriate monitoring is carried out as directed by the Board of Trustees;
- Ensure that any concern, grievance or complaint is dealt with promptly, sensitively and confidentially;

5.4 Role of Management Committee

- To advise the Director on best practice in all matters relating to equality and diversity;
- To devise and recommend policies, procedures and action plans to ensure that all legislative requirements are met and best practice adopted;

- To collect and review data relevant to diversity and equality matters relating to or employees on a regular basis and recommend changes to policies and procedures as appropriate;
- To advise on the provision of appropriate training and awareness-raising in relation to all equal opportunities and diversity matters.
- To be accountable for the actions of Ashiana Network in relation to this policy.
- To encourage, foster and promote a culture of equality and diversity in the organisation;
- To ensure consistency of this policy with other policies and initiatives, making recommendations and providing advice on implementation of the policy.
- To hold ultimate accountability for the Equality and Diversity policy.
- To ensure that equality and diversity issues are mainstreamed into the work of sub-committees.
- Ensure clear leadership in the promotion of equality and diversity;
- Ensure that Ashiana Network adheres to equality legislation and good practice;
- Ensure that equality and diversity is embedded into strategic planning;
- Ensure the policy is reviewed as stated;
- Regularly consider monitoring data and any action plans which arise from it.

6. Implementation

6.1 Monitoring of the Equality and diversity policy and its implementation is the responsibility of the Ashiana Network Management Committee, and by delegation the Director and Senior Management Team of the organisation.

6.2 Monitoring will take place throughout the year for:

- Recruitment, selection and promotion (see the Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure)
- Members of the Board of Trustees
- Service Users

On the basis of: gender, age, disability, ethnic origin, gender identity, sexual orientation and religion or belief.

We will also endeavour to monitor the types of organisation we work with.

Ashiana Network will keep monitoring information confidential for job applicants, employees, volunteers and Trustees.

Ashiana Network will analyse/evaluate the monitoring and evaluation records kept on an annual basis and consider whether:

- Staff, volunteers and Trustees are representative of women living in the wider community
- Specific groups of staff, volunteers and Trustees are not leaving Ashiana Network in disproportionate numbers. Reasons for leaving given at exit interviews will also be analysed

- Individual staff, volunteers and Trustees are being recruited, selected and promoted on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities.

During review, all Ashiana Network policies and processes will be assessed to ensure they do not unfairly discriminate against or disadvantage any group. The monitoring information collected will be used to help in that assessment where possible.

6.3 A copy of this Equality and Diversity policy and Equality action plan will be given to all new staff, volunteers and committee members of Ashiana Network and to funding organisations and contractors on request.

7. Application of the Policy: Staff

7.1 Recruitment and Selection

- Recruitment advertising will encourage applications from all sectors of the VAWG community reflecting Ashiana Network's commitment to equality and diversity;
- Recruitment advertising will appear in publications appropriate to the audience capable of producing the best candidates;
- Job descriptions, person specifications and recruitment advertisements will be written on the basis of the essential and justifiable requirements of the position;
- Short-listing, appointment and rejection decisions will be transparent and justifiable and will be supported by written comments.

7.2 Grading and Promotion

- All grading and promotions criteria and procedures will be free from prejudice and must be applied equitably and consistently where these exist.

7.3 Staff Development

- All staff will have equal access to induction, personal and career development opportunities and facilities.

7.4 Performance Management

- Probation and appraisal procedures will be clear and transparent and will be applied fairly across all staff.

7.5 Discipline and Grievance

- Disciplinary and grievance procedures will be applied fairly and transparently for all staff;
- Allegations of discrimination, harassment or inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with under the appropriate disciplinary procedures for staff.

8. Access

8.1 It is essential that Ashiana Network services and activities are fully accessible for all who want, and are eligible, to be involved. The following areas should be carefully considered with regard to access:

- meetings
- events
- publicity
- training

- use of resources
- referrals
- activities

9. Training

9.1 Equality and diversity awareness raising and training will be mandatory for all staff. Information will be provided to all staff in order to raise awareness of equality and diversity and the contents of this policy.

10. Communication

10.1 It will also be available in printed form and, if requested, will be made available in different formats (for example large print, audio cassette) and in different languages (if requested). The policy should also be included in the Staff Handbook.

10.2 This policy is available in the policies section on the shared network:
It will also be supplied to all new staff and volunteers. During induction this policy will be signed off as having been read and understood by new staff and volunteers.

The policy will be made known to and available for current and prospective service users and others as requested.

11. Monitoring

11.1 Statistics will be gathered to monitor equality across all aspects of Ashiana Network processes and will be used to inform future practice.

12. Review

The policy will be reviewed every three years to ensure it continues to meet the needs of Ashiana Network and all who receive Ashiana Network services and support.

The policy will be updated according to legislative changes as and when needed.

Overview of the legislation

- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- Sex Discrimination Act (SDA)1975, 1986 Amendment, Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulations 2005 and Gender Equality Duty 2007
- The Race Relations Act (RRA) 1976 as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (RRAA) 2000
- Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)1995 and 2005 and the Disability Equality Duty 2006
- Prevention from Harassment Act 1997
- Human Rights Act (HRA)1998
- Employment Regulations Act 1999, Employment Act 2002 (Dispute Resolution) Regulations 2004

- Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000
- Fixed-Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 and the Equality Act 2006
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- Gender Recognition Act 2004
- Civil Partnership Act 2004
- Equality Act 2010

Further sources of information

- ACAS: www.acas.org.uk
- Equality Direct Helpline (ACAS): 0845 600 3444 (9.00am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday)
- Equality and Human Rights Commission: Tel: 0161 829 8100
www.equalityhumanrights.com
- The United Kingdom Disabled People's Council: www.ukdpc.net

The Government Equalities Office: www.equalities.gov.uk

12. Confidentiality

12.1 Any information disclosed to the Ashiana Network in relation equality and diversity issues will be kept strictly confidential in accordance with legislative requirements.

13. Breach of Policy

13.1 Contravention of the Equality and Diversity policy will be treated as a disciplinary matter and offenders will be dealt with under Ashiana Network's Disciplinary policy for all staff.

14. Examples/Definitions of Discrimination

14.1 Ashiana Network believes that discrimination can take one or more of the following forms; however it is not intended that this list is exhaustive:

Equal opportunity refers to the elimination of unlawful and unfair direct and indirect discrimination of particular groups.

Diversity can be defined as the wide range of differences, both visible and non-visible, that characterise people (such as nationality, race, gender, background or belief).

It is the aim of Ashiana Network that individuals and groups within the organisation are not only treated on an equal basis, but that their diverse contributions to socio-political and cultural life of Ashiana Network are recognised and developed.

Direct discrimination is treating one person less favourably than another in the same or similar circumstances or segregating them from others solely because they are, for example, a lesbian, a gay man or because they have a disability or illness. Refusing to employ someone who has the required skills because they are deaf or because they are pregnant would constitute such discrimination.

Indirect discrimination

Occurs when a condition or requirement is applied equally to all groups of people but has a disproportionately adverse effect on one particular group.

In some circumstances, indirect discrimination may be justifiable but only if it is considered to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

For example an unnecessary physical or age requirement can discriminate against women or disabled people. The setting of language tests, where language skills or fluency are not really needed for a job, is another example.

Victimisation occurs when a person is treated less favourably or is discriminated against because she/he has pursued or intends to pursue their rights in respect of alleged discrimination.

Discrimination in any of the forms stated above is unacceptable, regardless of whether there was any intention to discriminate or not.

Institutional racism (Macpherson Report, 1999)

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 in the processes or attitudes and behaviour, which amount to discrimination, to unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantages minority ethnic people.

Racist incident (Macpherson Report, 1999)

Any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person. If the victim doesn't want to complain, another person may do so.

Bullying (based on ACAS definition)

Offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means which undermines, humiliates, denigrates or injures the recipient.

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)

The EHRC promotes equality and human rights in Britain through advice and guidance to individuals, organisations and government bodies.

Genuine Occupational Requirement (from October 2010: Occupational Requirement)

This exception applies where being of a particular sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation or age, or not being a transsexual person, married or a civil partner is a requirement for the job. The requirement must be crucial to the post and the person seeking

to rely on it must be able to show that it pursues a legitimate aim.

Harassment (definition from ACAS)

"Unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of men and women in the workplace. It may be related to age, sex, race, disability, religion, nationality or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident.

The key is that the actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient."

Positive action

Is offering help/encouragement to people who are underrepresented in order that they may take full and equal advantage of opportunities in jobs, education, training, services, etc.

Social Model of Disability

Ashiana Network accepts the social model of disability. We accept that it is society (individuals and organisations) that has erected barriers to jobs, services, education and training. Ashiana Network will endeavour to remove barriers as and when they are recognised and consult appropriately to ensure as wide as possible access for all.