

## **5.1. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY**

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

Youth Options aims to provide equality of opportunity for all children and young people accessing our services. We want all of the children and young people that we support to achieve their full potential irrespective of gender, ability, race, religion, nationality, economic status or background.

We are committed to embracing the diversity of the communities in which we work, through the opportunities we offer to children and young people. We strive to show that this diversity can be brought together in harmony to achieve positive and rewarding outcomes for young people. We also insist on a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to any sort of discrimination or abuse amongst young people and/or staff.

Youth Options does not seek to differentiate between employees simply on the grounds of status and believes in equality of opportunity and access for all. Youth Options welcomes applications for employment from all people irrespective of gender, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, colour, race, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, disability or age.

Youth Options believes that the performance of its employed staff and volunteer staff is central to the success of the organisation. The Board of Trustees and the Chief Executive depend upon the skills and motivation of all those employed by the organisation; to promote and develop the ethos of the organisation and recognise that positive reinforcement of equal opportunities, for all employees and the young people the organisation seeks to serve; is essential for continued success and prosperity.

Equality and Diversity is about accepting and embracing people's differences and creating an environment in which all can thrive and contribute. Youth Options is committed to ensuring that all employees feel valued, that the skills and talents of individuals are recognised and fully utilised and that the working environment across the organisation is productive and rewarding.

The procedures laid out in this policy are in line with legislation defined by the Equality Act 2010.

## **5.2 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES PROCEDURES**

### **Delivery of Services**

- All children and young people accessing Youth Options activities will be valued and treated with respect irrespective of gender, ability, race, religion or belief, sexuality, nationality, economic status or background.
- Youth Options staff are encouraged to recognise and challenge prejudice and discrimination. Discrimination or abuse amongst young people and/or staff is never tolerated.
- All services delivered by Youth Options will be appropriate, accessible, effective and affordable.
- Youth Options strives to ensure that facilities used are accessible to all.
- No individual's financial circumstances will prevent them from accessing services or activities delivered by Youth Options.
- Youth Options aims to actively promote respect for other people through programmes of work delivered to young people.
- All staff will receive equality and diversity training as part of their induction.

### **Equality of Employment**

- Youth Options welcomes applications for employment from people from all walks of life and adheres to a strict selection process for interview on the basis of the Job Description and Person Specification matching the applicant's details and no other basis.
- Youth Options will ensure that no employee or job applicant receives less favourable facilities or treatment (either directly or indirectly) in recruitment or employment on grounds of age, disability, gender / gender reassignment, marriage / civil partnership, pregnancy / maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation (the protected characteristics).

### **Employment of Ex-Offenders**

- Prospective employees will not be asked to disclose convictions which are spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 unless the post applied for is exempt from Section 4(2) of the Act. *(N.B. The majority of posts offered by Youth Options are exempt because they involve working with children and young people).*
- In the event of employment, any failure to disclose such convictions will result in disciplinary action or dismissal.
- Having an unspent conviction is not necessarily a bar to employment with Youth Options.
- Criminal records will be taken into account for recruitment purposes only when the conviction is relevant.
- All employees are required to undergo a DBS check at a level appropriate to their role.

## Harassment at Work

All employees have the right not to be subjected to or endure any form of harassment or abuse whilst carrying out the responsibilities of their employment.

For the purpose of this policy, Youth Options has defined harassment as:

- Offensive remarks and jokes
- Unwanted physical contact
- Being rejected or made to feel unwelcome

For the purpose of this policy, Youth Options has defined sexual harassment as:

- Making suggestive remarks or innuendos
- Leering
- Offering compromising invitations
- Unnecessary or uninvited touching/physical contact
- Physical assault of a sexual nature

- Any employee who experiences harassment at work has a right to complain without fear of recrimination and can expect to be listened to, taken seriously and treated fairly.
- In the first instance, any employee who allegedly suffers harassment must report the incident to their Line Manager. The Line Manager has the responsibility to report the incident to the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team of Youth Options (*Appendix One*).
- If the employee has an allegation against their Line Manager, they must report the incident to either the Chief Executive or the Deputy Chief Executive. If the allegation is made against either the Chief Executive or the Deputy Chief Executive, then the incident must be reported to another member of the Senior Leadership Team or Trustees (*See Appendix 1 for contact details*).
- If allegations are made that harassment is taking place, Youth Options will remove the employee from situations where they are considered to be potentially at risk of harm, until a full investigation has taken place.
- Youth Options will respond quickly, fairly and impartially to all allegations of harassment and will enable all parties involved to supply their version of events before any disciplinary action is taken.
- Youth Options does not expect its employees to be subjected to or endure any form of harassment or abuse whilst carrying out the responsibilities of their employment and will regard any incidents of such, as extremely serious.

## Promotion and Pay Reviews

- All employees are entitled to equal pay and conditions for work of equal value. Youth Options does not differentiate between men and women when setting salary scales.

- Pay reviews are carried out annually; increases are awarded, in line with the agreed pay scales, entirely at the discretion of the Board of Trustees on the recommendation of the Remuneration and Appointments group.

## **Maternity and Paternity Allowance**

- Youth Options recognises its duty to give all prospective parents the minimum government requirements for maternity and paternity leave. It is the due date of your baby, and not the actual date of birth, that determines your rights.
- Pregnant employees are entitled to 26 weeks of Ordinary Maternity Leave, regardless of how long they have been employed, and those who meet the qualifying conditions of continuous employment for at least 26 weeks are entitled to Statutory Maternity Pay for a period of up to 39 weeks.
- Women who are not entitled to Statutory Maternity Pay but meet qualifying conditions based on their recent employment and earnings may be entitled to claim Maternity Allowance for up to 39 weeks, which is paid by the Jobcentre Plus Office.
- All women regardless of their length of service are entitled to an additional period of maternity leave. This starts immediately after ordinary maternity leave and continues for a further 26 weeks, but is unpaid.
- Employees are entitled to paid leave for antenatal appointments, but are required to produce a certificate from a medical practitioner confirming pregnancy.
- The statutory entitlement to annual leave remains the same during the period of maternity leave. This cannot be taken at the same time as maternity leave but may be taken before or after.
- During maternity leave an employee and employer can agree to the employee having up to 10 "Keeping in Touch" days.
- With regard to paternity leave, Youth Options' employees, with 26 weeks continuous service ending with the 15<sup>th</sup> week before the baby is due, are entitled to take up to two consecutive weeks leave. This can start from the date of the child's birth or from an agreed date preceding or following the child's birth. It must be taken within 56 days of the child's birth. It cannot be taken as odd days leave throughout the 56-day period.
- Additional paternity leave allows employees who are eligible to take up to 26 weeks leave to care for their new baby. Leave can be taken any time from 20 weeks after the child is born, but it must have finished by the child's first birthday. In the case of adoption, it can start anytime between 20 weeks and 52 weeks after the child starts living with the adopter.
- For Additional Paternity leave and pay to be taken the child's mother or adopter must have started working again and any relevant payment must have stopped, with at least two weeks of the 39-week payment period remaining.

- Statutory adoption leave and pay are available provided employees have completed at least 26 weeks of continuous employment ending with the week you are notified of being matched with a child for adoption. Employees are entitled to an additional leave of 26 weeks starting immediately after the statutory period, but this leave period will be unpaid.
- Shared Parental Leave enables eligible parents to choose how to share the care of their child during the first year of birth or adoption. All eligible employees have a statutory right to take Shared Parental Leave; there may also be an entitlement to some Shared Parental Pay. Employees wishing to take Shared Parental Leave should first read the Organisation's Shared Parental Leave Policy, which sets out the statutory rights and responsibilities of employees who wish to take statutory Shared Parental Leave (SPL) and statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP), and then discuss specific procedures with their Line Manager.