



YOUTHLINE COUNSELLING SERVICE

Equality and Diversity Policy

Youthline is committed to a policy of treating all its service users, employees, volunteers, committee members and job applicants equally. No person shall receive less favourable treatment or consideration on the grounds of disability, age, race, colour, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, sex or marital status.

Special responsibility for the practical application of Youthline's equal opportunities policy falls upon all members of Youthline including Staff and volunteers who interact with Service Users, and Trustees and Staff involved in recruitment, selection, promotion and training of employees and volunteers.

Introduction

At Youthline, we are committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace where all individuals are treated with respect and dignity, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, or any other characteristic. This Equality and Diversity Policy outlines our commitment to promoting equality and diversity within our organization and sets out the principles and practices we adhere to.

Policy Statement

We believe in creating an environment where every individual is valued for their unique contributions and perspectives. We do not tolerate discrimination, harassment, or any form of unfair treatment. Our aim is to provide equal opportunities for all employees, recognising that a diverse workforce enhances creativity, innovation, and overall business success.

Responsibilities

- **Trustees** are responsible for setting the tone for equality and diversity throughout the organisation. They ensure that the principles of this policy are embedded in all aspects of our operations.
- **Heads of Department, Coordinators and Supervisors** are accountable for implementing and upholding this policy within their teams. They must ensure that all employees and volunteers are treated fairly and are aware of their rights under this policy.
- **All Employees & Volunteers:** Every employee, School Counsellor and volunteer is responsible for treating their colleagues with respect and dignity, promoting a welcoming and inclusive environment, and reporting any incidents of discrimination, harassment, or unfair treatment.
- **Service Users:** We will respect our clients' privacy and dignity and align our values with our accrediting body, the BACP and the Ethical Framework for the Counselling professions (BACP EF p15/16) to provide services that:
 - a. endeavours to demonstrate equality, value diversity and ensure inclusion for all clients avoid unfairly discriminating against clients
 - b. accept we are all vulnerable to prejudice and recognise the importance of self-inquiry, personal feedback and professional development
 - c. work with issues of identity in open-minded ways that respect the client's autonomy and be sensitive to whether this is viewed as individual or relational autonomy challenge assumptions that any sexual orientation or gender identity is inherently preferable to any other and will not attempt to bring about a change of sexual orientation or gender identity or seek to suppress an individual's expression of sexual orientation or gender identity
 - d. make adjustments to overcome barriers to accessibility, so far as is reasonably possible, for clients of any ability wishing to engage with a service
 - e. recognise when our knowledge of key aspects of our client's background, identity or lifestyle is inadequate and take steps to inform ourselves from other sources where available and appropriate, rather than expecting the client to teach us
 - f. are open-minded with clients who appear similar to ourselves or possess familiar characteristics so that we do not suppress or neglect what is distinctive in their lives.

Service Users

We will take the law concerning equality, diversity and inclusion into careful consideration and strive for a higher standard than the legal minimum.

We are particularly concerned to achieve the following objectives:

- When requesting or enquiring about counselling there is no discrimination against any potential Service User on the basis of disability, age, race, colour, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, sex or marital status.
- Counselling volunteers and staff carry out their work safely, ethically and effectively with no discrimination against any Service User on the basis of disability, age, race, colour, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, sex or marital status.
- We will challenge colleagues or others involved in delivering related services whose views appear to be unfairly discriminatory and take action to protect clients, if necessary.
- We will do all that we reasonably can to ensure that our clients are participating on a voluntary basis.
- Hesitant clients or clients who feel under pressure from other people or agencies to work with us will have their reservations acknowledged and taken into account in how services are offered.
- We will work with our clients based on their informed consent and agreement.
- We recognise that exceptional situations may arise where we may need to prioritise the safety of the client or others over our client's wishes and confidentiality.

Careful consideration will be given to working with young people that takes account of their capacity to give informed consent, considering whether it is appropriate to seek the consent of others who have parental responsibility for the young person, and their best interests demonstrates knowledge and skills about ways of working that are appropriate to the young person's development and how relationships are formed demonstrates a sound knowledge of the law relevant to working with children and young people and their human rights is informed about the current culture and customs that affect parenting/care giving and how young people interact with each other and other significant people in their lives.

Careful consideration will be given to working with adult clients to obtain and respect the consent of vulnerable adult clients, wherever they have the capacity to give consent, or involving anyone who provides care for these clients when appropriate.

Our work with clients will be based on professional partnerships with them that aim to increase their wellbeing, capability and/or performance.

To ensure that all Service Users and potential Service Users have equal access to counselling and are treated equally and fairly.

Staff and Recruitment

Objectives

Youthline regards this as a commitment to make full use of the talents and resources of all our employees and volunteers and to provide a healthy environment that will encourage good working relations.

We are particularly concerned to achieve the following objectives:

- When applying for positions there is no discrimination against any person on the basis of disability, age, race, colour, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, sex or marital status.
- The recruitment process must result in the selection of the most suitable person for the job in respect of experience and qualifications.
- No assumptions or pre-judgements are made by Trustees or recruiters about the suitability of either sex or any race for a particular job.
- No decision is made or preference stated in advance regarding the outcome of the recruitment process.
- All applications are to be given equal consideration.
- Recruitment publicity must positively encourage applications from all suitably qualified and experienced people.

- It is vital that the selection process is carried out consistently for all jobs at all levels within Youthline, and that it is seen to be fair and non-discriminatory.
- Only those qualifications and skills that are important for the job are to be established as criteria.

Policy Date:
Review Date:

Septeb
September 2021

Signed:

Chair of Trustees