Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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Definitions

Definitions of key words and terms used in this policy can be found in Appendix 1.

Introduction

Thread Ahead recognises that in our society, power is not held equally. Groups and individuals have been and continue to be discriminated against on many grounds, including race, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, class, religion, marital status and where they live. We recognise that people may experience multiple and intersecting forms of disadvantage and discrimination.

Where direct or indirect discrimination occurs within our organisation, it is both morally and legally unacceptable. Equity, diversity and inclusion are essential to effective governance, safeguarding, service delivery and organisational sustainability.

The purpose of this policy is to set out clearly and fully our approach to equity, diversity and inclusion, including the positive action we will take to combat direct and indirect discrimination within our organisation, the services we provide and our relationships with other bodies. It sets out our commitment to nurturing an organisation where people of all identities and backgrounds can thrive.

Aims

Thread Ahead aims to be more inclusive, diverse and equitable. This allows us to follow our fundamental principles. Thread Ahead aims to become an anti-racist organisation. We strive to be a place where people of all ethnicities feel welcomed to work, volunteer or seek support.

We want to be a safe and inclusive organisation that learns and grows to proactively dismantle barriers, eliminate discrimination and create equity; an organisation where:

- our people learn, understand and take action to dismantle discrimination and create a safe and inclusive environment
- our workforce is built on diverse skills, experiences and capabilities at all levels
- we embed equity and remove barriers to participation across everything we do

Code of Practice

We will promote equity, dignity, fairness, inclusion and respect for all those who work for, volunteer for, or interact with our organisation. To this end, we will strive to cultivate an organisational culture that is free from prejudice, bullying, harassment, victimisation, discrimination and offensive behaviour. We will do this by educating our people on their responsibilities to champion equity, diversity and inclusion, by promoting inclusive language and respectful behaviour, and by ensuring that any breaches are dealt with appropriately.

Thread Ahead will provide support and take all complaints for discrimination or offensive behaviour seriously and will proactively uphold and advance the rights of individuals with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, as well as those who may experience discrimination and marginalisation outside the Act's scope.

We will continuously engage with staff, volunteers and visitors to grow our understanding of their needs and any obstacles they face. We will work to provide support for health, safety and wellbeing issues which may affect our teams.

We will ensure that our recruitment, selection, development and progression processes are transparent, merit-based, fair and accessible. We will proactively promote increasing diversity and representation of lived experience of precarious immigration status. We will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of staff and volunteers, wherever appropriate.

All trustees, staff and volunteers within Thread Ahead will have the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy shared with them and must undertake to comply with and implement this policy in their work.

Staff, volunteers or visitors who have experienced discrimination can make complaints to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or any member of the Board of Trustees.

Embedding this practice throughout service delivery

Thread Ahead provides clothing, accessories and toiletries to people with precarious immigration status. Thread Ahead will take action to ensure that its services and events are open and welcoming to everybody entitled to use them.

We aim to make our services and events accessible to people with disabilities. To this end, we will meet in accessible premises, seek to provide sign language interpreters when necessary and produce information in large print. We will seek to make our communications accessible through the use of plain English, alternative formats and accessible digital practices where reasonably possible.

We also work with external referral organisations to ensure that service users are able to visit us alongside any support workers, key workers or interpreters they need. Where external referral organisations are unable to provide the support which a service user needs to access our services, we will, as far as is possible, seek to provide this ourselves.

Code of Conduct

We expect the following from all volunteers and staff carrying out work on behalf of Thread Ahead:

- People will be treated with dignity and respect regardless of race, nationality, immigration status, gender, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability and/or age.

- At all times, people's feelings will be valued and respected. Language or humour that people find offensive will not be used.
- No one will be harassed, abused or intimidated on the grounds of their race, nationality, immigration status, gender, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability or age. Incidents of harassment will be taken seriously.

Responsibilities

The Board of Trustees have ultimate responsibility for this policy and are responsible for championing equity, diversity and inclusion.

The CEO is responsible for ensuring that this policy allows achievement of external and internal standards, developing, monitoring and reviewing this policy.

All staff and volunteers are responsible for adhering to this policy.

Dealing with Complaints

Thread Ahead's Comments, Compliments & Complaints Policy outlines the process by which complaints can be made, including expected confidentiality, possible outcomes, and what happens if the complaint concerns the DSL or a trustee.

The Safeguarding Lead and/or Board of Trustees will take complaints of discrimination and harassment very seriously. They will investigate them thoroughly and provide opportunities for the person making the complaint to speak in a safe environment about their experience.

If the complaint is against a particular individual, the investigating staff member(s) or committee will hear their point of view.

The investigating staff member(s) or committee will decide the action to take based on the principle of ensuring the continued inclusion and safety of any trustee, member of staff or service user who has experienced discrimination or harassment.

Any decision to terminate someone's position within the organisation will be made in line with the rules set out in Thread Ahead's Governing Document.

Review

The Board will periodically review organisational practices, recruitment, accessibility and feedback to identify barriers to inclusion and areas for improvement. This policy will be reviewed at least every 2 years. It may be reviewed earlier in response to legal, organisational or operational changes.

Appendix 1

Definitions

Equity: Where equality means treating everyone the same regardless of their experiences, background or identity, equity recognises that people may have different advantages or disadvantages in society and that we don't all have the same starting point. Equity is the ongoing process of acknowledging that inequality and taking steps to correct that imbalance.

Diversity: Diversity is anything that makes us different from one another.

Inclusion: Inclusion is actively embracing people with diverse perspectives, backgrounds and experiences. Inclusion can be felt, but can also be seen through systems, processes, policies, and behaviours.

Protected Characteristics: People are legally protected from discrimination by the Equality Act 2010. It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of the following protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race including racial group, ethnic or national origin, or nationality; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; political opinion (Northern Ireland only).

Unlawful discrimination: When a person or group of people is treated less favourably than another person or group of people would be treated based on their protected characteristic or religious opinion. Types of discrimination include:

- Direct discrimination – treating someone unfairly because of their protected characteristic.

- Indirect discrimination – A practice, policy or rule applied to everyone that may at first appear fair or neutral but puts people of a particular protected characteristic at a disadvantage.

- Discrimination by association – a person is treated unfavourably because of another person's protected characteristic.

- Discrimination by perception – when someone is treated unfairly because others believe they have a protected characteristic.

- Victimisation – a person is treated less favourably because they have or is expected to complain about discrimination.

- Harassment – unwanted conduct with the purposeful effect of violating a person's dignity of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.