



Brighton & Hove LGBT Switchboard.

Equality and Diversity Policy.

The Statement:

Brighton & Hove LGBT Switchboard (Switchboard) recognises that the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community is made up of individuals with differing identities, cultural values, experiences and needs from across the social, cultural, political, economic and religious spectrum. Switchboard recognises that the LGBT community includes many who face multiple forms of discrimination and disadvantage in society as a whole. Switchboard believes that as an organisation providing services to the LGBT community, it has a responsibility to understand and challenge the causes and effects of this discrimination and disadvantage.

Why have an Equality and Diversity Policy?

LGBT aims to ensure equality of opportunity in its service delivery, volunteering and employment opportunities, and celebrate the diversity of the LGBT community, recognising and challenging the discrimination and disadvantage that exists within the LGBT community. The reason for this policy is to formalise Switchboard's commitment to this, and clarify for all relevant stakeholders Switchboard's ethos and activities that promote equality of opportunity.

The Principles of the Policy.

It is Switchboard's aim to be a truly inclusive organization, and one with a voluntary and paid workforce that reflects the many different facets of the community that we serve. This aim is reflected in the following statement:

"As an equal opportunities organisation, it is Switchboard's aim to ensure that no person is denied services, rejected for membership, voluntary or paid employment, or otherwise be discriminated against by the organisation or its members on grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion, gender, marital status, age, sexual identity, medical condition, HIV status, disability, or economic disadvantage. We aim to recruit volunteers and staff with the relevant attributes, talents and skills best able to reflect the diversity within the communities we serve. The organisation will monitor and evaluate the implementation of this policy to ensure good practice and take positive action where necessary to achieve these aims. This policy will be regularly reviewed."

How Switchboard will implement the policy for employees and volunteers

Central to Switchboard's success as an equal opportunities organization is achieving a representative workforce at all levels. A diverse workforce is central to this objective: utilizing skills, knowledge and experience to design the services that the LGBT community needs.

Recruitment

Switchboard has made a commitment to achieving equality of opportunity through volunteer and employee recruitment and development. We are committed to addressing discrimination in all forms. To achieve this, Switchboard will work on recruiting, developing and retaining a skilled and diverse staff and volunteer team.

It is a condition of employment that every member of staff understands complies with and implements this policy. It is also a condition of our volunteer Agreement that every member of the organisation understands, complies with and implements this policy.

Monitoring

All applicants seeking paid or voluntary opportunities with Switchboard will be asked to complete monitoring forms which will enable the organisation to monitor the effectiveness of its approach to equalities in recruitment. This monitoring, coupled with Switchboard's awareness of the demographic make-up of the LGBT community we serve, will ensure that we can focus our recruitment drives towards various groups currently underrepresented within the organisation.

At times the organisation may seek people from particular types of communities where there is a genuine occupational requirement for a specific type of person to fill a vacancy. For example, it is a genuine occupational requirement that the volunteers who provide the counselling service identify as LGBT to ensure that service users can access counselling delivered by people who have an understanding of the issues that affect LGBT people. This is because the counselling service was developed in response to this need that was identified via Switchboard's help-line and recent local research evidences that this remains a specific need. Similarly, Switchboard may need to specifically recruit people from the transgender community so that the needs of service users can be responded to by people who have an understanding of the specific issues that affect them.

Access to services

Our premises are full accessible and Switchboard will work hard to ensure that people with disabilities are not excluded, directly or indirectly from paid or voluntary opportunities with the organisation.

All our publications are written in plain English and application forms for volunteer and employment opportunities are available in hard copy and to download from Switchboard's website which ensures that the forms are accessible to people with reading or visual difficulties. People with reading and writing difficulties will be fully supported in completing the initial application for counselling paperwork to ensure they are able to access the counselling service.

Training

Switchboard will build a culture that values the diversity of all existing members of the organisation, and paves the way for even greater diversity, valuing the creative conflict that this may bring. Switchboard will ensure that the principles of the equal opportunities policy is at the heart of its training and support for volunteers, and will take care of its members from all backgrounds; building commitment to the organisation and its goals; and overcoming barriers to progression.

These measures will form an integral part of the organisation's equal opportunities policy and strategy. In this way, it our goal to achieve a skilled, flexible and sustainable workforce that reflects the community it serves.

How Switchboard will implement the policy for service users

Switchboard will ensure that all service users are treated with respect and dignity. Where users have particular needs we will do everything possible to meet those needs.

Switchboard implements and monitors equality of opportunity by keeping track of service users, volunteers and staff by monitoring and recording age, gender, sexual identity, ethnicity, and disabilities wherever possible. (Given the anonymity of callers to the help line, and the nature of some of these calls, it is not always possible to elicit this information from callers, however it is done where possible, and all clients of the counseling service are asked these questions). This information enables the organisation to provide services that meet the needs of the service users, and also to identify particular groups of the community that are not accessing Switchboard's services.

Switchboard's help line operates an email enquiry service for callers with hearing difficulties, and this along with the website provides an alternative route for people to access information and support services to ensure that we offer services in a manner appropriate to the needs and abilities of each individual user. We will work towards a website that is as accessible as possible for all users.

Switchboard is continually striving to ensure that the principles of this equal opportunities policy underpins all aspects of its service design and delivery, and that everything is done to remove barriers that inhibit access to services.

Breaches of Policy

Any breach of this policy by a volunteer or member of staff will represent misconduct and be dealt with by either the Chair or Vice Chair of the organisation in the case of a breach by a volunteer or by the Director, or by the Director in the case of a breach by any other member of staff.

Any breach by a client will be considered by the Director who may decide to terminate the provision of services to that client.

Any breach which constitutes a criminal offence will always be reported to the police.

This policy and the way in which it operates will be reviewed every 2 years.

The policy was reviewed in November 2013

Signature.....
Chair

Date.....