

Equality and Diversity Policy – Peer Support Plus®



Peer Support Plus is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) Registered Charity Number 1190818, with voting Members other than its Trustees.

Membership and voting, including the election of Trustees, are governed by the Peer Support Plus *Constitution*¹.

Policy aims

The Peer Support Plus Board of Trustees recognises that power is not held equally in our society. Individuals and groups have been and continue to be discriminated against on many grounds including: race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, disability, class, religion or belief, marital status and where they live.

The Board of Trustees recognises that it would be both morally and legally indefensible if direct, indirect or unintentional discrimination occurred and was permitted to continue at Peer Support Plus CIO.

The purpose of this *Equality and Diversity Policy*¹ is to set out clearly the positive actions the Board of Trustees will take to combat any direct, indirect or unintentional discrimination in:

- The Policy and processes, Management and Operation of Peer Support Plus
- The services the charity provides to its beneficiaries
- The charity's relationships with other individuals, businesses or bodies

By adopting this *Equality and Diversity Policy*¹, the Peer Support Plus Board of Trustees is making an unequivocal commitment to implementing it, so that understanding and respecting diversity, and ensuring equality of opportunity are present in all of the charity's relationships.

Code of Practice

Peer Support Plus aims to:

- Provide Peer Support Groups, Workshops and Courses which are open to all adults in Leeds. The Board of Trustees will ensure that its meetings, activities and events are open and welcoming to all adults in Leeds, and volunteers and supporters of Peer Support Plus CIO.
- Make our meetings, activities and events accessible to people with disabilities. For example, we will try to meet at accessible venues and be prepared to produce documents in large print or using a font helpful to those living with dyslexia.
- Use training opportunities to help our Trustees, Peers and Volunteers better understand how discrimination occurs and how to prevent it.

- Engage with Peers and Volunteers who need a carer or personal assistant in attendance, providing the carer or personal assistant will engage with Peer Support on the same terms as any other Volunteer.

All Trustees Volunteers and any Employees will have this *Equality and Diversity Policy*¹ explained to them, and will undertake to comply with it.

The Board of Trustees is committed to transparency so this *Equality and Diversity Policy*¹ will be published with other Policies on our website peersupportplus.org.

Everyone who engages with Peer Support Plus will be treated with dignity and respect regardless of race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, disability, class, religion or belief, marital status and where they live.

No one will be harassed, abused or bullied.

At all times individual's feelings will be valued and respected. Words or 'humour' that an individual finds offensive will not be used.

Peers and Volunteers who have experienced or observed discrimination during a Support Group, Workshop or Course may voice it directly with the Group or speak privately to the Facilitator. If the Group or Facilitator are unable to resolve the issue on the spot, the Facilitator must prepare an *Incident Report*¹ **Alert** which and send it direct to our **Safeguarding Concerns Officer**² who will investigate and produce a report with recommendations for consideration by The Board of Trustees.

Peers and Volunteers who have experienced or observed discrimination at Peer Support Plus outside of a Facilitated Support Group, Workshop or Course (or believe a Group's Facilitator may have been guilty of discrimination or condoning discrimination) must prepare an *Incident Report*¹ **Alert** and send it direct to our **Safeguarding Concerns Officer**² who will investigate and produce an initial report with recommendations for consideration by The Board of Trustees.

Dealing with Reports

The Board of Trustees are collectively and individually responsible for conducting the operation of Peer Support Plus CIO within the laws of England.

The Board of Trustees will take reports of incidents involving discrimination and/or harassment very seriously.

They will investigate such reports thoroughly and provide opportunities for the person reporting the incident and all those who may be perpetrators or victims to speak openly in a safe environment about their experience. Anyone invited to speak about their experience may be accompanied by a 'friend'.

The Board of Trustees will decide on the actions that will be taken to ensure there is opportunity for the continued inclusion and safety of any Peer or Volunteer who The Board of Trustees agrees has experienced discrimination or harassment.

Discrimination or harassment is a serious breach of the undertaking given by all Peers and Volunteers to respect the *Guidelines for Behaviour*¹. If a decision is taken to end a Peer's, Volunteer's or Employee's engagement with Peer Support Plus it will be to ensure the Safety of everyone remaining at Peer Support Plus.

If a complaint of discrimination or harassment is evidenced against Peer Support Plus CIO as a whole, The Board of Trustees will work to ensure that such corporate behaviour is not repeated in the future and will inform Peers, Volunteers and anyone else affected by the Discrimination how they will ensure this.

Anyone may use the *Comments, Compliments and Complaints*¹ process to challenge the manner in which an *Incident Report*¹ has been dealt with.

It is also open to voting Members of the charity – see *Membership Policy*¹ – to use the process written into the *Constitution*¹ to remove any Trustee(s) from office.

Finally, if you are Whistleblowing 'making a disclosure in the public interest, alleging corruption, malpractice or wrongdoing', please act as set out in *Whistleblowing*¹.

Anyone may present evidence of corruption, malpractice or wrongdoing to the Charity Commission. The Charity Commission is empowered to disqualify anyone from holding office as a Trustee; or to put an end to the charity.

Review

This *Equality and Diversity Policy*¹ will be reviewed and agreed by The Board of Trustees no later than 2 years after its last review.

Notes

¹ available on our website peersupportplus.org

² see *Safeguarding Policy*¹

End