

Last review Date: September 2025
Next review Date: September 2026



LASTING SUPPORT

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Equality and Diversity Policy

1. Purpose

This policy applies to all individuals engaged to work at the organisation, including managers, employees, contractors, and agency staff. It details our commitment to equality and diversity, outlines relevant laws and types of discrimination, and clarifies responsibilities.

- This policy does not form part of employees' terms and conditions of employment and may be subject to change at management's discretion.
- Lasting Support Network CIC commits to: Provide unequivocal equality, fairness, and respect for all employees, regardless of employment type or status.
- Never unlawfully discriminate against anyone on the basis of any Equality Act 2010 protected characteristic, including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex (gender), or sexual orientation.
- Take a firm stand against all forms of unlawful discrimination. Apply this rigorously in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, handling grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, flexible working requests, and selection for employment, promotion, training, or other developmental opportunities.

2. Scope

The rights and obligations set out in this policy apply equally to all employees, whether part-time or full-time on a substantive or fixed-term contract, and to associated persons such as secondees, agency staff, contractors and others employed under a contract of service.

All employees are personally responsible for the application of this policy. During employee induction, each individual is expected to read and familiarise themselves with this policy and ensure it is properly observed and fully complied with.

This policy is also relevant to directors, line managers, and other employees involved in recruitment, training, and promotion procedures, as well as in employment decisions that affect others.

3. Our commitments

Lasting Support is committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion among our workforce, and eliminating unlawful discrimination. The aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and our service users, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

Lasting Support is committed to the principle of equal opportunity in meeting the needs of the individual service users and in employment for all its employees and applicants, and encourages equality and diversity in the workplace by:

- Ensure a working environment free from bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination, while promoting dignity and respect for all, and recognising and valuing individual differences and the contributions of all staff.

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- Treat complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, service users, multi-agency partners, suppliers, visitors, the public, and others during the organisation's activities with seriousness.
- Address such acts as misconduct in accordance with the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, taking appropriate action. Recognise that particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and result in dismissal without notice.

This commitment includes training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the equality, diversity and inclusion policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves in ways that help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination.

All staff must understand that, along with their employer, they may be legally liable for bullying, harassment, victimisation, and discrimination during employment against colleagues, customers, suppliers, or the public.

Sexual harassment can be both an employment and criminal issue, for example, in sexual assault accusations. Additionally, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, which is not limited to protected characteristics, is a criminal offence.

4. When does this policy apply?

- a) In employment, develop policies to ensure that no job applicant, employee, volunteer, or trainee faces unfair discrimination. This includes protection from discrimination based on status as a refugee or asylum seeker, gender, ethnicity, national origin, religion or belief, age, abilities, marital status, sexual preference, social background, sexuality, or organisational role.
- b) In service delivery, by providing fair, respectful, and unbiased services, and by being available to all clients and staff. LSS will ensure that staff diversity matches our clients, so services meet the needs of our residents.

5. Method of Implementation

- a) Fostering a cooperative working environment that is free from harassment or victimisation and promotes good relations among staff and clients to create the conditions for their full development.
- b) Training, developing, and supporting every staff member to increase their awareness and understanding of discrimination against groups or individuals.
- c) Make training, development and progress opportunities available to all staff, offering help and encouragement to develop their full potential so their talents and resources can fully benefit the organisation.
- d) Reviewing employment practices and procedures as needed to ensure fairness. Updating them and the policy to reflect changes in the law.
- e) Monitoring the workforce make-up, including age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability. This supports equality, diversity, and inclusion, and meets the commitments in the policy. Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality, diversity, and inclusion

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policy and action plan work in practice. Review these annually, then consider and address any issues.

- f) Creating systems to report, monitor, and evaluate discrimination and to track implementation of the equal opportunity policy.
- g) Raising awareness in the organisation about the needs of staff, users and visitors with disabilities. We will work to ensure our practices do not limit access to our services or the contributions people with disabilities can make to our work.
- h) Assessing how accessible our sites are. We will always look for ways to improve access to our premises and services for people with physical disabilities. If we cannot provide physical access, we will make services available through outreach and uphold non-discriminatory practices. We also understand that some disabilities are not visible and respect the broader needs of this group, including those with mental health or debilitating conditions, such as HIV and AIDS.

6. Lasting Support's legal duties

Lasting Support is additionally subject to public sector equality duties under the Equality Act 2010. This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis by Lasting Support to assess its effectiveness and may be amended from time to time.

Contacts

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