



## **Pearls Project Equality and Diversity Policy**

### **Statement of Intent**

Pearls Project is committed to promoting, valuing and managing equality and diversity in all aspects of its work.

Pearls Project does not tolerate discrimination on the basis of age, disability, gender / gender reassignment, marriage / civil partnership, pregnancy / maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or any other form of discrimination.

Pearls Project acknowledges that the client group we work with are vulnerable women who face discrimination and disadvantage and that these prevent them from achieving their full potential. Pearls Project aims to tackle this unfair discrimination and disadvantage.

### **Purpose**

Pearls Project will ensure that equality and diversity is embedded at every level of operation and service delivery.

Pearls Project aims to ensure that the people who work for and with Pearls Project are fully representative of the community we serve.

Pearls Project aims to involve the people who use our service in the development and delivery of our work.

Pearls Project opposes all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination or victimisation towards employees, volunteers, management, company members, supporters or people who use our service.

### **Commitment to Action**

In order to ensure representation from all groups of protected characteristics amongst our staff, volunteers, trustees, members and supporters, we actively pursue networking opportunities with minority groups and take positive action to tackle under representation.

## **Service Users**

Following approval from the Charity Commission, Pearls Project is constituted to serve vulnerable women. Apart from this gender qualification we operate no discriminatory practices in relation to those who use our service on the basis of the other eight protected characteristics. We offer our services to trans-gender individuals who self-identify as female.

Pearls Project promotes inclusion by working creatively and flexibly to overcome barriers to services.

Pearls Project ensures that those who use our service receive equitable treatment regardless of individual heritage, beliefs, circumstance or preference or any other inappropriate distinction.

## **Employees**

Pearls Project claims some genuine occupational qualifications as follows:

Most of the people we work with are abused and vulnerable women, therefore all employees who will be working closely with them or accessing the same spaces, must identify as female.

Every employee is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all.

No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.

Pearls Project will make any reasonable adjustments that are necessary for disabled employees.

Pearls Project will ensure that policies and procedures for recruitment, selection and promotion of employees treat all candidates fairly and are on the grounds of merit (please see Recruitment Policy).

Pearls Project is committed to recruiting from a wide pool of applicants e.g. through job centres, local press, targeted media, community centres etc.

Pearls Project will monitor the profile of job applicants, those shortlisted and those successful at interview, and will take action to address identified underrepresentation or potential discrimination at any stage of the process.

Pearls Project will provide access to training for all employees.

## **Supporters**

All offers of appropriate support are received gratefully. Men are actively recruited to help with particular activities.

## **Volunteers and trustees**

Every volunteer is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.

Most of the people we work with are abused and vulnerable women, therefore all volunteers who will be working closely with them or accessing the same spaces, must self-identify as female.

Pearls Project will ensure that arrangements for recruitment and selection of volunteers treat all applicants fairly.

Pearls Project is committed to recruiting volunteers from a wide pool of applicants e.g. through community centres, churches, targeted media, VOSCUR, etc.

Pearls Project is committed to monitoring the profile of volunteers and to take action to address identified under-representation or potential discrimination at any stage of the process.

Pearls Project is committed to providing training to volunteers and trustees.

### **Access to services**

It is one of Pearls Project's aims to create an inclusive service where no individuals who use our service are subject to discrimination or victimisation as a result of their gender identity.

Pearls Project strives to value diversity and equality, including all the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2000. This includes recognising and supporting a person's self-identified gender.

We will offer a service to all those who identify as a woman. As with all women who access our services, transgender women will be assessed on a case-by-case basis for suitability for the services.

Pearls Project recognises that some people who use our service may not self-define as either a man or a woman. Our services are open to those who identify as non-binary, intersex, and gender fluid.

Where a transgender person presenting as female accesses our Drop-in or other group services, where possible the Manager or another more experienced team member, will be present to welcome the person and to manage any responses from other women that may pose a risk.

The team will support anyone who may experience fear and distrust of other people who use our service who identify as female, recording all interactions appropriately. However, Pearls Project maintains a woman only space in our Drop-in and group services, as part of a trauma informed approach which recognises gender-based violence. Hence, if women do not feel safe in the Drop-in or group space due to the presentation of a transgender female, we will consider the appropriateness of the access, as the women who access Pearls Project services have often experienced higher and more extreme levels of domestic and sexual violence perpetrated by males.

As we grow in size, Pearls Project will seek to provide Equality and Diversity workshops to those who use our service, to appropriately challenge any discrimination or victimisation of marginalised groups.

## **Legal Requirements**

In drawing up this policy, full reference has been made to the relevant statutory requirements as outlined in the Equality Act 2010. The Equality Act brings together separate pieces of legislation into one single Act. The Equality Act consolidates all existing law preventing discrimination on any one of the nine protected characteristics into one Act.

## **Discrimination, harassment and victimisation**

| <b>Type of discrimination</b> | <b>Definition</b>   | <b>Example of discriminatory behaviour</b>  |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Direct discrimination         | Treated less favourably than others in the same circumstances on grounds of protected characteristics   | A job advert stating that only those with English as a first language may apply       |
| Indirect discrimination       | Applying a conditional requirement which adversely affects one particular group and cannot be justified | A line manager who only offers overtime to full time members of staff                 |
| Victimisation                 | Taking action against a person for asserting their rights under the law                                 | A service user complains about a member of staff and is subsequently denied a service |

| Type of discrimination       | Definition   | Example of discriminatory behaviour  |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| Harassment / bullying        | It takes many forms and on a variety of grounds – can be directed at one person or many people   | Persistent, unwanted behaviour which a person / group finds intimidating / upsetting / embarrassing / humiliating or offensive |
| Harassment by a third party  | Employees can complain of the behaviour they find offensive even if it is not directed at them.<br><br>Employers are potentially liable for the harassment of their staff or customers by people they don't themselves employ, i.e. a contractor |  |
| Associative Discrimination   | This is discrimination against someone because they are associated with another person who possesses a protected characteristic  | Not needed   |
| Discrimination by perception | This is direct discrimination against someone because others think that they possess a particular characteristic. They do not necessarily have to possess the characteristic, just be perceived to   | Not needed   |

| Type of discrimination             | Definition  | Example of discriminatory behaviour                                   |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Positive Action                    | Allowed by the law to encourage employees who are members of disadvantaged groups which have been under represented to receive special training programmes to enable them to compete equally for jobs | Not needed  |
| Positive discrimination            | An employer favours a person from a particular under-represented group because they have a particular characteristic  | Not needed  |
| Genuine occupational qualification | Restricts certain jobs to certain categories or groups of people – this is rare and an employer would need to demonstrate that they have researched the requirement thoroughly before setting it      | Pearls Project is able to recruit women to work with vulnerable women |

## Implementation and Communication

Equality and Diversity briefings are held for employees and repeated as necessary. Equality information is included in induction programmes for volunteers and trustees.

Information is provided regarding Pearls Project's equality policies and complaints procedures for those who use our service and will be displayed when we have a meeting space for Pearls Activities.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Pearls Project will monitor information on employees, volunteers, trustees and people who use our service by all nine protected characteristics. Information will be collected from individuals when they engage in our services. Information will be collected from staff, volunteers and trustees anonymously.

Pearls Project is committed to taking action to address identified under-representation (of all sections of the community being served) or potential discrimination of trustees, staff, volunteers and people who use our service.

Pearls Project will maintain information on staff, volunteers, trustees and people who use our service who have been involved in certain key policies: disciplinary, grievance, bullying and harassment. Information collected for monitoring purposes will be treated as confidential and it will not be used for any other purpose.

### **Complaints or grievance and disciplinary procedures**

Any employee, volunteer, trustee, member, supporter or individual who uses our service who perceives they have suffered from discriminating attitudes or behaviours should follow Pearls Project's complaints / grievance procedures. Please see Pearls Project's Complaints Policy.

Breaches of our Equality Policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings for employees, volunteers and trustees.

**Reviewed By: Jude McMaster**

**Reviewed Date: 10/09/21**

**Next Review Date: September 2022**