

IvybridgeLink at the BridgeLink Centre

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy and Procedures

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 IvybridgeLink strives for high standards both as an employer and as a provider of services. In so doing, we recognise the need for encouraging diversity and wholeheartedly support a policy of equal opportunities in all areas of our work and responsibilities.
- 1.2 This policy provides guidance to enable all who work with or for IvybridgeLink to comply with anti-discrimination legislation. The policy will also address anti-discrimination issues involving areas that currently fall outside any legislation.
- 1.3 Failure to follow the procedures in the policy may lead to disciplinary or other appropriate action.
- 1.4 IvybridgeLink's aims and objectives will be achieved through action planning, effective monitoring and a willingness to tackle problems where they arise. IvybridgeLink is committed to reviewing this policy on an annual basis. Through our training, publications, interaction with members and other activities, IvybridgeLink will ensure those we work with know our statements of policy.
- 1.5 IvybridgeLink will regularly review the implementation of its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and strategy. Where evidence is found of ineffectiveness, immediate remedial action will be taken to ensure implementation.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 **Equal Opportunities** ensure that policies, procedures and practice within the BridgeLink Centre do not discriminate against the people within it. It is about treating people fairly and equally, regardless of their background or their lifestyle.
- 2.2 **Diversity** ensures that all people are valued as individuals and are able to maximise their potential and contribution to IvybridgeLink and to the community. It recognises that people from different backgrounds can bring fresh ideas and a different approach, which can make the way we work and learn more fun, more creative, more efficient and more innovative.
- 2.3 **Direct Discrimination** occurs when an individual is dealt with less favourably on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin or sex. Also because of, for example, marital status or caring responsibility; sexual orientation; age; physical, sensory or learning disability; mental health; political or religious beliefs; class; HIV status; employment status; unrelated criminal convictions; or union activities.
- 2.4 **Indirect Discrimination** occurs when a requirement or condition, which although it applies equally to persons of all groups, is such that only a considerably smaller proportion of a particular group can comply with it. For example: a rule about clothing that disproportionately disadvantages a racial group cannot be justified; requiring applicants to have British qualifications.
- 2.5 **Victimisation** occurs when an individual is treated less favourably because that person has asserted rights under the Sex Discrimination Act, the Race Relations Act or the Disability Discrimination Act or acted as a whistleblower on such activity. People must be able to act against unlawful discrimination without fear of reprisals.
- 2.6 **Harassment** means repeated, unreciprocated and unwelcome comments, looks, actions, suggestions or physical contact which is found objectionable and offensive, and which might threaten an employee or participant or create an intimidating or uncomfortable environment. Harassment can be sexual, racial, directed against people with disabilities or indeed related to any characteristic exhibited by the individual. (See IvybridgeLink's Harassment Policy for guidance where harassment has occurred).
- 2.7 **Positive Action** refers to measures taken to assist employees or learners, who have been under-represented in specific areas, to reach a level of workplace knowledge and competencies that is comparable with 'representative' employees. These measures would normally take the form of additional training. 'Positive discrimination' at the point of selection for work is not permissible.

IvybridgeLink urges staff, trustees, volunteers and clients to be aware of the less obvious types of discrimination which result from general

assumptions and pre-conceptions about the capabilities, interests and characteristics of individuals.

3. Policy Statements

Diversity

- 3.1 IvybridgeLink will actively encourage diversity to maximise achievement, creativity and good practice and to bring benefit to individuals and communities.
- 3.2 IvybridgeLink encourages all people it works with, and for, to contribute to an environment in which people feel comfortable expressing how they feel and what they need, knowing they will be treated with respect and that their contribution will be valued.
- 3.3 The way we work, train and learn at the BridgeLink Centre reflects both the Mission and Objectives of IvybridgeLink and the spirit and intentions of legislation that outlaws discrimination and promotes equality and diversity.
- 3.4 IvybridgeLink will make reasonable adjustments to working practices, equipment and premises and offer, where appropriate, additional support to trustees, staff and volunteers to ensure they are able to take a full and active part in IvybridgeLink's work.
- 3.5 IvybridgeLink will endeavour to deliver services in a way that genuinely recognises the importance of an inclusive society that brings opportunities and access, not barriers, to individuals.

Equal Opportunities

- 3.6 IvybridgeLink is an equal opportunities employer and provider of services. No job applicant, employee, volunteer, trustee, member or service user should receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin; sex; marital status or caring responsibility; sexual orientation; age; physical, sensory or learning disability; mental health; political or religious beliefs; class; HIV status; employment status; unrelated criminal convictions; union activities. Nor will such person be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable. This principle applies to recruitment, promotion, transfer, training, benefits, facilities, procedures and all terms and conditions of employment.

4. Aims and Objectives

- 4.1 The aims and objectives of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy are:
- To encourage, promote and celebrate diversity in all our activities and services.
 - To ensure equal access to jobs and volunteer opportunities.
 - To ensure compliance with legislation on discrimination and equality as consolidated in the legal framework of the Equality Act 2010. To promote equal opportunities in other areas not currently covered by legislation.
 - To create environments free from harassment and discrimination.
 - To maximise the use of resources in the best interests of staff, volunteers and service users.
 - To confront and challenge discrimination where and whenever it arises, whether it be between colleagues or in any other area relating to IvybridgeLink's work.
 - To make a willingness to accept and implement this policy to be a necessary qualification for any position in IvybridgeLink.
 - To ensure, through positive action if necessary and so far as is practicable, that all IvybridgeLink premises and services are accessible to all people
 - To ensure that employment and advancement within the organisation is determined by objective criteria and personal merit.

5. Policy Implementation: Expectations

- 5.1 IvybridgeLink recognises that passive policies do not provide equality and IvybridgeLink will seek to promote equality and diversity within the following framework of responsibilities.
- 5.2 Responsibility for implementing and developing the policy rests with the Trustees. The overall co-ordinating responsibility for equal opportunities and management of diversity is delegated to the Centre Administrator. However, IvybridgeLink believes that all who work with or for the organisation have an individual responsibility: to accept the policy and ensure a personal involvement in its application; to co-operate actively to ensure that the environment we desire is a reality. Therefore:
- 5.3 **Ivybridge Link Centre expects individuals:**
- to co-operate with measures introduced by IvybridgeLink to ensure equality of opportunity, diversity and non-discrimination
 - not to harass, abuse or intimidate any other employee or participant on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin; gender; marital status or caring responsibility; sexual orientation; age; physical, sensory or learning disability; mental health; political or religious beliefs;

class; HIV status; employment status; unrelated criminal convictions; union activities; gender reassignment, or pregnancy and maternity.

- to feel sufficiently confident to inform management if they suspect discrimination is taking place.

5.4 IvybridgeLink expects our Board of Trustees:

- to ensure that proper records of employment decisions are maintained, and regular reviews of employment practices are carried out
- to ensure that grievances are dealt with in a fair and consistent manner and in line with IvybridgeLink's Grievance Policy and Procedure
- to ensure that staff are aware of their legal responsibilities, and the organisation's Equality and Diversity Policy
- to promote actively the benefits of employee and participant diversity, in employment, services and training.

5.5 IvybridgeLink may appoint external Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Advisers to provide advice and make recommendations in relation to Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Inclusion to help us:

- to ensure that the highest standards of Equality Opportunities practice are observed in the delivery of IvybridgeLink services and to undertake training and development opportunities to ensure that competence is maintained.
- to collate and discuss relevant organisational information and make recommendations to the Centre Administrator.
- to offer advice and guidance to members of staff, volunteers and client organisations in IvybridgeLink's Equality and Diversity Policy and Procedures.
- to seek the views and opinions of employees, volunteers and clients on the operation of the policy in his/ her locality/ area of responsibility, in particular to meet the diverse needs of the users.
- to facilitate training and discussion on Equal Opportunities and Diversity issues as appropriate.

5.6 The person with responsibility for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion will:

- ensure that the Centre Administrator and any external Advisers are supported in their roles regarding the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Procedures.
- ensure Trustees are appraised promptly of any complaints raised and advised at least annually of indicators relating to equal opportunities, diversity and inclusion within the BridgeLink Centre.
- ensure that the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy and associated documents are reviewed on an annual basis.

- review and approve policies, procedures and practices that impact on equal opportunities, diversity and inclusion practice.
- co-ordinate the delivery of any required equality, diversity and inclusion action plans.

6. Policy Implementation: Recruitment and Promotion

- 6.1 IvybridgeLink strives to ensure that our trustees, staff and volunteers reflect the wider community.
- 6.2 Clear and accurate information on vacant posts should be available through advertisement, job descriptions, person specifications and interview. Vacancies should be advertised sufficiently widely to reach the widest possible range of candidates, either internal and/or external.
- 6.3 All recruitment material should not imply any preferred group, unless a genuine occupational qualification exists limiting a post to a particular group.
- 6.4 Applicants will be informed, through all recruitment material of IvybridgeLink's commitment to Equal Opportunities and Diversity and the existence of this policy. As a minimum, this policy will be made available on the Bridgeline Centre website.
- 6.5 Person specifications may include 'essential' and 'desirable' requirements that are necessary and justifiable. Care, and advice where necessary, is needed to ensure these are not discriminatory.
- 6.6 Staff and volunteers should be encouraged to discuss their development and training needs through a process of regular support and annual appraisals.
- 6.7 Job titles that are discriminatory should be avoided.

7. Policy Implementation: Interviews and Selection

- 7.1 In line with the intentions of this policy, interviewing and selection policies and processes must take care to reflect the gender, disability and ethnic make-up of IvybridgeLink when selecting the panel.
- 7.2 The shortlisting panel will not select candidates on the basis of the gender, name, possible disability or age of the candidate.
- 7.3 The interview panel must take extreme care not to ask discriminatory questions unrelated to the requirements of the job, e.g. race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin; sex; marital status or caring responsibility;

sexual orientation; age; physical, sensory or learning disability; mental health; political or religious beliefs; class; HIV status; employment status; unrelated criminal convictions; union activities.

8. Policy Implementation: Training

- 8.1 In line with the intentions of this policy, IvybridgeLink will not discriminate in the provision of training courses/ opportunities wherever possible.
- 8.2 Appropriate training will be provided to enable trustees, staff and volunteers to perform their jobs effectively. The training offered will consider the needs of all people.
- 8.3 Briefing on this policy will form part of the Induction Procedure for Trustees, staff and volunteers.

9. Enforcement

- 9.1 IvybridgeLink recognises the need for a continuing commitment to genuine equal opportunities and diversity within the organisation. The effectiveness of the policy's aims and objectives can only be judged by how the policy operates in practice.

Policy Enforcement – Grievances

- 9.2 Any staff member or volunteer who feels they have been a victim of unlawful discrimination or unfairly treated in a way contrary to the intention of this policy should raise the issue to the Board of Trustees via the Centre Administrator.
- 9.3 Any service user who feels they have been unfairly treated in a way contrary to the intention of this policy should make a complaint through IvybridgeLink's Centre Administrator, who must report any such complaint to the Chair of the Board of Trustees. If the complaint is about the Centre Administrator, this should be made directly to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.
- 9.4 Any job applicant who believes that they have been treated unfairly and contrary to the intention of this policy should raise the issue with the Chair of the Board of Trustees via the Centre Administrator.
- 9.5 All incidents of **direct discrimination** are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure.
- 9.6 Incidents of **indirect discrimination** will be investigated to determine whether they should be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure.

- 9.7 Incidents of **victimisation** or **harassment** will be dealt with in accordance with Ivybridge Link's Harassment Procedure. Where incidents of victimisation and harassment are proven, the issue will be dealt with under IvybridgeLink's Disciplinary Procedure.
- 9.8 IvybridgeLink will not treat lightly or ignore grievances from members of disadvantaged groups on the assumption that they are over-sensitive about discrimination.

Policy Enforcement – Disciplinary Procedure

- 9.9 Any member of staff found to be in breach of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action in line with the Standard Terms of Employment.
- 9.10 Any volunteer found to be in breach of this policy will be counselled on their actions and may, where necessary, be removed from IvybridgeLink's volunteer register.
- 9.11 Any member of any Committee or working group of IvybridgeLink Centre found in breach of this policy will be counselled on their actions and may, where necessary, be asked to leave IvybridgeLink.
- 9.12 Any service user found in breach of this policy will, where appropriate, be counselled on their actions and may, where necessary, be referred back to their organisation or refused future services from IvybridgeLink.

10. Monitoring

- 10.1 The Board of Trustees will review annually equality of opportunity relating to IvybridgeLink services. Recruitment and selection procedures will be monitored and reviewed annually by the Centre Administrator who will report to the Board of Trustees. All aspects of personnel policies and procedures shall be kept under review to ensure that they do not operate against the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- 10.2 In order to determine the impact of this policy it is important that a monitoring system be developed which will measure commitment, progress and effectiveness. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy will be monitored and reviewed as follows:
- The policy will be an agenda item at staff team meetings at least once each year.
 - Trends in staff turnover will be reviewed at least once each year and any required investigation considered.
 - The Chair of the Board of Trustees will undertake an annual policy review. All relevant parties will be encouraged to submit comments for consideration.
 - The review recommendations will be presented to the next Trustee meeting for their comments and ratification.

- 10.3 Where it appears that there may have been or there is a breach of the policy, the Chair of the Board of Trustees will investigate the circumstances and action will be taken to counter any proven breach of policy.
- 10.4 If it is found that the policy is excluding or discouraging the development of trustees, staff or volunteers or restricting service users, the Board of Trustees should take positive action to re-adjust the policy.

Change Record

Date of Change:	Changed By:	Comments:
25/3/24	Katherine Morgan	Sent to DS for annual review
09/09/24	Debbie Squires	Date Approved by IvybridgeLink Board of Trustees
12/07/25	Katherine Morgan	Sent to DS for annual review in September
15/09/25		To be reviewed at meeting by trustees

Review Form

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Adviser:

_____ Tel: _____

Monitoring Arrangements:

Date of local review(s):

Other information: