



Service User Equality Policy

Policy

My Life Legacy and My Life Learning are committed to eliminating discrimination, harassment, intimidation or abuse of any kind and aims to create an environment which values each person connected with the organisation as a unique individual, worthy of respect and understanding. The purpose of this policy is to provide the necessary guidance to all staff to support them in their role.

Definitions

Direct Discrimination

Treating one person less favourably than another, because of, for example race or gender.

Indirect Discrimination

Creating a condition or requirement which cannot be shown to be justifiable and which in practice precludes certain groups from being considered.

Bullying/Harassment

Occurs in cases where a member of staff or young person is subject to abuse or unfair treatment by another person, whether staff, young person or visitor.

Religious Observances

My Life Legacy and My Life Learning do not promote a religion. Nonetheless, My Life Legacy and My Life Learning fully accepts the vitally important role that an individual's belief system has in their personal development and the role that ethical standards play in shaping adult life.

My Life Legacy and My Life Learning promotes a general value system which acknowledges the rights and responsibilities of all those who participate in each service.

Every young person at a My Life Legacy or My Life Learning service (under 18 years) has the right under the Children Act 1989 Regulations (1991) to attend such religious services and receive such instructions as are appropriate to the religious persuasion to which they belong. Adult Services Standards require that the religion and cultural needs of the over-18s are also given priority.

The organisation must ensure that sufficiently detailed information is obtained at the time of referral to ensure that:

- The religious, dietary and cultural needs of the service user are understood.
- These needs can be met by the centre, if necessary, by making special provision.

The organisation should forge appropriate links with local organisations representing all the major organised religions and ensure that appropriate, accessible information is maintained (where appropriate). Where feasible, the family, carers or guardians should be involved in deciding upon the best means of making provision for the service user's religious needs, especially if this has not been adequately addressed in the Local Authority care plan already. Special arrangements may be needed to enable service users to worship in privacy.

Every effort should be made to meet the service user's religious needs; any additional expenditure required should be discussed with the placing authority and a variation to fees negotiated to cover actual expenditure. What constitutes exceptional expenditure is a matter for the Senior Leadership Team to decide.



Race, Culture, Gender and Ethnic Origin

The Senior Leadership Team should take steps to ensure that staffing reflects the ethnic, religious and cultural background of the client group served. This is important for children of Black and Asian origin and for those from cultural traditions, e.g. Ireland. Religions such as Roman Catholicism, Judaism and Islam have specific requirements which need to be understood, but it should not be assumed that service users from other faiths with less stringent requirements, e.g. Anglican, do not have needs which need to be considered.

Curricula should be structured to ensure that young people can learn about their own ethnic and cultural background. It is important that boys are provided with positive male role models and that girls can discuss personal matters with appropriately trained female staff.

Assumptions about needs or capabilities based on chronological age or gender are always inappropriate and must be avoided.

Language

Some service users may speak only or primarily a language other than English. Individuals are entitled to be able to communicate with at least one member of staff who always understands their language and dialect. In extreme cases, where this requirement cannot be readily met, this may constitute reasonable cause for declining a referral. In less extreme cases, where occasional provision needs to be made, arrangements should be made as a matter of priority to allow opportunities for the service user to speak their own language and have access to relevant cultural resources.

Welsh Services

Welsh is spoken by over a fifth of the population of Wales but is also an essential part of the cultural identity and character of Wales. Whilst the organisation cannot guarantee a Welsh language service to all, we welcome the use of Welsh by staff and the people we support and will continually seek to improve the company's ability to communicate in Welsh, wherever possible. We record the language choice of all people supported by our services and will endeavour to provide a comprehensive service in that preferred language. We will always seek services in Welsh for those who use it as their first language.

Sexual Orientation

Individual plans should take account of the service user's sexual orientation. Any issues must be treated sensitively, both as regards the individual and the organisation.

Disability

Issues surrounding the disability of any service user must be identified and every effort made to ensure that they do not suffer a lack of access to opportunity as a result of that disability. In areas where access to those with physical disabilities is restricted, the potential to improve the situation should be the subject of regular review, in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act.

Diet and Personal Preferences

Service users should have their personal preferences as regards diet respected, wherever compatible with adequate nutrition, whether as a result of religious or ethnic reasons. Vegetarians should not be required to eat meat or any animal products of which they disapprove. Those with a restricted diet which may be unhealthy for them may be encouraged but not forced to eat more nutritiously. Extreme cases should be referred to the service user's GP. Every service user has a right to a variety of nutritious foods in line with their dietary preferences. Particularly expensive diets to supply should be discussed in advance with the placing authorities.



Service users have a right to choose in a number of areas in their life. Those choices should be accepted and encouraged, except in cases where they do harm to the individual or others. Traditional stereotypes should neither be taught nor encouraged. Any ridicule shown to any service user as a result of exercising such a choice will be treated as a breach of this policy. As part of their independence programme, service users should be encouraged to develop the skills of shopping and food preparation necessary to be able to follow the diet of their choice.

Teaching Materials

Teaching materials and other items, such as computer games and books, should be regularly reviewed and updated, after due consideration of race, gender and other forms of stereotyping. This consideration should be essentially "light touch". It is as much the job of the organisation to enable service users to make their own choices as to protect them from negative stereotypes.