

Equal Opportunities Policy

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1. Scope

- 1.1. This equality policy applies to all members of the Centre of Therapy & Counselling Studies community including all staff, therapists and students. It is the aim of this policy to ensure that no person involved with the Centre of Therapy & Counselling Studies experiences unfair disadvantage or discrimination.

2. General information

- 2.1. The Centre of Therapy & Counselling Studies is committed to equal opportunities in its hiring and in the provision of services to students and therapy clients. It is our aim to provide an environment of mutual respect and fair treatment.
- 2.2. All reasonable efforts will be taken to ensure prevention of discrimination against all staff, therapists, students and clients working with the Centre of Therapy & Counselling Studies. This includes any discrimination based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/beliefs, sex or sexual orientation. These protected characteristics are laid out in the Equality Act 2010 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>).
- 2.3. The existence of this policy does not prohibit an individual's rights to lodge a complaint of discrimination with an external body involved in the enforcement of equal opportunities, nor does it prohibit an individual's rights to seek advice or lodge appeal against any decisions made relating to the enforcement of this policy.

3. Implementation

- 3.1. To effectively implement this policy, the Centre of Therapy & Counselling Studies will:
 - make the policy known to all staff, job applicants, member therapists and students
 - provide training and guidance for staff, where appropriate, to ensure that they understand and are able to discharge their responsibilities in law and under Centre of Therapy & Counselling Skills policy
 - monitor, examine and regularly review employment procedures and practices with a view to promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating discrimination
 - ensure that the actions of staff and therapists, including trainees, in the provision of services are conducted in a non-discriminatory manner in terms of the policy
 - take action to address any reported discrimination efficiently and effectively.

4. Monitoring

- 4.1. The implementation and effectiveness of this equal opportunities policy will be monitored and reviewed through:
 - data collection and analysis of relevant information and statistics on the composition of paid staff and job applicants
 - student supplied course feedback
 - use of performance indicators to identify possible areas requiring action
 - assessment of policy knowledge and understanding during regular staff performance reviews.

- 4.2. Any such information collected will be used solely for monitoring purposes. Arrangements will be made to protect the confidentiality of such information during its collection and retention, in line with all applicable data protection laws.

5. Responsibilities of individuals

- 5.1. This policy requires individual staff, students and member therapists:
- to co-operate with measures introduced by the Centre of Therapy & Counselling Skills to promote equal opportunities and to eliminate discrimination in employment, access to learning and access to therapy
 - not to discriminate against staff, job applicants, students, therapists or members of the general public
 - not to induce or attempt to induce staff, students or therapists to practise discrimination
 - not to victimise any individual who has made a complaint or who has provided information about discrimination or suspected discrimination
 - not to harass, abuse, bully, intimidate or demean staff, job applicants, students, therapists or members of the general public on any grounds or otherwise act in a discriminatory manner
 - to report any incidents of discriminatory acts or practices suspected, witnessed or experienced to the Centre of Therapy & Counselling Studies administration.
- 5.2. Discriminatory acts or omissions committed by staff, students or therapists will be viewed seriously and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken. This may include dismissal of a member of staff, expulsion of a student from courses and suspension of a therapist's access to membership.
- 5.3. Formal complaints of discrimination made by an individual discriminated against will be investigated fully under the Centre of Therapy & Counselling Studies official complaints procedure, accessible on our website (<https://www.centreoftherapy.org/complaints-procedure>).

6. Responsibilities of the Centre

- 6.1. The Centre of Therapy & Counselling Studies commits to taking all available steps to support and ensure accessibility for those working with us or using our services.
- 6.2. Reasonable adjustments will be made to arrangements and premises to ensure equal access for staff, job applicants, students, therapists and members of the general public who have particular needs or who are disabled.
- 6.3. The provision of support and adjustments requires the Centre of Therapy & Counselling Studies to be made aware of such a requirement as soon as possible to ensure our ability to meet those needs. Students experiencing difficulties in completing course objectives due to disability or disadvantage should report this to their tutor as soon as possible.
- 6.4. The Centre may arrange a meeting to establish the precise levels of support required for an individual; the Centre will never presume to know better about a person's needs than the person who experiences them.

Appendix 1: Definition of prohibited conduct

The following definitions describe the conduct this policy requires members of the Centre of Therapy & Counselling Studies community to refrain from and report if witnessed or experienced.

Direct discrimination:

Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably directly because of:

- a protected characteristic they possess – this is ordinary direct discrimination
- a protected characteristic of someone they are associated with, such as a friend, family member or colleague – this is direct discrimination by association
- a protected characteristic they are thought to have, regardless of whether this perception by others is actually correct or not – this is direct discrimination by perception.

Indirect discrimination:

This type of discrimination is usually less obvious than direct discrimination and can often be unintended. In law, it is where a provision, criterion or practice is applied equally to a group of people, but has (or will have) the effect of putting those who share a certain protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage when compared to others without the characteristic in the group.

Harassment:

Harassment is defined as unwanted conduct that:

- violates a person's dignity
- creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for a person
- is of a sexual nature.

Victimisation:

Victimisation is when an employee suffers what the law terms a 'detriment' - something that causes disadvantage, damage, harm or loss - because of:

- making an allegation of discrimination
- supporting a complaint of discrimination
- giving evidence relating to a complaint about discrimination
- raising a grievance concerning equality or discrimination
- doing anything else for the purposes of (or in connection with) the Equality Act 2010.