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COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland)

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

1 General Statement of Policy

1.1 COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland) is committed to equal opportunities in its employment of staff, engagement of volunteers and delivery of services. COSCA will make every effort to prevent discrimination against any of its existing and potential staff, volunteers or users of its services on grounds of the following nine legally 'protected characteristics':

- (a) Sex
- (b) Race
- (c) Age
- (d) Disability
- (e) Religion and belief
- (f) Gender reassignment
- (g) Sexual orientation
- (h) Marriage and civil partnerships
- (i) Pregnancy and maternity

1.2 As an employer, COSCA is committed to working within existing UK anti-discrimination legislation. Information on the examples of the different kinds of conduct that are legally prohibited under the Single Equality Act 2010 are included in **Appendix 1: Prohibited Conduct.**

2 Responsibility for Implementation

- a. The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of COSCA's Board, members of staff and volunteers.
 - a. Corporate overall strategic and administrative responsibility lies with the Chief Executive.

3 Statement of Intent

- 3.1 To ensure the effectiveness of this policy, COSCA will
 - (a) make the policy known to all employees, job applicants and volunteers
 - (b) provide training and guidance for employees and volunteers, as appropriate, to ensure that they understand and are able to discharge their responsibilities in law and under COSCA's policy
 - (c) examine and regularly review employment procedures and practices with a view to promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating discrimination
 - (d) use performance indicators to identify possible areas requiring action
 - (e) ensure that the actions of employees and volunteers in the provision of services are carried out in a non-discriminatory manner in terms of the policy.

4 Responsibilities of COSCA's Employees and Volunteers

- 4.1 This policy requires individual employees and volunteers:
 - (a) to co-operate with measures introduced by COSCA to promote equal employment opportunities and to eliminate discrimination

- (b) not to discriminate against other employees or volunteers
 - (c) not to induce or attempt to induce other employees, or volunteers to practice discrimination
 - (d) to draw to the attention of the Chief Executive any suspected discriminatory acts or practices
 - (e) not to victimise any individual who has made a complaint or who has provided information about discrimination
 - (f) not to harass, abuse or intimidate other employees on any grounds or otherwise act in a discriminatory manner
 - (g) to ensure that no actions are undertaken in their dealings with members of the public which could be held to be discriminatory in terms of the equal opportunities policy.
- 4.2 Discriminatory acts or omissions committed by employees or volunteers of COSCA will be viewed seriously and will normally result in disciplinary action being taken which, in extreme cases, may include dismissal.

5 Monitoring

- 5.1 COSCA will monitor the implementation of the equal opportunities policy.
- 5.2 This will involve the collection of relevant information and statistics on the composition of paid staff, job applicants and volunteers.
- 5.3 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.

6 General

- 1. COSCA's equal opportunities policy does not detract from the individual's rights. This policy does not prevent any individual from pursuing their contractual rights through internal or external appeals procedures, or from pursuing their statutory rights through any body that deals with the enforcement of the particular legislation.

Appendix 1

Prohibited Conduct

Examples of the different kinds of conduct that are prohibited under the Single Equality Act 2010 are as follows:

- **Direct Discrimination** happens when a person is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic. Direct discrimination can also take place by association (links or association to a person with a protected characteristic) and perception (when a person is wrongly thought to have a particular protected characteristic, or is treated as if they do).
- **Discrimination – Perception and Association** – people and employees are protected against offensive behaviour even when it is not directed at them. This does not apply to marriage and civil partnership nor to pregnancy and maternity.
- **Indirect Discrimination** happens when there is a rule, a policy or even a practice that applies to everyone but which particularly disadvantages people who share a particular protected characteristic. This does not apply to pregnancy and maternity.
- **Harassment** – means unwanted behaviour related to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. This does not apply to marriage & civil partnership nor to pregnancy and maternity.
- **Third Party Harassment** means that employers are liable for the behaviour of third parties e.g. customers, performers, and others. Liability arises here after two prior events (not necessarily by the same person), when the employer has been aware of prior events, and when the employer has not taken reasonable steps to prevent recurrence. This does not apply to marriage and civil partnership nor pregnancy and maternity.
- **Victimisation** occurs when a service provider treats someone badly because they have made (or supported) a discrimination complaint or raised a grievance under the Act. There is no requirement here to compare an employee's treatment with anyone else i.e. someone else being treated differently.

Brian Magee
Chief Executive