

## **Equal Opportunities Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

This statement sums up Crisis' views and action in respect of equal opportunities. It sets the standards for all staff and volunteers in the organisation itself and articulates the principles by which Crisis operates. The Policy incorporates the Statement of Intent (Appendix 1), which is a summary of the Policy. This Policy itself is lodged in the staff handbook, though it is also a key document relating to service delivery and practice.

### **2. Equal opportunities and the law**

Equal opportunities legislation provides a definition of what constitutes discrimination in law. Discrimination, as defined in the legislation below, is illegal. It is also unfair and prevents full consideration of an individual's potential. It can be direct or indirect, intentional or unintentional. It often occurs as a result of prejudice and stereotyping.

The relevant legislation is:

The Race Relations Act 1976 and Amendments

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and Amendments

The Disability Discrimination Act Parts 1 – 4

The Employment Equality (religion or belief) Regulations 2003

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003

### **3. Principles**

Crisis mission is to fight homelessness and empower people to fulfil their potential and transform their lives. In striving to achieve these aims, Crisis recognises that people have been and continue to be discriminated against for many different reasons. It is often as a result of such prejudice that people become homeless. Discrimination is then further perpetuated as a result of that homelessness itself.

Crisis is fully aware of its equal opportunity obligations as they are enshrined by legislation and will strive to exceed the minimum that they represent. There are some delivery and cost constraints, but it is acknowledged that considerable progress needs to be made, and a programme of action will be developed.

### **4. Equal opportunities in the different areas of Crisis' activity**

#### **Research**

When researching the needs and circumstances of homeless people Crisis will take care to consider the extent to which prejudice and unfair discrimination are a feature of the causes of homelessness.

#### **Services**

Crisis will:

- ensure that services it supports and runs will be available to people on a fair and equitable basis. Potential users will not be excluded from services on grounds which reflect prejudice or unfair discrimination; and
- urge its partner projects to adopt policies which reflect good equal opportunities practice, and will satisfy itself that they do not unfairly exclude people who may reasonably be expected to use the services. Crisis needs to be satisfied that the projects recruit people, as far as possible, on the merit of their abilities to do a particular job.

#### **Supporters**

Crisis will not allow the need for fundraising to cloud the pursuit of its mission. It will not accept funds that it knows have been generated by illegal activity, but will not turn down funds on behalf of homeless people unless particular offers will damage its ability to pursue its goals. Crisis welcomes support from the full range of ethnic and cultural groups that are within the community and will actively seek out this support.

#### **Employment of staff and volunteers**

Crisis is committed to being a fair employer and will challenge and discourage unfair discrimination. The key points to its personnel policies are to:

- Design job descriptions and person specifications which will be a dispassionate assessment of the task that needs to be done and the qualities of the person who will be able to do it.

- Ensure that interviews will concentrate on assessing a persons abilities and skills in line with the person specification.
- Advertise permanent vacancies and new posts simultaneously internally and externally, unless they are a result of reorganisation or restructuring. Crisis will cast its search for personnel, volunteers and supporters as widely as possible.
- When appropriate, Crisis will use the legislation enabling positive action. Both the Sex Discrimination Act and the Race Relations Act (S37 & 38) allow employers to redress imbalances or under-representation of a particular sex or race within the work force under certain specific circumstances, by recruitment and training.
- Equal opportunities awareness is considered to be an integral part of all staff development. All new employees are issued with a copy of this policy and regular training will be given to new and existing staff.
- Maternity and paternity provisions for staff will exceed minimum standards and represent good practice. No employee will receive less favourable treatment or consideration on the grounds of maternity rights. Employees will not be disadvantaged by any conditions of employment or requirements that cannot be justified as necessary on operational grounds.
- Training and promotion opportunities will be available on the basis of ability, merit, development potential and according to job requirements.
- Grievance and disciplinary procedures will provide scope for staff/volunteers to complain about or be disciplined for harassment or discriminatory behaviour.

## **5. Monitoring**

Crisis will monitor the extent to which policies and their implementation are fair. This will be done by collecting and analysing information which will enable comparison of performance with the needs and circumstances in the community. Policies will be designed to value fairness and challenge unfair behaviour. Information which may expose unfair behaviour or policies will be sought. Crisis will monitor:

- Circumstances in which deviations from the policy have occurred.
- The extent to which Crisis' research has contributed to the understanding of discrimination as a cause of homelessness.
- The use of the relevant parts of the grievance and disciplinary procedure.
- The nature of job advertising.
- The extent to which publicity materials reflect the true picture of homelessness.
- The profile of job applicants and the quality of selection and interview practice.
- The profile of those people who use services or the services of Crisis supported projects .
- The profile of its supporters, where practicable - eg funders and volunteers – and assess the extent to which it is encouraging support amongst a range of people and groups.

Once yearly, this information will be brought together as an equal opportunities audit by the responsible senior manager and adjustments to policies and practice will be considered in the light of this information.

## **6. Responsibility**

The Chief Executive of Crisis is ultimately responsible for the implementation of the policy. Managers are responsible for taking all steps possible to eliminate discrimination, and Crisis gives them particular responsibility for providing a supportive workplace for all.

Every employee and volunteer has a responsibility not to discriminate against anyone at work and in the services. There is a shared responsibility to promote a supportive workplace where differences are respected and to develop an atmosphere where discrimination cannot flourish.

Crisis will appoint two members of staff as equal opportunities representatives. Their responsibility will be to stay up to date with legal and good practice issues. They will also provide advice and assistance to anybody who may have problems which they do not wish to raise with their line manager.

Any person dissatisfied with Crisis' response to a complaint can consult external bodies such as The Equal Opportunities Commission, The Commission for Racial Equality and the National Disability Council.

Appendix1

### **Equal Opportunities Statement of Intent**

Crisis aims to fight homelessness and empower people to fulfil their potential and transform their lives.

In striving to achieve this aims, Crisis recognises that people have been and continue to be discriminated against for many reasons. It is often as a result of such prejudice that people become homeless.

Discrimination is then further perpetuated as a result of homelessness itself.

Crisis seeks to be an organisation that serves homeless people in all their diversity. We will therefore encourage any person or organisation with whom we are connected to adopt equal opportunities practices and policies. This includes existing and potential staff, trustees, volunteers, partners, service users and contractors.

Crisis aims to achieve a diverse workforce at all levels throughout the organisation. It will ensure that all policies and practices reflect good practice in equal opportunities and particularly that this is reflected in recruitment and service delivery.

Both equal opportunities policy and practice will be continually monitored with a commitment to identifying and actively responding to change.

Crisis is striving to be at the forefront of good equal opportunities practice.

This Statement of Intent will be elaborated in Crisis' Equal Opportunities Policy.

Shaks Ghosh  
Chief Executive