



The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service

ADVOCACY IN BARNET



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

1. GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT

Advocacy in Barnet recognizes that Barnet is socially and culturally diverse and believes that its work is positively enriched by the experience and qualities brought by Barnet's communities to the voluntary and community sectors.

However, Advocacy in Barnet recognizes that groups and individuals are discriminated against, both directly and indirectly, on the grounds of:

- Race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin
- Gender, marital status and caring responsibilities
- Sexuality
- Age
- Physical or mental disability or mental ill health
- Religion, faith and belief
- Class
- Employment status
- Unrelated criminal conviction
- Association with others who experience the above.

Advocacy in Barnet aims to ensure that no job applicant, member of staff, volunteer, member of Management Committee, individual or organisation to whom we provide services is discriminated against on any of these grounds. We therefore commit ourselves to take positive action against discrimination and will work to achieve policies and practices which ensure that all who are listed above will have their needs considered, and where appropriate, support needs provided.

2. RESPONSIBILITY UNDER THE POLICY

It is the overall responsibility of the Chair of the Advocacy in Barnet Management Committee to ensure that the Advocacy in Barnet Equal Opportunities Policy is implemented.

The policy applies to all staff employed by Advocacy in Barnet, members and affiliate organisations and Management Committee, all of whom have the personal responsibility to act in accordance with the policy and to be aware of their obligations. The policy will also apply to all aspects of Advocacy in Barnet's promotional activities and materials.

3. IMPLEMENTATION

3.1. Management Committee

- a. Advocacy in Barnet seeks to ensure that the composition of the Management Committee reflects that of Barnet's community.
- b. The Management Committee will endeavor to ensure that the time, place and conduct of meetings will enable existing and potential member of Management Committee to have an equal opportunity to be involved.
- c. Management Committee Members may claim expenses incurred as a result of their work on behalf of Advocacy in Barnet and as set out in the Advocacy in Barnet "Expenses Policy – Management Committee and Volunteer Travel and Subsistence".

3.2. Employment

- a. Advocacy in Barnet works to ensure equal opportunity in all areas of employment including recruitment and selection, induction, training and development, supervision, staff appraisal, promotion, conditions and benefits of service, employment procedures, health and safety, and cessation of employment.
- b. The role of Advocacy in Barnet is to provide free, independent and impartial advocacy services to people in Barnet. Staff will therefore be recruited on the basis of their suitability for this role. All employees, and applicants for employment, will therefore be treated according to their relevant merits and abilities in delivering these services.
- c. As far as is practicable within the constraints of providing a service to our members, flexible working arrangements (eg part time work, job share, hours of work, time off in lieu) will be considered across all posts to meet individual requirements.

3.3 Recruitment and Selection:

- a. All job advertisements will state that Advocacy in Barnet is committed to equal opportunities.
- b. All job vacancies will be advertised as widely as possible including local, national and minority press to encourage applicants from all sections of the community.
- c. Job descriptions and person specifications will be produced, provided to potential applicants and used throughout the recruitment and selection process as objective criteria for measuring applicants' relevant aptitudes, potential skills, knowledge and experience.
- d. Except where there is a need to re-deploy existing staff or there is a genuine occupational qualification, all jobs are open to those with the relevant skills, knowledge and experience.

- e. Application forms will only ask for information relevant to the post.
- f. Members of the interview panel should reflect as wide a range of background and skills as possible.
- g. An equal opportunities section should be included on the application form. The equal opportunities policy, and the purpose of monitoring should be clearly explained.
- h. Staff, Management Committee and others involved in shortlisting and selection will receive written guidelines covering interviewing techniques, systematic assessment, decision making and equal opportunities in interview.
- i. Short listing and interview assessment forms based on the person specification should be completed by all panel members for all candidates and retained on file for 6 months.
- j. Acceptance of the Advocacy in Barnet Equal Opportunities Policy is a condition of employment and all employees must work to this policy.

3.4. Volunteers

Recruitment

- a. Volunteers are recruited in a wide variety of ways to ensure we recruit individuals who are representative of the community who use our services. We believe we have much to learn from different cultures and perspectives.
We monitor our recruitment method so we develop as an organisation in which an assortment of ideas, abilities, backgrounds and needs are cultivated and valued.
- b. As Advocacy in Barnet works with vulnerable adults all volunteers are requested to complete an application form declaring any convictions, are interviewed, have two references taken up and apply for a Criminal Records Bureau enhanced disclosure.
- c. All volunteers receive full initial training and ongoing training relevant to their roles.
- d. New volunteers will be supported by a staff member or an established volunteer on any outreach visits and during the induction period; this will give the new volunteer a chance to discover whether they are comfortable in their role and will enable skills learnt during training modules to be built on.
- e. Volunteers at Advocacy in Barnet can expect support and encouragement, guidance, information, to be able to use their skills and talents, regular contact and to receive training and personal development.
- f. If volunteers are assessed as being unsuitable for placement within Advocacy in Barnet, they will be notified with reasons given. A fair process is used to consider such situations and to ensure the volunteer is able to contribute to this process. We will be able to help these individuals to find a more suitable opportunity if they require.

Expenses

Volunteers are encouraged to reclaim 'out of pocket' expenses incurred through volunteering with Advocacy in Barnet. Forms are provided for this and are available from our office. Details are set out in the Advocacy in Barnet "Expenses Policy – Management Committee and Volunteer Travel and Subsistence".

3.5. Service Delivery

- a. Every effort will be made to ensure that Advocacy in Barnet's membership is representative of all Barnet's communities and where under representation is identified, action will be taken to encourage participation and application by that sector.
- b. Advocacy in Barnet should regularly review the range and type of services offered to determine whether all sections of the community are benefiting. Action should be taken in the event that equal opportunities principles are not being met.
- c. Every effort will be made to ensure that Advocacy in Barnet's premises are accessible to employees, volunteers, users of the service and other visitors.
- d. Advocacy in Barnet should provide information about its services, reports, briefing papers, news magazines, training information, etc. in a format that is acceptable to all sections of the community and will promote its commitment to equality of access to its services.
- e. In day to day dealings with members, service users and the public, members of the Management Committee, staff and volunteers should demonstrate an understanding of equal opportunities principles.

3.6 Training

- a. Training provided by Advocacy in Barnet will reflect this Equal Opportunities Policy at all times.
- b. Advocacy in Barnet should provide comprehensive information about its training programme. Potential participants should be invited to provide details of any special requirements they may have.
- c. Advocacy in Barnet will ensure that all training venues are accessible, provide a safe and comfortable working environment and do not restrict the participation of anyone.
- d. Trainers should be selected in accordance with Advocacy in Barnet's Equal Opportunities Policy.

Advocacy in Barnet and Trainers should integrate equal opportunities by ensuring that:

- Materials carry positive images of all groups in society and should not be discriminatory in terms of language, roles and illustrations.

- Language and examples are anti-discriminatory.
- Racist, sexist and other discriminatory remarks and practices are challenged.
- Training events are inclusive, particularly those with elements of group work.

4. COMPLAINTS

Advocacy in Barnet will ensure that all alleged incidents of discrimination or harassment are taken seriously, handled sensitively, investigated and resolved through its Complaints Procedure and / or, in the case of staff, the Grievance and / or Disciplinary Procedures.

5. MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Chair of the Management Committee, Management Committee and staff members will work to this policy and will monitor, review and evaluate its effectiveness.

Policy written April 2006

Approved and Ratified by Advocacy in Barnet Management Committee May 2012