

Appendix 1

BPA Equal Opportunities Policy

2008

EQUAL ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITIES :

The importance of equal opportunity is acknowledged throughout the organisation.

Our equal opportunities policy is closely monitored to try to ensure that everyone has access to the services they need, and training is provided for all members of staff.

Every aspect of the work of our organisation is informed, and enhanced by the issue of equality of opportunity.

All staff, trainees and volunteers are enabled and supported in challenging behaviour which goes against our policy, and the spirit of it. All our staff, services, resources and activities try to reflect the wide breadth and diversity of cultures within the local community, and meet the variety of local needs.

The Children Act 1989 states:

Children from a very young age learn about different races and cultures, and will be capable of assigning different values to them. The same applies to gender, and making distinctions between male and female roles. It is important that people working with young children are aware of this so that their practice enables children to develop positive attitudes for differences of race, culture, language, and gender.

Children Act standards require all staff to treat the children, provide care with equal concern, and in doing so, acknowledge and respect their specific needs with regard to their religious persuasion, racial origin, cultural and linguistic background, as well as gender or disability.

We recognise that in our society certain groups and individuals are discriminated against for many reasons including their ethnic origin, gender, disability, age, social class, religious or political belief, sexuality, or state of health. Accordingly, we are strongly committed to work towards eliminating any such discrimination in all aspects of our work.

In addition to the human values underlying the need to avoid unfair discrimination, there is also further legislation which covers other particular areas:

The Chronically sick and disabled Act 1970, and amendments of 1976

impose obligations on employers to provide facilities for people with disabilities regarding means of access to and within the building, and appropriate parking and sanitary arrangements.

Equal Pay Act 1970 and amendments of 1983

provide that women should be treated equally as far as pay, fringe benefits etc., and are concerned with men who are employed on work of equal value, and that women should be given equal treatment.

Sex discrimination Acts 1975 and 1986

make it unlawful to discriminate against any person, directly or indirectly, in fields such as recruitment, promotions, training, and conditions of employment, or dismissal on the grounds of gender or marital status.

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

enables some criminal convictions to become “spent” (or forgotten) after a “rehabilitation period”. This applies to sentences of less than 30 months. There are several exceptions including people applying to work with people under 18. They are expected to declare their convictions, even if spent. Police checks are therefore, carried out on all our workers, and trainees.

Race Relations Act 1976

which deals with discrimination on racial grounds (i.e. on grounds of colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins). It makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person directly, or indirectly, in the field of employment. (See the Commission for racial equality’s code of practice for the elimination of racial discrimination for more details)

Employment Act 1990

makes it unlawful for an employer to refuse a person employment because he /she is not a trade union member, or because a person refuses to accept a requirement to become, or resign as, a trade union member.

(For further information on the above legislation, see Croner's reference book for employers, and Croner's management of voluntary organisations.

Notwithstanding the additional thrust given to the issue of equal opportunities given by the Children Act, the legislation does not adequately cover all sections of the community which are unfairly discriminated against, so our policy is wider than legislators have allowed.

It is our policy to ensure that our Playschemes are available to all residents, within the specified age range, where numbers permit, and that no child be excluded or disadvantaged on any of the above grounds. Our objectives are as follows:

To ensure the composition of staff teams reflects that of users.

To examine premises and equipment and make any necessary adaptations, to ensure access is available to all potential users.

To increase awareness within our organisation of the needs of minority groups.

To ensure that racism in all its forms is challenged, and that food, festivals, images, games and other play opportunities reflect the diversity of the setting.

To enable all children have equal status, and rights to appropriate access, with each child being included, and given encouragement to fulfil their individual potential.

To ensure that no staff / users / parents/ members of committees suffers unfair discrimination, and to act decisively on any such incidents in accordance with employment procedures / rules on behaviour etc.

To advocate effective equal opportunities policies throughout the voluntary sector.

The implementation of Equal Opportunities Service Provision

In implementing our Equal Opportunity Policy, we have regard to the following:

Ensuring that we actively develops links with ethnic minority groups that are discriminated against, and informs them of its work

Ensuring that all potential users have access to information, and that all leaflets, and publicity materials are easy to read, and understandable.
Ensuring that our representatives meet regularly with users to evaluate the Service, and look at ways of enhancing it.

Ensuring that we have information about the local community with which to compare its monitoring records.

CHILD-CARE ISSUES

Racism and child-care:

The council for racial equality asserts:

“It is possible to analyse differences in the learning experiences available in different settings, and to infer that some ethnic minority children might begin their statutory schooling at a disadvantage because of the quality of their pre-school experiences. Young children are influenced by ideas and attitudes which perpetuate prejudices.”

Every precaution must be taken to ensure anti-racist child-care, so that black and white children are not damaged by their experience. Black children may feel excluded, rejected, angry, ashamed of their colour, language their way of life. Being constantly presented with a white world, they may find it more difficult to establish their identity and self-esteem.

If white children see that racist remarks and attitudes go unchallenged, they are more likely to develop insensitive, uncaring attitudes themselves, thus perpetuating the spiral of children learning racism.

Thought is therefore given, and action taken, to ensure that Playwork, games, activities, events, puzzles, books and other materials contribute to an anti-racist approach, and that themes and art / craft -work reflect the ethnicity of the community.

Playworkers should also take care to give positive responses to other languages.

Our food policy ensures that our meals / snacks prepared for children include food from different cultures and countries.

Celebrating and learning about different festivals are essential because the more we know about each other's culture and race, the less we will be divided by racism.

Racism must be recognised, challenged and eliminated. Each child's motivation must be encouraged by ensuring they feel fully included, personally, racially, and culturally.

Children with Special Needs

We believe that segregation of children with special needs is a devaluation of those children, just as exclusion on the basis of gender, class or race.

All children have equal status and equal rights to appropriate support and to access play-care facilities. If an increasingly wide range of children is used to being together in integrated groups, then there will be less ignorance and fear that would otherwise prevent the acceptance of people with disabilities and/or learning difficulties.

It is therefore, vital that our employees / Playworkers and volunteers expect, and look forward to working with children with disabilities, and have the necessary training and support to do so including: sign-language, physical care, help with behavioural difficulties, and First Aid.

Sexism and Child-Care

As with anti-racism, care must be taken to ensure that activities, events, games, toys and other materials do not reflect society's stereotyping of gender roles. For example, books and puzzles should not exclusively show Mummy in the home, and Daddy working outside the home. It is better to have fewer books and puzzles which are non-sexist than to have a larger amount which provide stereotypical images.

Team games and Sports should also be anti-sexist. Thought must continually be given, for example, to ways in which girls will not feel excluded from computer games, football etc., and boys from cooking and sewing.

We will not discriminate against any child, on any basis apart from medical grounds. This means that boys will share in the preparation of food, snacks and washing-up, and girls encouraged to play in the Adventure Playgrounds even if they get grubby. Time should also be taken to explain our reasoning to any parents who are concerned about their child's gender role.

Playworkers are also encouraged to ensure that they show affection and comfort to boys as well as girls, and to be aware of the messages we might be transmitting if, for example we ask boys to help carry out

physical tasks, and girls in particular to look after younger children, or help with the cleaning up. Boys should be encouraged to express their feelings, just the same as girls.

General Issues

It is essential that positive images should be given to children. For examples, pictures, posters, photos etc. should reflect positive images of minority groups living happy and successful lives. Children should see men in caring roles and women in career situations. Care should be taken to make sure that people with disabilities are included, and so on. Questions about physical / cultural differences must be answered honestly, not ignored or side-stepped. Staff should be aware of what children perceive and understand.

Discussions regarding bullying should be investigated by staff in a “safe situation”, where adults and children are enabled to be honest, thus facilitating children developing skills to combat and deal with prejudice and the abuse of power.

Selection Procedures

In order to avoid indirect / direct discrimination, selection criteria should be regularly examined to ensure that they are related to fair person specifications. For example, consideration should be given to what is acceptable literacy / numeracy standard for Playworker posts.

The person specification is based upon the following six point grading system drawn from guidelines from the Commission for Racial Equality:

1. Impact on others: Appropriate appearance, communication skills, manner, ability to work within a team.
2. Attainments: education, qualifications, vocational training, work / voluntary experience.
3. Innate abilities: ability to carry out physical tasks as required in a Play-work setting, quickness of comprehension, aptitude for learning.
4. Special aptitudes; abilities with children, patience, understanding, manual dexterity, abilities regarding use of words,

and figures, practical, constructional, creative.

5. Disposition: dependability, self-reliance, enthusiasm, motivation, initiative, emotional stability, ability to withstand stress ability to relate to children and adults
6. Interests: practical, constructional, physical activities, intellectual, artistic, dramatic, musical, social.

Candidates are sent a person specification with their application form, and job description.

A selection panel involving three members of the management team read all application forms, mark them according to the selection criteria, and those applicants with the highest marks are invited to an interview.

All unsuccessful candidates receive a letter indicating that they did not meet sufficient requirements.

Interviews are conducted over a one or two day period, depending upon the number of candidates.

All candidates are received warmly, and every effort is made to establish a rapport.

All candidates are required to complete police-check forms at interview stage. The selection process and interview procedure are explained to each candidate, and that the candidate's success in meeting all the required

criteria will result in their details being logged onto our Play Register.

Each candidate is informed that although inclusion on the Register does not guarantee them a job, as most Playwork posts are seasonal, part-time, during school holidays etc. If they are successful they will be informed when a suitable vacancy arises.

Each candidate is asked if they accept that their details will be kept on the Play Register, and contacted if and when a post requiring their particular abilities and skills becomes available.

The same questions are asked of each candidate, and marks apportioned to their responses. Where possible open questions are used to maximise the candidate's scope for answering.

Records of all interviews are signed dated and kept on the Play Register. Each member of the selection panel totals their marks for each candidate, and shares their figures with the others. Each is then able to challenge one another in a non-judgemental way, about any discrepancies in the marking, and any adjustments made accordingly.

Decisions are made in relation to the job requirements and person specification already set, and not comparison with other candidates. All successful candidates are notified in writing within two weeks of the final interview.

Monitoring and Reviewing Equal Opportunities

The Equal Opportunities policy is monitored annually to ensure that it's aims and objectives are being achieved, and / or to address any problems in achieving those aims and objectives.

Areas of monitoring are:

Recruitment: In terms of: gender, race, ethnicity, disability, age
Religious / cultural needs

Retention: As above, with length of / periods of service, rate of pay

Training and Development: As above, with qualifications, training, etc.

Discrimination and harassment: Through staff appraisal, disciplinary, grievance and complaints procedures.

We recognise and encourage the involvement of employees in the wider community. We also aim to reach all sections of the local community, in terms of users.

Staff employed reflect the diversity of our community.

We hold regular meetings of staff to ensure consultation, feedback, ideas, and suggestions for Service improvement, and staff development.

We also encourage each staff team to conduct similar exercises in consultation with children and parents who use the provision.

Training is offered to all staff, with the opportunity to obtain nationally recognised qualifications in Playwork...

These standards recognise in full, the need for anti-discriminatory practice covering culture, race, gender, disability, sexual orientation and social background.

Our training programme, therefore advocates taking positive action to counter discrimination in all its forms, and being positive about people's differences.