

# TOUCHSTONE

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

(Part of the Inclusion and  
Diversity Handbook)

### Other Related Policies:

- Diversity Policy
- Recruitment and Selection procedure
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Code of Conduct Policy
- Supervision and Appraisal procedures
- Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy.
- Gender Identity at Work Policy
- Sexual Orientation Policy
- Faith, Religion and Belief Policy

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to outline Touchstone's policy relating to equality of opportunity in employment and service delivery. It is applicable to all members of the Board of Trustees, Touchstone's employed staff, agency workers, consultants, contractors, volunteers, and the people Touchstone serves. It is a fundamental policy of Touchstone and all other policies will be reviewed and developed in line with this.

As evidence of its commitment to its people and equal opportunities best practice, Touchstone is a Stonewall Top 100 Employer, a Sunday Times Top 100 Best Company and a Disability Confident employer. Touchstone is also an Investors in People and Investors in Volunteers accredited organisation as well as a Mindful Employer.

### LEGISLATION

Touchstone and its employees have a number of obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The Act protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. It is against the law to discriminate against anyone on the grounds of a "protected characteristic" There are 9 protected characteristics:

- age
- gender reassignment
- marriage and/or civil partnership
- pregnancy or maternity
- disability
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion, belief or lack of religion/belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Agreed: November 2020

Review: October 2023

## **1 POLICY STATEMENT**

- 1.1 Touchstone is committed to developing and promoting ways of working that ensure employees and service users are not subjected to any form of discrimination.
- 1.2 Touchstone wholeheartedly supports the principles of equal opportunities in employment and service delivery, and opposes all forms of discrimination on the grounds of a protected characteristic. This will be promoted to all stakeholders and expected of all partnering organisations.
- 1.3 Touchstone is committed to equality of opportunity in its provision of services. To this end all who approach it for services will be treated fairly and equally – according to need. Any form of discrimination, harassment or abuse will not be tolerated and appropriate action will be taken, in line with legislation and Touchstone policies.
- 1.4 We believe that it is in the best interests of Touchstone, its employees and the people and communities we serve, to ensure that the human resources, talents and skills available throughout society are considered when employment opportunities arise. To this end, within the framework of law, we are committed, wherever practicable, to achieving and maintaining a workforce which broadly reflects the communities in which we operate. Touchstone undertakes to review annually the demographic composition of the workforce to ensure that we reflect the individuals and communities we serve. Every possible step will be taken to ensure that people are treated fairly and based on the evidence available to us, and that decisions on recruitment, selection, training and development, are based solely on objective and job related criteria. An action plan, which is regularly reviewed and overseen by SMT and the Diversity Action Group, will drive forward Touchstone's performance in relation to diversity and inclusion and this will be reported annually to Touchstone's Board of Trustees.

## **2 ACTION TO IMPLEMENT POLICY**

- 2.1 Touchstone staff, volunteers and trustees are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that is not discriminatory or oppressive at all times and Touchstone will take all possible steps to ensure that inclusion and equal opportunity is maintained. These steps will include:-
  - Setting an action plan containing achievable objectives and targets, and reviewing it annually at Operations and Quality Standards Committee;
  - Monitoring existing employees, the Board and applicants for new jobs in order to meet equality targets annually and reporting at a full Board meeting;
  - Using fair and objective criteria in recruitment and employment decisions. Our selection procedures will be reviewed from time to time to ensure that they are appropriate for achieving our objectives and for avoiding unlawful discrimination;
  - Where gaps or deficits are identified, to develop appropriate positive action plans to bridge these gaps and to ensure staff and service delivery targets are met
  - Collecting accurate data on equal opportunities by the analysis of staff demographic information;
  - Examining and reviewing existing procedures for recruitment, selection, training

Agreed: November 2020

Review: October 2023

and development as per the policy review timetable.

- Person and job specifications shall be limited to those requirements which are necessary for the effective performance of the job. Interviews will be conducted on an objective basis;
- Ensuring staff are able to report any forms of discrimination experienced to their line managers, giving feedback on the usage of policies and procedures e.g. grievance, and access to a whistleblower via supervision and appraisals. Any discriminatory conduct shall be treated very seriously and is potentially a disciplinary matter;
- Ensuring that all services will be equally accessible to deaf and hearing people, as well as people who do not have English as a first language. Community language interpretation, including access to British Sign Language, will be available upon request to all service users. All services are accessible by voice or text phone
- Monitoring the application of the Equal Opportunities Policy;
- Providing appropriate Diversity and Equal Opportunities training to staff;
- Reviewing the policy, periodically;
- Reviewing objectives and taking steps within legislation to rectify discrepancies via formal reporting to SMT;
- Reviewing as required the needs of people with disabilities in relation to employment and service delivery via monitoring to the Board and relevant Committee(s)
- Ensuring policies are gender neutral and inclusive of all gender identities, expressions and none.
- Reviewing working patterns to enable us to offer flexible working to staff who require it. Where necessary, special provision will be made for staff returning to work following a break for domestic reasons;
- All staff having a right to equality of opportunity and a duty to implement this policy.

### **3. BREACHES OF THIS POLICY**

- 3.1 If any colleague believes that they have been discriminated against they are encouraged to raise this matter through the HR Director or Chief Executive, whether this is either by another member of staff or external person and the appropriate action will be taken in line with relevant policies and procedures.
- 3.2 Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. Staff who make such allegations will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result.
- 3.3 Any member of staff who is found – following due process - to have committed an act of discrimination or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. We take a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.
- 3.4 Allegations raised with regard to external people will be taken seriously and investigated and appropriate action taken.
- 3.5 It is important that all employees are familiar with this policy as they could personally be liable under the Equality Act 2010.

Agreed: November 2020

Review: October 2023

4. ACTION PLAN 2020-23

Objective	Target/Monitoring	Responsibility/ Monitoring
<b>Employment:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the procedure for recruitment and selection is fair and equal</li>   <li>• Ensure the workforce reflects the communities we serve, and is in line with legislation</li>   <li>• Ensure the provision of fair and just terms and conditions of employment which support the recruitment and retention of all staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review procedures annually</li>   <li>• Employ at least 50% women, 40% Black African/Caribbean and South East Asian people, 15% disabled people and 10% LGB staff and 2% Trans staff, across the whole organisation and individual targets to be set for each team.</li>   <li>• To be monitored within the Joint Negotiating &amp; Consultation Committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CEO/HR Director and Board</li>   <li>• CEO/HR Director/Board</li>   <li>• Board</li> </ul>