

Equal Opportunities Policy

1 STATEMENT OF INTENT

Precious Lives recognises that in society some groups and individuals are oppressed and/or disadvantaged on the basis of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or racial origins, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, HIV status, employment status, dependants, disability, age, political or religious beliefs, trade union membership and in other areas of social exclusion. 'Precious Lives' further recognises that this has a direct bearing on the way members of these groups may experience access to services and community support.

Precious Lives considers such forms of discrimination to be unacceptable and is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunities and elimination of bad practice in its own work, policies and practices. It therefore recognises the importance of good practice and will strive to redress discrimination and provide equality of opportunity and service in all the areas of Precious Lives' work.

In so doing, Precious Lives recognises the Statutory requirements laid down in the Employment Rights Act 1996, Race Relations Act 1976, Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (as amended), the Disabled (Employment) Acts 1944 and 1958, the Equal Pay Act 1979 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. 'Precious Lives' further accepts and wishes to comply with the recommendations set down in the 1984 Commission for Racial Equality Codes of Practice and the 1985 Equal Opportunities Commission Code of Good Practice on the Employment of Disabled People. The aim of the legislation is to ensure that no job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, citizenship, ethnic or racial origin, sex, Trade Union membership, marital status or disability, unless justified by the requirements of the post.

Precious Lives fully accepts its responsibilities within these laws and is also bound by the spirit of the Acts. 'Precious Lives' also has a responsibility not to discriminate against a person for reasons associated with age, political or religious beliefs, sexual orientation, dependants, HIV status, employment status or in other ways, unless justified by the requirements of the post.

Precious Lives is, therefore, committed to ensuring that our policies and practices relating to all aspects of management, staffing (paid and voluntary workers), service delivery and development are accessible to and reflect the needs of all groups. "Precious Lives" therefore, positively welcomes and actively seeks the involvement and participation of oppressed and disadvantaged groups.

This policy applies to all potential and existing "Precious Lives" members, staff, volunteers and management committee members, and will be made known to all applicants for jobs, volunteers and potential management committee members. Codes of Practice pertaining to good practice in recruitment, selection and training (for paid and voluntary staff) conditions of service, grievance and other areas of employment practice will inform the implementation of this policy.

2 MANAGEMENT

2.1 *Implementation*

Responsibility for implementing and monitoring this Equal Opportunities Policy rests primarily with the Chair of the Management Committee, who will delegate aspects of it to staff or other members of the Management Committee under her/his supervision.

2.2 *Membership*

Membership of the organisation is available to any group or individual meeting our published membership criteria. We will endeavour to monitor our membership 'constituency' in terms of ethnic origin and disability so that we can begin to identify any bias or imbalance in our membership as compared with the population as a whole. All members of the organisation are expected, as a condition of membership, to comply with this policy on Equal Opportunities.

2.3 *Management Committee*

Our procedures for electing the Management Committee are democratic, and allow every member group or individual who wishes to be represented on our Management Committee an equal chance of being elected at our Annual General Meeting (AGM). We will monitor the composition of our Management Committee after each AGM, and in the event that one or more sections of the community appears to be under-represented, we shall make efforts to co-opt representatives from them. Suitable training will be offered to all Management Committee members, to enable them to discharge their duties and responsibilities effectively.

3 COMPLIANCE

Precious Lives expects members, staff, volunteers and Management Committee members to raise issues of discrimination when they become aware of it by challenging it or by using our Complaints Procedure (and, in the case of discriminatory behaviour by staff, Contracts Of Employment). Staff and volunteers will be offered training in methods of challenging discriminatory and oppressive behaviour in a positive and assertive manner (see 4.3 below).

Any individual or group found to have shown racist or sexist attitudes and behaviour or prejudice against people on the grounds of disability, age or sexual orientation will be excluded from membership. A right of appeal will exist according to Precious Lives' complaints procedure. Similarly, any member of staff, committee member or volunteer worker showing such behaviour or attitudes will be subject to disciplinary action on grounds of gross misconduct.

4 EMPLOYMENT

4.1 *Staff Recruitment*

Our recruitment policies are designed in such a way as to ensure that appointments are made on the basis of how well each applicant meets the requirements of the job (the 'Person Specification'). It follows that drawing up the 'Person Specification' is crucial to ensuring equality of opportunity; it will therefore specify as precisely as possible the skills, knowledge

and experience needed for the job. Our recruitment policies aim to achieve a workforce that reflects the diversity of the population.

Our staff recruitment policy is available as a separate document, and contains details of the full process, including the monitoring system used.

4.2 *Conditions of Employment*

Compliance with this policy on Equal Opportunities is a condition of employment of all staff.

4.3 *Training*

Precious Lives will develop procedures to ensure equal access to training for all staff.

Disability awareness and equalities training (including ways of challenging discrimination) will be offered to all staff.

Staff and organisation learning goals will be met via a combination of on-job training/coaching, in-house training and external training (see 'Staff Training and Development' policy document).

5 VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers will be sought from all sections of the community. We will monitor our volunteer recruitment process at least once a year and make special efforts to recruit volunteers from any section of the community that appears to be under represented.

In conjunction with other organizations that support volunteering, 'Precious Lives' will produce a Volunteers Handbook and procedures for the recruitment and support of volunteers, which will be available separately. All volunteers and prospective volunteers will be supplied with a copy of a Volunteers Handbook.

Compliance with this policy on Equal Opportunities is a condition of employment of all volunteer workers.

6 WORK PLACEMENTS

We will only seek work placement trainees from placement agencies that have equal opportunities policies consistent with the principles contained in this Policy. Recruitment of work placement trainees will be carried out on the basis of how well each applicant meet the Person Specification at a selection interview to be held with them. All work placement trainees will be supplied with written information relating to their rights and responsibilities.

Compliance with this policy on Equal Opportunities is a condition of employment of all work placement trainees.

7 SERVICE PROVISION

7.1 Premises

Precious Lives will actively seek premises which are accessible to all visitors. To counteract any access difficulties when working with member groups, our staff will also visit their own premises where this is more convenient for them.

7.2 Information and publicity

Information and publicity about 'Precious Lives' will be made available to all sections of the community. This requires material to be translated into appropriate languages for people who do not read English. We will do this on request, subject to the availability of resources. We will follow the guidelines contained in 'How to Give Information Well', regarding the accessibility of printed information. We will continue to investigate other methods of making information accessible, including making use of any external resources that are available.

7.3 Meetings

- 7.3.1 Any meetings held by 'Precious Lives' will be in fully accessible venues, with an induction loop available. Venues will be audited for accessibility beforehand, and any access problems that are subsequently discovered will be reported to the managers of the venue.
- 7.3.2 Publicity about the meeting will indicate the accessibility of the venue, and invite persons requiring sign language or other interpreters to contact our office so that the necessary arrangements can be made. Meetings will, where possible, be advertised at least four weeks in advance to allow this.
- 7.3.3 Requests for interpreters will be actioned immediately, and will be provided subject to availability of interpreters and financial resources.
- 7.3.4 The timing of meetings will be considered in relation to the potential attendees, to ensure that people with family or other commitments are not disadvantaged.
- 7.3.5 Members' meetings and Management Committee meetings will be held on rotation in different geographical locations, to enable a wide range of participation.
- 7.3.6 If food is provided, we will offer a vegetarian option, and will cater for other dietary requirements on request, subject to the availability of ingredients and resources.
- 7.3.7 Training materials will be provided in a variety of formats, and we will endeavour to meet participants' needs subject to adequate notice and resources.

7.4 Training Programmes (Groups)

Precious Lives is committed to providing affordable, locally-based training for community groups. We will apply the criteria in 7.3 relating to the location and accessibility of venues, publicity, interpreting and timetabling to try and ensure that our training programmes are available to all.

In designing and commissioning the content of our training programmes, 'Precious Lives' will ensure that equality issues are adequately addressed.

Precious Lives will only purchase training or consultancy services from suppliers on our Approved List. All trainers/consultants wishing to be on our Approved List must have equal opportunities policies consistent with the principles contained in this Policy. If contracted to supply services in Precious Lives' name, they will also be expected to comply with this Policy. Failure to comply will be subject to the same sanctions as for 'Precious Lives' staff.

Training/consultancy services will only be commissioned on the basis of a written specification and contract. Where the value of the work to be contracted is likely to be for more than £500, at least three quotations will be sought from suppliers on our Approved List. In this case, selection will be carried out by at least one "Precious Lives" staff member and a person nominated by the Management Committee. Selection will be based on the principle of best value and the quality of the application.

8 MONITORING

In order to determine the effectiveness of this Equal Opportunities policy, we will monitor every aspect of our work against appropriate national demographics, and take positive action to redress any imbalances found.

Our recruitment policies will be monitored against ethnicity categories recommended by the Commission for Racial Equality and compared with baseline data available from the 1991 census.

Precious Lives recognises the need to have systems for measuring quality across the organisation, and is committed to developing appropriate systems.

9 REVIEW

We will continue to review this policy as part of our normal consultative process.

In addition this policy will be formally reviewed by the Management Committee at the meeting prior to Precious Lives' AGM on an annual basis, and reported to members at each AGM.

Date Implemented: 20 th March	Future Review Dates			Notes
	2011	2012	2013	
Date to reviewed	June	June	June	
Date approved By Trustees				