

Equality and Diversity Policy

STATEMENT OF INTENT

- Women's Design Service (WDS) is actively opposed to all forms of discrimination on the grounds of age, race, ethnicity, physical or mental ability, sexuality, class, appearance, caring responsibilities, caste, HIV status, marital status, nationality, political beliefs, religion, immigration status, long term illness, spent criminal conviction or trade union involvement. WDS will comply with all legislation relating to these areas, and will also seek to go beyond this where appropriate and follow best practice to maximise equality of opportunity and the celebration of diversity.
- Women's Design Service is also opposed to discrimination on the grounds of gender. However as an organisation whose purpose is to work with women on urban environment issues, WDS reserves the right to only have women members and trustees, to employ only women staff so long as this complies with legal requirements, and to give preference to women volunteers.
- WDS aims to create a culture that respects and values each others' differences. WDS sees these differences as an asset to our work as they improve our ability to meet the needs of the organisations and people we serve.
- WDS will actively challenge direct and indirect discrimination in service delivery, employment, volunteering and management.
- WDS is committed to continuous improvement of accessibility to services, employment, volunteering and management opportunities.
- WDS will take active steps to encourage representation from all sections of the diverse women's community in its management, staff, volunteers, membership and service users.
- WDS will implement employment practices such as flexitime, enhanced maternity leave, potential for job-share, guaranteed annual leave permitted to be taken for religious and cultural holidays, reasonable adjustments for disability and other provisions which will improve equality of opportunity for employees.

COMMITMENT

- A copy of the Equality and Diversity policy will be given to all new staff, members, volunteers and all other interested parties.
- Training will be provided where appropriate for employees, board members and volunteers on cultural awareness, disability awareness and other subjects that will ensure good practice

- All WDS members must support the principles of the Equality and Diversity policy. Those who are unwilling to support the policy will not be eligible for membership. Those who infringe the policy subsequently through direct or indirect discrimination will lose their membership.
- The Management Committee's membership should aim to reflect a fair balance and representation of different women and should endeavour to redress any imbalance of under-represented groups.
- All WDS staff and volunteers must support the principles of the Equality and Diversity policy. Those who are unwilling to do so will not be eligible for employment. Those who infringe the policy subsequently will be subject to the Disciplinary Procedure.
- All consultants and contractors employed by WDS will be expected to comply with the principles of the Equality and Diversity policy.
- WDS reserves the right not to purchase goods and services from agencies whose activities are contrary to the principles outlined in this policy.
- All other WDS policies will follow the principles of this policy.(see in particular Recruitment Policy and Volunteer Policy)

NON COMPLIANCE BY THE ORGANISATION

- If a staff member, volunteer or management committee member within the organisation feels that WDS has failed to maintain the standards set out in this statement, they will be actively encouraged to pursue a grievance with the organisation through the use of the WDS Grievance Procedure.
- If a user, customer or service beneficiary feels that WDS has failed to maintain the standards set out in this statement, they will be actively encouraged to pursue a complaint against the organisation through the use of the WDS Complaints Procedure.

ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICES

- WDS aims for its services to be accessible through the provision of translating and interpreting support to projects; producing information in appropriate community languages and accessible formats for disabled people; provision of childcare or caring expenses and creating an accessible website.
- WDS will hold meetings and events in venues with optimum accessibility for all participants including access for those with limited mobility, hearing induction loops, access by public transport and disabled parking arrangements. Participants will be requested to state their access needs regarding childcare provision and language interpretation.

POLICIES

- WDS is committed to improving the accessibility of our premises, and progress towards full access will be monitored and managed by the Management Committee.

MONITORING

- WDS will collect statistics on the profiles of individuals and organisations who contact us with enquiries. They will be reported to the Management Committee on a regular basis. The information will be available to staff, Management Committee and members, and used in the development of WDS's services.
- Our website will have an email form for guests to submit their comments and feedback to the organisation.

CHALLENGING DISCRIMINATORY BEHAVIOUR BY OTHERS

- Staff members, volunteers and Management Committee are actively encouraged to challenge examples of discriminatory behaviour from external organisations. Where appropriate, this will include a formal complaint against the individual or organisation concerned. WDS will endeavour to refer individual service users and organisations to services which do not display discriminatory attitudes or behaviour.
- WDS reserves the right to deny membership to or withdraw membership from an organisation which demonstrates discriminatory behaviour. This may also include filing a formal complaint against the organisation concerned.
- Staff, volunteers and Management Committee members will be offered support in identifying and challenging discriminatory and intimidating behaviour and language through supervision, meetings for mutual support and training on either an external or in-house basis.

SOME DEFINITIONS

- **Direct discrimination** is treating one person less favourably than another in the same or similar circumstances or segregating them from others solely because they are, for example, a lesbian, a gay man or because they have a disability or illness. Refusing to employ someone who has the required skills because they are deaf or because they are pregnant would constitute such discrimination. However WDS reserves the right to employ only women so long as this is compatible with legislation
- **Indirect discrimination** occurs where there is a requirement or condition which applies equally to everyone but which, in practice, has an adverse impact on a particular group and cannot be justified. For example an

unnecessary physical or age requirement can discriminate against disabled people.

- **Abuse and/or harassment** of people or groups of people because for example they are a member of a national, racial or ethnic minority group, a woman, a lesbian, a gay man or have a disability or illness also counts as discrimination
- **Victimisation** occurs when a person is treated less favourably or is discriminated against because she/he has pursued or intends to pursue their rights in respect of alleged discrimination.
- **Institutional racism (Macpherson Report, 1999)** The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen in the processes or attitudes and behaviour, which amount to discrimination, to unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantages minority ethnic people.
- **Racist incident (Macpherson Report, 1999)** Any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person. If the victim doesn't want to complain, another person may do so.