

Equal Opportunities

Legal Background

In order to comply with the law there are two distinct areas that you need to consider within your club to ensure that everyone has equal opportunities. These are:

- Employing staff and volunteers. This means ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to be considered for employment, either paid or as a volunteer and that your selection, training and staff development processes are fair.
- Providing a service, ensuring that all aspects of the service that you are providing are being delivered in a non-discriminatory way and that the club users have access to the programme on offer.

General Information

All voluntary youth organisations should have a written Equal Opportunity Policy that sets out the organisation's intent and the practices it will follow to ensure equal opportunities in managing the organisation and its services. The policy should reflect the priorities and the needs of your organisation.

It is important, when writing a policy, to include everyone within the organisation who uses your services.

Policy and Procedures

The following information should be included.

- Statement opposing discrimination and commitment of intent to avoid discrimination and promote equality.
- A general description of policy and objectives.
- Procedures to deal with issues of inequality.
- Details of how the policy will be implemented and monitored.
- The following paragraphs highlight issues that your policy should address.

Provide equal opportunities by:

- Recognising and challenging prejudice, discrimination and oppression.
- Promoting positive image and role models.
- Promoting respect for other people, their culture and religion.
- Effective communication of equal opportunity.
- Support and empowerment of individuals and groups.

Show your commitment by:

- Positive public statements and images.
- Clear procedures for dealing with discrimination.
- Inclusion of everyone in the policy.
- Discussion and promotion of equality.
- Making equal opportunities part of the youth group's image in society.

- Enabling young people to achieve a common starting point.

Ensure your club has a positive attitude by:

- Recognising issues and addressing them.
- Developing training and discussion.
- Seeking specialist advice needed.
- Talking to young people, parents and the community.
- Regularly assessing attitudes.
- Encouraging socially educative opportunities for all young people.

Equal access means:

- Facilities for all abilities.
- Resources that encourage access with dignity.
- Acceptance of the difficulties of disability.
- Socially educative opportunities are accessible to all young people.

Good Practice

- DO create a positive and accepting environment where young people and youth workers meet together.
- DO respect other people's life experiences.
- DO value each person for their own uniqueness regardless of age.
- DO focus on people's ability rather than disability.
- Do take the opportunity to experience or explore other people's culture.

- Do think about the programme.
 - Do make sure opportunities are planned to enable young people to explore non-stereotypical activities.
 - Do consider your own prejudices; accept other people's personal choices and be prepared to challenge oppressive behaviour and language.
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- DON'T allow racist comments or jokes by staff or young people to go unchallenged.
 - DON'T ignore complaints or warning signs of discrimination on the assumption that the matter is trivial.
 - DON'T expect everyone to share your values and standards.
 - DON'T ignore abuse of power on the basis of age.
 - DON'T think about disability as just an issue about physical access.
 - DON'T display only posters and other material which reinforce stereo-typical role-models.
 - DON'T stereo type or make assumptions about young people's sexuality.