



# Equal opportunity, diversity and dignity policy

## 1. Introduction

DASH has a core commitment to the social model of disability<sup>1</sup>, which locates discrimination and oppression within society and institutions rather than pathologising individuals. DASH views all forms of discrimination as different but equal, and we do not rank disability within a 'hierarchy' of discrimination.

We recognise that individual lives are complex and constantly changing, and that many of us experience multiple discrimination, and different forms of discrimination at different times in our lives.

## 2. Aims

This policy and action plan are intended to support the development and improvement of:

- Our equality, diversity and anti-discrimination practice
  - Our progress towards achieving our equality, diversity and anti-discrimination outcomes and targets
  - Conformity with our statutory obligations under equality and diversity legislation,
- and
- To support our partners to apply good equality, diversity and anti-discrimination practice in their work with us.

## 3. Background

3.1. DASH was established in 1996 to develop high quality disability art with disabled and deaf people locally, regionally and nationally. DASH became a company and registered charity 2001, and works in partnership with other arts and cultural organisations to develop disability arts practice by:

- facilitating the exchange of skills and knowledge;
- creating new work and ways of working;
- fostering debate and developing models of best practice;
- encouraging audience development and diversity.

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<sup>1</sup> The social model of disability proposes that barriers, prejudice and exclusion by society (purposely or inadvertently) are the ultimate factors defining who is disabled and who is not. It recognises that while some people have physical, intellectual or psychological impairments, these do not have to lead to disability unless society fails to accommodate and include them in the same way as all members of that society.

3.2. As a disability organisation, our service users, partners and members of the general public expect that we will be an exemplary equality and anti-discrimination organisation. We also have very high expectations of ourselves.

3.3 **Definitions:**

In this Policy and Action Plan, “equality” means ensuring that employees, trustees, service users and members of the public are able to take part in all our activities and use our resources equally.

“Diversity” means the full range of differences between people and communities, and includes communities sharing particular socio-economic characteristics.

‘Community’ and ‘communities’ refers to communities of geography, identity and/or interest.

Anti-discrimination means actions that are designed to challenge and change discriminatory and oppressive policies, practice and behaviour.

3.4. **Positive action**

Different people and groups need different levels of support to reach the same standard of achievement, and people’s needs change throughout their lives. DASH will use specific lawful measures to enable disadvantaged groups and individuals to achieve an equal footing with everybody else. This may include positive action programmes, the provision of reasonable adjustments to working conditions, and the provision of signing, translation, interpreting, mentoring, advocacy and other specialist services where appropriate.

4. **Statutory context**

DASH has a number of obligations under equality and diversity legislation:

4.1. **General duties**

As a voluntary sector charitable organisation DASH is not subject to the same level of statutory requirements as public sector and statutory organisations.

4.2. However, as an employer and service provider DASH is subject to requirements under:

4.2.1. The **Equality Act 2010**, which superseded earlier anti-discrimination legislation. The Act provides a unified framework of protection against direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation in employment, services and other provision.

It covers nine 'protected characteristics' (equality 'strands'):

- Age;
- Disability;
- Gender reassignment;
- Marriage and civil partnership (in many but not all instances);
- Pregnancy and maternity;
- Race;
- Religion or belief (including lack of belief);
- Sex;
- Sexual orientation.

4.2.2. **Statutory Equality Duty** requires public authorities, to 'pay due regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination and harassment and to promote equality of opportunity'. In general, it does not apply to voluntary organisations.

However, voluntary organisations which deliver public functions on behalf of public authorities may be subject to these duties. 'Public functions' are services that would otherwise be carried out by the state, and where individuals have to rely upon a specific body to deliver them.

4.2.3. The **Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974**, which allows in certain circumstances the convictions of offenders to become 'spent'. which means they do not have to be disclosed in job or training applications.

## 5. **DASH priorities**

5.1. From time to time external factors influence the time, effort and resources that can be devoted to different elements of our work, including equality and diversity. These factors may include the wider economic picture, the requirements of funders, and the particular needs of communities with different protected characteristics.

5.2. There are some pressing current equality and diversity concerns, linked with the wider political and economic picture and its impact on particular communities. Among these, DASH sees Disabled people and older people facing disproportionate pressures and disadvantage. Underpinning this impact are wider class and socio-economic considerations; again impacting disproportionately on particular communities.

5.3. DASH therefore intends to focus its limited resources primarily (but not exclusively) on meeting the needs of disabled and older people within its client and service user groups, and working to ensure equality of access for them to its services and resources.

## 6. **Statement of Policy**

6.1. It is DASH's policy to provide equality of opportunity and access for all of our staff, service users, clients, and members of the public with whom we have contact, irrespective of their:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender identity or status
- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins)
- Religious belief or political opinion
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Social class and socio-economic status
- Marital or civil partnership status
- Having or not having dependants

Decisions about recruitment and selection, promotion, training and other benefits, and decisions about access to our services, will be made objectively and without unlawful discrimination.

### 6.2. **To whom does the policy apply?**

This policy applies to job applicants, employees, other people who work for and with us, people who use our services, and members of the public with whom we have contact.

### 6.3. **Equality and diversity commitments**

We are committed to:

- Promoting equality of opportunity for all
- Promoting a harmonious working environment in which everyone is treated with respect
- Preventing unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Challenging discrimination and oppression which are within our sphere of influence
- Meeting our legal obligations under equality legislation and codes of practice
- Complying with our own equal opportunity and associated policies
- Taking lawful affirmative or positive action where appropriate
- Treating all breaches of equal opportunities policy as misconduct which could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

This policy is fully supported by our Trustees and staff.

#### 6.4. **Implementation**

Implementation of this policy and the promotion of equality and diversity is the responsibility of all trustees and members of staff. It is expected that they will all contribute to DASH providing a safe, welcoming, productive and creative environment for everybody who works for and has contact with us.

The Board of Trustees have overall responsibility for equality and diversity policy, and for monitoring and reviewing progress against the Equality and Diversity Action Plan. The staff team is responsible for day-to-day equality and diversity practice, and are responsible to the Board of Trustees for the effective management of this process.

In order to implement this policy we will:

- Communicate it to employees, job and freelance applicants and other relevant people and organisations
- Incorporate appropriate duties into staff job descriptions and work objectives
- Provide equality and anti-discrimination training and guidance as appropriate
- Ensure that those who are involved in assessing candidates for recruitment or promotion are trained in non-discriminatory selection techniques
- Obtain commitments from other individuals and organisations with whom we have working relationships that they will comply with the policy as appropriate
- Ensure that adequate resources are made available to implement the policy and action plan.

#### 6.5. **Monitoring and review**

We will establish appropriate information and monitoring systems to secure effective implementation of our equal opportunities policy and action plan. These will be reviewed at least annually, and action taken as necessary.

#### 6.6. **Complaints**

Anybody who believes they have suffered any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation is encouraged to raise the matter by informing a member of staff or a Trustee.

All such complaints will be treated seriously, promptly and confidentially. In addition, staff have the right under the Equalities Act 2010 to pursue complaints of discrimination at an Employment Tribunal.

Every effort will be made to ensure that anyone who makes a complaint will not be victimised. Any complaint of victimisation will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially. Victimisation will be treated as gross misconduct, will lead to disciplinary action and may merit dismissal or removal from the Board of Trustees.

**7. DASH Equality and Diversity Action Plan: May 2019**

The Equality Action Plan has been prepared to take account of DASH's equality and diversity priorities, our resources and the fact that we are a small, independent voluntary organisation with a high dependency on the unpaid work of our Board of Trustees.

It is focused on our key issues of age (A), disability (D) and social class/ economic & social status (C), but also includes actions that address the other protected equality characteristics (equality strands) of gender (G), race (R), religious belief or political opinion (RB) sex (S), and sexual orientation (SO).

**8. Review**

- This policy will be reviewed biennially by the Board of Trustees.
- Date of next scheduled review: May 2021

**May 2019**

