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## **DISABILITY, EQUALITY AND ACCESS POLICY**

### **STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE**

Direct Mediation Services are committed to ensure that all are to be given every opportunity to access family mediation. We make every effort to ensure that our service and the environment are accessible to all who may consider themselves to have a disability.

At Direct Mediation Services, we are committed to ensuring equality for disabled clients, staff and all those receiving services from the business. We aim to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which people feel free to disclose their disability and to participate fully in mediation. Our policies and procedures regarding client engagement does not discriminate against disabled people.

Discrimination against people with disabilities takes many forms, and barriers are often created within society which makes it more difficult for them to reach their full potential or to have equal access to the services they need. We are committed to removing barriers for our clients and staff.

The levels of engagement with disabled clients will be monitored and we will use this data to raise standards and ensure that we are being inclusive. We will make reasonable adjustments to ensure that the mediation environment is as accessible as possible. We will NOT tolerate harassment of disabled people with any form of impairment.

Our Policy takes account of the following legislation:

- Equality Act (2010)
- Disability Discrimination Act (2005)

### **POLICY AIMS**

This policy's aim is to provide a structure to:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people
- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Equality Act 2010
- eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disability
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life
- take steps to meet disabled people's needs

The definition of 'disability' under the Equality Act 2010

A person has a disability if:

- they have a physical or mental impairment

- the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities
- 'substantial' means more than minor or trivial
- 'long-term' means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least twelve months (there are special rules covering recurring or fluctuating conditions)
- 'normal day-to-day activities' include everyday things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping
- people who have had a disability in the past that meets this definition are also protected by the Act
- people with HIV, cancer or multiple sclerosis are protected by the Act from the point of diagnosis. People with some visual impairments are automatically deemed to be disabled.

It is impossible to list every condition that might be recognized as a disability but some of these include:

- Hearing and visual impairments; specific learning difficulties – such as dyslexia and dyspraxia
- Long term mental health difficulties such as chronic depression
- Long term medical conditions – such as epilepsy, diabetes, heart condition, cancer and HIV
- Autistic Spectrum Conditions/ Asperger's Syndrome
- Physical impairments
- Chronic pain
- Chronic fatigue
- Speech impairments

**Staff and contractors will:**

- Model respectful attitudes to disabled clients, staff and other members of the wider community
- Promote positive representation of disabled people
- Participate in training (where applicable)
- Draw the attention of the Managing Partner to any instances of discrimination or harassment
- Ensure that they make reasonable adjustments to their professional practice to enable disabled clients to fully access mediation opportunities.

**The Senior Management Team will:**

- Seek the advice of the Managing Partner on this policy, keep it up -to-date, and make it available to clients upon request
- Ensure that the impact of the policy is monitored and changes made if appropriate.
- At all times we need to uphold the values of mediation.

- We recognise that not everyone eligible to use the term disability will think of themselves as disabled.

### **Clients' role**

- To engage with any materials presented during mediation sessions that relate to Disability, Equality and Access
- To encourage the clients to actively review our response as a business to disability issues. Mediation staff meetings will continue to be used to identify client needs as well as monitor client responses.

### **Staff role**

- Asked to self disclose any disability and what reasonable adjustments they felt they needed to fully participate with their work
- To reflect any concerns related to Disability, Equality and Access, in whole staff surveys

### **Senior Management Team's role**

- Asked to self disclose any disability and what reasonable adjustments that they feel they need to fully participate in the life of the business
- The Senior Management Team and the Managing Partner will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made as appropriate.

### **Local Community & Visitors**

Any members of the local community which regularly use the business's facilities/services have been asked to disclose information and what reasonable adjustments that they feel they need to fully participate in activities that take place.

### **How we have gathered information on the effect of our policies and practices on disabled people**

- We recognise that our policies and practices may impact on disabled people and in particular on: The recruitment, development and retention of disabled employees;
- On the mediation opportunities available to disabled people.
- We acknowledge that information gathered from a wide range of sources will be required in order to identify the actions which we need to take to promote disability equality. We will ensure that information is gathered in relation to both employment and the delivery of our services.

The processes we use for gathering information will include:

- notes made by mediators
- emails sent by staff

- mediation staff meetings
- client surveys

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **The Managing Partner will ensure that:**

- The Senior Management Team is advised about the policy and provision for meeting the needs of people with disabilities (clients, staff, and support workers and members of the wider community)
- The impact of policy and provision in terms of (i) the recruitment, development and retention of disabled employees; (ii) the mediation opportunities available to disabled clients, is monitored and provision amended where appropriate
- The service and its delivery do not disadvantage disabled people
- Reasonable adjustments are made to premises and to mediation methods to enable disabled clients to access the full range of mediation services
- Positive attitudes to disability and equality are promoted throughout the business

#### **The Disability Equality Duty**

The duty requires the business, when carrying out their duties, to have due regard to the need to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people
- Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Equality Act
- Eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disability
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- Encourage participation by disabled people in mediation
- Take steps to meet disabled people's needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment.