

Equal Opportunities Policy

TouchBase recognises that everyone has a contribution to make to our society and a right to equality of opportunity.

We are committed to providing a service and following practices which are free from unfair and unlawful discrimination. The aim of this policy is to ensure that no person receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be relevant to performance. It seeks also to ensure that no person is victimised or subjected to any form of bullying or harassment.

We aim to promote equal opportunities, eliminate discrimination and eliminate harassment through the following:

- Opposing all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination.
- All service-users and prospective service-users, employees and associates (whether part-time, full-time or sessional), and the people to whom we provide a service will be treated fairly and with respect.
- All vacancies will be advertised and will include a statement on equal opportunities.
- Selection for employment, promotion, training or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. All selection/rejection decisions will be recorded.
- All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of individuals will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
- All employees have a legal and moral obligation not to discriminate and to report incidents of discrimination against any individual or group of individuals to Louise Bomber, Founding Director.
- You are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved, by contacting Louise Bomber, Founding Director.

Our Commitment

Is to work towards achieving equal opportunities in policy and practice. Our policy is that we will not knowingly discriminate on grounds of race, ethnicity, gender, physical or mental disability, religious belief or sexual orientation. In practice, we work for and on behalf of a diverse and complex client group and we strive to maintain the highest standards in our approach to everyone, irrespective of their background or beliefs, and everyone is treated with dignity and respect. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.

Breaches of our equality policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings or non-inclusion in our service.

This policy is fully supported by all representatives of TouchBase. The successful implementation of this policy depends on the awareness and commitment of all staff; hence all new staff will be made aware of its existence on joining the organisation, and reminded of the value and importance of it on a regular basis.

This policy is monitored and reviewed on a regular basis, as are the aims and commitments set out in this policy, and the impact these may have on our organisation.

Our commitment as a service provider

TouchBase is committed to:

- providing services to which all clients are entitled regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation
- making sure our services are delivered equally and meet the diverse needs of our service users and clients
- taking steps to ensure equity amongst our clients and service users such as removing any unlawful obstacles to accessing our services or facilities. Where appropriate, measures will be taken to identify and remove unnecessary barriers and to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups
- fully supporting this policy by senior management and ensuring agreement has been reached with employee representatives, if applicable
- monitoring and reviewing this policy annually
- having clear procedures that enable our clients, candidates for jobs and employees to raise a grievance or make a complaint if they feel they have been unfairly treated.

Our commitment as an employer

TouchBase is committed to:

- creating an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of our staff are recognised and valued
- everyone is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated

- providing training, development and progression opportunities to all staff
- understanding equality and inclusion in the workplace is good management practice and makes sound business sense
- reviewing all our employment practices and procedures to ensure fairness and inclusion for all
- In our employment practices we ensure that, as far as it is practically possible, the team reflects the diversity of the needs of our client groups.
- diversity in our workforce will be regularly monitored to ensure equal opportunities throughout the organisation. Where appropriate, measures will be taken to identify and remove unnecessary obstacles and to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups

Notes for Employers and Employees

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act gives disabled people rights in employment. A disabled person is defined in the Act as 'anyone with a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect upon his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

However, disability does not necessarily affect someone's health, so insisting on a medical report purely on the basis of the disability may be unlawful discrimination. It is unlawful to ask health related questions before making a job offer (whether conditional or unconditional), except in order to:

- determine if a candidate can carry out a function, which is essential to the job
- ask whether candidates need special arrangements for any part of the application process
- anonymously monitor whether candidates are disabled
- take positive action to assist disabled people
- check that a candidate has a disability where this is a genuine requirement of the job.

If a report from any individual's doctor is sought, then permission must be given by the individual, and they have the right to see the report (Access to Medical Reports Act 1988).

Discrimination means treating someone less favourably without any justification, and the Act requires that employers make reasonable adjustments if that will then remove the reason for the unfavourable treatment. An example of a reasonable adjustment could be the provision of a suitable computer keyboard to an operator who had difficulty through disability in using a conventional keyboard.

In relation to discipline and grievance procedures, employers must clearly ensure they do not discriminate in any area of practice, which could lead to dismissal or any other

detriment (for example warnings). The Act also covers people who become disabled during the course of their employment, and this is particularly relevant to how absences are handled. It is vital that the employer should discuss with the worker what their needs really are and what effect, if any, the disability may have on future work with the organisation. Any dismissal of a disabled employee for a reason relating to the disability would have to be justified, and the reason for it would have to be one, which could not be removed or made less than substantial by any reasonable adjustment.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission provides information and advice about all aspects of the Equality Act 2010, as well as signposting specialist organisations where necessary. In addition, it can offer good practice advice on the employment of disabled people.

If you need expert information, advice and support on discrimination and human rights issues call EASS on 0808 800 0082.

Review date: December 2021

Review due: December 2022