



## **Coventry Local Involvement Network (LINK) Equal Opportunities & Diversity Policy**

### **1 Scope**

This document sets out Coventry LINK's commitment to equality of opportunity for involvement, and its valuing of diversity in its membership. It should be read in conjunction with the LINK's Diversity Statement.

### **2 Responsibility**

Coventry LINK recognises that its decision-making processes, policies, work and membership play an extremely important part in ensuring that its equal opportunities and diversity agenda is met.

The LINK has a legal and moral obligation to ensure that all those wishing to take part in its work are able to do so without barrier.

It is the responsibility of all members of the LINK to ensure that this is the case and a Code of Conduct is in place to ensure this.

The LINK Steering Group has responsibility for overseeing the strategic implementation of this policy across the LINK and, where there are failings in this, to investigate why these occurred.

All members of the LINK are accountable to those living within the city of Coventry, and must be open and accountable for their implementation of the LINK's Diversity Statement, Code of Conduct, and Equal Opportunities & Diversity policy.

### **3 Statement of intent**

Coventry LINK's work is based on a fundamental belief in equality of opportunity and the many benefits that a diverse range of views can bring to providing better health and social care to all those within the city.

The LINK recognises that many people in our society experience discrimination or lack of opportunity for reasons which are not fair. These include: race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, gender, marital status and caring responsibilities, sexuality, age, physical or mental disability or mental health status, medical condition or treatment, religion/faith, social origin or class, employment status, or criminal conviction.

Coventry LINK will act against any discrimination or denial of opportunity based upon the list above found in its own policies, practices, membership, and work. It will also challenge any and all occurrences of discrimination it encounters when reviewing the commissioning and delivery of health and social care services within the city.

Coventry LINK aims to create a culture that respects and values each other's differences. The LINK sees these differences as an asset to its work as they improve its ability to fulfil its remit, as outlined in the Local Government and Public Involvement Act 2007, and also to meet the needs of those living with the city.

Coventry LINK recognises the importance of providing a safe, supportive and welcoming environment for all of its members, participants, Host staff, and visitors. It is committed to ensuring that all members and Host staff understand and implement the principles of valuing diversity and equal opportunities, and that all participants and visitors are aware of the LINK's commitment to these same principles.

## 4 What is discrimination

Coventry LINK believes that discrimination can take one or more of the forms set out below:

**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 listen to the views of someone who has a valuable input for the work of the LINK because they are deaf or because they are pregnant would constitute such discrimination.

**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 requirement can discriminate against disabled people. The insistence on being able to read English, where language skills or fluency are not needed for a particular piece of LINK work, is another example.

**Abuse and/or harassment** – Discrimination also covers actions which amount to 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.

**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)**

This is the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin to unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which

disadvantages minority ethnic people origin. It can be seen in the processes or attitudes and behaviour, which amount to discrimination.

## **5 Policies, procedures, review and implementation**

Coventry LINK is committed to ensuring that its policies and procedures meet the purposes they are created to fulfil.

Should an occurrence arise when this policy does not achieve this, the LINK will investigate the incident and review this policy, making appropriate amendments to ensure that such an event will not occur again.

A copy of the LINK's Diversity Statement and Equal Opportunities & Diversity Policy will be given to all new LINK members and Host staff. All new LINK members will also be required to agree to abide by the LINK's Code of Conduct.

## **6 LINK Membership**

It is the belief of Coventry LINK that anyone who wants to offer their time as a member or participant should be able to do so without barrier or unfair treatment.

Coventry LINK is committed to ensuring equality and diversity in all aspects of its work. This includes the opportunity to become a member of the LINK. The LINK believes that no volunteer, group, or community should be:

- treated less favourably in becoming a member because of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, gender, marital status and caring responsibilities, sexuality, age, physical or mental disability or mental health status, medical condition or treatment, religion/faith, social origin or class, employment status, or unrelated criminal conviction;
- disadvantaged by requirements, procedures, or working practices which cannot be shown to be justifiable.

### **Recruitment of members**

Coventry LINK is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for involvement for all, and achieving a wide diversity in its membership. Anyone, regardless of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, gender, marital status and caring responsibilities, sexuality, age, physical or mental disability or mental health status, medical condition or treatment, religion/faith, social origin or class, employment status, or unrelated criminal conviction may become a LINK member, and Coventry LINK will not discriminate against potential members in its procedures or working practices based on the grounds listed above.

All LINK members will be given equal access to training and development opportunities to enable them to progress and become as involved in the work of the LINK as they may wish.

Coventry LINK is committed to ensuring that all members understand the importance of valuing diversity and equal opportunities, and that all members understand their responsibilities to prevent discrimination and to meet the diverse needs of those that they come into contact with.

Coventry LINK is also committed to removing any and all barriers to membership and involvement that it comes across. The LINK will strive in all instances to provide support to members with specific needs, and/or make arrangements to match the requirements of all members to ensure equality of involvement opportunity.

### **Personal responsibility**

All members of the Coventry LINK are committed to ensuring that the LINK's Diversity Statement and Equal Opportunities & Diversity policy are applied to all aspects of the LINK's existence and work. To this end, it is the responsibility of each LINK member to be familiar with the Diversity Statement, Equal Opportunities & Diversity policy, and Code of Conduct, and to act in accordance with their aims and objectives.

## **7 LINK Steering Group**

Coventry LINK is committed to ensuring that its Steering Group is representative of the wider city community and consists of individuals who have been elected based upon the skills and experience they can bring to the LINK, and not upon personal agenda or popularity.

All Steering Group members will affirm their commitment to valuing diversity and ensuring equality of opportunity in all that the LINK does.

The Group's membership (including co-opted members) should reflect a fair balance and representation of the wider city community and should endeavour to redress any imbalance of under-represented groups.

To ensure equality of opportunity for all LINK members to join the Steering Group, there will be a process of election conducted within a regular specified timeframe.

## **8 Work of the LINK**

Coventry LINK will aim to ensure that its work and its reasons for carrying out that work is transparent to all, and accurately reflect the views and needs of all those living with Coventry.

Coventry LINK will continuously review and question whether its work meets these views and needs by maintaining a programme of engagement with all communities within Coventry. When and where the LINK identifies gaps in terms of diversity in this programme, the LINK and its Host will endeavour to rectify this.

Coventry LINK will promote its work and opportunities to be involved using methods tailored to reach diverse groups. It will actively promote and support involvement and membership by diverse communities/individuals.

Coventry LINK will promote equality and diversity in its own work, and in any partnership work it undertakes with other agencies.

When organising meetings and events, Coventry LINK will consider the suitability of the time, day, date and any food provided, and will offer interpreters, hearing loops, and other adaptations as necessary within the resources available.

All Host staff that work with or for the LINK will be required to support its commitment to equality and diversity.

## **9 Promotion/Publicity**

Coventry LINK will promote its commitment to valuing diversity and preventing discrimination.

The LINK's Diversity Statement, Equal Opportunities & Diversity policy, and Code of Conduct will be freely available to all.

Coventry LINK will ensure that all publicity material it creates or commissions will reflect the community by containing visible diversity in images.

The LINK Host will provide translated information where appropriate.

Coventry LINK recognises the significance of its role in promoting equality in health and social care accessibility within the city and seeks to develop new ways of reaching diverse communities.

## **10 Physical access**

Coventry LINK is committed to ensuring that physical barriers to involvement with its work are removed and will always attempt to hold meetings in buildings that are fully accessible to all.

The LINK Host is also committed to this aim and is located in a fully accessible building.

Coventry LINK recognises that not everyone has access to personal transport or is able to use it, and will plan its meetings and activities with this in mind.

End of Policy.

Agreed: 11/06/09