



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE USERS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Policy Approval and Review

Date of Board Ratification	Signed	Position	Date	Review due date
9.6.22	Sharon Burnett	CEO	9.6.22	9.6.23

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Women's Aid in Northern Ireland is the lead voluntary organisation, addressing domestic violence against women and children, recognising it as one form of violence against women. The overall aim of Women's Aid is to eliminate domestic violence and to challenge the attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate it.

Nine local Women's Aid groups across Northern Ireland are all members of the Women's Aid Federation NI (WAFNI) and deliver a range of specialised support services to women and children who have experienced domestic violence.

Causeway & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid (CMUWA) is committed to ensuring that all current and potential service users have equal access to all services. This policy takes into account the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 aimed at ending the discrimination which many disabled people face in accessing goods, facilities and services; and acknowledges the Commission for Racial Equality's Rented Housing Code of Good Practice (which includes hostel accommodation) The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2006 which make it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of goods, facilities and services, education and public functions. .

2.0 POLICY STATEMENT

- 2.1 The Board of Directors of Causeway & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid are committed to promoting equality of opportunity and equal access for women and children to all its services, and equal treatment in respect of the quality of services provided, regardless of:

- perceived religious or political affiliation,
- marital or family status,
- Sex
- Pregnancy or maternity leave.
- Gender reassignment.
- Being married or in a civil partnership.
- Religious belief or political opinion (perceived or actual).
- Race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, being an Irish Traveller.
- Disability
- Sexual orientation.
- Age.
- Nationality.
- Those with caring responsibilities.

CMUWA is opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination.

2.2 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following organisational policies:

- Confidentiality
- Code of Conduct
- Adult Protection from Abuse and Safeguarding
- Comments and complaints
- Consulting and Involving Service Users
- Whistleblowing

3.0 IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 The CEO has specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy. Each senior manager also has responsibilities, and all staff and volunteers are expected to abide by the policy.

In order to implement this policy, CMUWA will ensure that:

- 3.2 All staff and volunteers are made aware of the Equal Opportunities for Service users Policy through induction training.
- 3.3 All staff and volunteers understand and promote the policy and are able to fulfil their responsibilities to service users. Appropriate training and guidance on equality issues and non-discriminatory practice will be provided for all staff and volunteers.
- 3.4 All service users are made aware of the Equal Opportunities for Service users Policy as soon as practicable after taking up services.
- 3.5 CMUWA will endeavour to ensure that the necessary adaptations are made to existing premises to install and/or improve disability access.
- 3.6 All the services provided by CMUWA are widely advertised, and/or promoted through campaigns and advertisements in the local press/media. Posters, leaflets, and information contact cards are displayed in a broad range of statutory and community facilities.
- 3.7 CMUWA aims to provide an interpreting service to women whose first language is not English where required. Information leaflets on Women's Aid services are produced in a range of languages and external agencies are accessed as required for services such as translation and signing. Information is also available on our website (www.causewayandmidulsterwomensaid.org) which can be translated into a range of languages. CMUWA will endeavour to provide appropriate translation services for those service users who require it.
- 3.8 CMUWA is affiliated to Women's Aid Federation N.I which maintains a website – www.womensaidni.org - which provides information on the range of

services available to women experiencing or at risk of domestic violence across Northern Ireland. It also provides information and statistics on domestic violence. Links to related websites and local Women's Aid groups' websites are available.

- 3.09 CMUWA recognises that all their premises should be accessible to people with a disability. Our refuge premises are wheelchair accessible and provide a unit specially adapted for wheelchair use.

CMUWA will endeavour to make the necessary adaptations to existing premises to improve disability access.

CMUWA will maintain a neutral and non-threatening environment in all its premises. The display of any national, political, or religious flags, emblems or posters and the circulation of sectarian materials will be prohibited.

The display and circulation of any materials which are likely to give offence or cause apprehension to any individual or group because of their religious belief, political opinion, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, nationality, race, or ethnic origin will be prohibited.

The articulation of slogans, songs or comments which are offensive, or which reinforce stereotypes will be challenged.

In respect of services for children, all children will be respected and their individuality and potential recognised, valued, and nurtured.

Childcare facilities will offer a variety of play equipment and materials which enable children to explore, acknowledge and value similarities and differences between them and others.

- 3.10 CMUWA will promote this policy in all its premises and ensure that service users are made aware of it.

- 3.11 In order to promote and comply with good practice on equal access (including such areas as communications; training; and policy & procedures), CMUWA will work closely with, and take advice from, the following agencies:

- Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM)
- Equality Commission
- Disability Action
- Equality Commission

- 3.12 Fair access, diversity and inclusion review and action planning is completed annually.

- 3.13 Any breach of this policy by a member of staff/volunteers will be regarded as misconduct and may lead to disciplinary action.

- 3.14 Any breach of this policy by service users will be dealt with under the protection from abuse procedures.

4.0 COMMENTS & COMPLAINTS

- 4.1 CMUWA encourages open communication and involvement by service users in the organisation. It is important that effective communication is encouraged between all staff, volunteers and residents in refuges, users of all other services and members of the general public, with whom our work brings us into contact. Comments and/or complaints help the organisation to improve and further develop practice and service.
- 4.2 Any service user who believes that they have been treated unfairly has the right to make a complaint through the procedures outlined in the Comments & Complaints Policy & Procedure. All service users have access to the Comments & Complaints Policy.
- 4.3 Any other comments or complaints in relation to this policy should, in the first instance, be raised with the CEO, who will conduct an investigation in line with the Comments and/or Complaints Policy.

5.0 MONITORING & REVIEW

- 5.1 The procedures will be reviewed on a regular basis to identify areas for improvement and, where appropriate, to make changes.

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