

Equality and Diversity Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Association opposes all forms of unlawful discrimination in relation to employment.
- 1.2. The Association is committed to eliminating discrimination and encouraging diversity in the workplace by promoting an environment of respect and understanding and providing equality of opportunity for all. Throughout the Association there will be a consistent approach in promoting equality and diversity across all areas within the Association through the entire employment relationship from the recruitment process to termination and references.
- 1.3. All employees are required to abide by this policy.
- 1.4. This policy is complemented by the Association's Dignity at Work policy.

2. Background

- 2.1. Lack of equal opportunities is not only a serious moral issue but also has a significant impact on business performance. Studies have shown that high levels of motivation are achieved in an environment of respect and fairness. The Association will therefore ensure all employees are provided with equality of opportunity in the course of their employment starting from recruitment.

3. Legal Framework

- 3.1. The Equality Act 2010 is the primary piece of legislation covering discrimination law. This policy will be compliant with the Act and promote a culture of dignity and respect for all.
- 3.2. The Equality Act 2010: Protected Characteristics
The Association will aim to ensure that all employees are treated with fairness and respect and not discriminated against on the grounds of the Protected Characteristics enshrined in the Act: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation – hereafter referred to as the Protected Characteristics.

4. Definitions

- 4.1. Diversity
Diversity is about valuing individual differences. The Association is committed to valuing and managing people's differences to enable all employees to contribute and realise their full potential. The Association recognises that people with different backgrounds, skills, attitudes and experiences can bring fresh ideas and perceptions that will benefit the Association and its customers.
- 4.2. Equality
Equality law focuses on those areas covered by the Protected Characteristics. Equality is making sure people are treated fairly and given fair chances. Equality is not about treating everyone in the same way, it is about recognising that people's needs are met in different ways.
- 4.3. Direct Discrimination
Direct Discrimination is treating someone less favourably than others based on a Protected Characteristic.

4.4. Indirect Discrimination

Indirect Discrimination is a policy, practice, procedure, provision or criteria that applies to everyone in the same way but might disadvantage a particular protected group, and which cannot be objectively justified.

4.5. Harassment

Harassment is conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile degrading, humiliating or offensive working environment. The intention of the perpetrator is irrelevant, it is the impact on the individual which determines whether harassment has taken place.

4.6. Victimisation

Victimisation is treating someone less favourably because they have done or not done, or intend to do or not do, something they have a right to do or not do.

4.7. Positive Action

Positive action is addressing imbalances in the workforce, by encouraging members of under-represented groups to apply for jobs. Positive action may be applicable in setting equality targets. No quotas will be set by the Association but equality targets may be set to encourage people from a particular group or groups to apply for a vacancy in the Association in comparison to the local community where they are under-represented.

4.8. Failure to make Reasonable Adjustments

Failure to make reasonable adjustments is where a person with a Protected Characteristic is disadvantaged because of a failure to consider and make reasonable adjustments. For example, a person with disability is disadvantaged because of a failure to consider and make reasonable adjustments to accommodate their disability.

4.9. Associated Discrimination

Associated discrimination is discrimination against a person because they have an association with someone with a particular Protected Characteristic. For example, a non-disabled person is discriminated against because of the action they need to take to care for disabled dependent.

5. Policy Principles

5.1. This Equality and Diversity Policy aims to:

5.1.1. Ensure integration with equality and diversity practices into all the Association does, and ensure that employees are treated with fairness and respect from all persons they come in contact with by way of their employment.

5.1.2. Require the Association to implement fair and just employment practices ensuring that no job applicant or employee will receive less favourable treatment on any grounds.

5.1.3. Ensure people are recruited and employees promoted solely on the basis of their own merit, experience, ability and potential. This applies throughout the entire duration of employment.

5.1.4. Provide an environment and promote a culture which values and respects the principles of equality and diversity and underpins those principles with dignity and respect.

6. Implementation of Policy

6.1. Each employee is responsible for the policy's day-to-day implementation.

- 6.2. The Association will ensure that all new employees will receive induction on this policy. The policy will be widely promoted and integrated into all policies and procedures within the Association.
- 6.3. Appropriate training and guidance will be available to promote equality and diversity among staff.
- 6.4. This policy applies to everyone in the Association and everyone has a responsibility to be alert to discriminatory behaviours and practices, should they occur. Unacceptable behaviour and practices must not occur, however if a situation arises it will be dealt with immediately.
- 6.5. Breaches of the Equality and Diversity Policy will be regarded as misconduct and will lead to disciplinary action, and depending on the facts and circumstances may amount to gross misconduct and warrant summary dismissal.

7. **Recruitment & Selection**

- 7.1. It is the Association's policy that all recruitment decisions will be based completely on the merits and abilities of candidates alone and no other criteria will be used. In order to achieve this, equality and diversity practices will be integrated into every stage of the recruitment and selection process.
- 7.2. A fair recruitment process will remove barriers to the employment of people of different backgrounds. This will enable the Association to recruit from the widest pool of talent, potentially raising the standard of their intake and therefore increasing the opportunity of a more diverse workforce which reflects the community it is serving. A more diverse workforce will improve the organisation's service delivery, as it will include staff with more knowledge and experience, meet and aid in meeting the needs and aspirations of service users and potential service users.
- 7.3. To highlight the Association's commitment to promoting equality and diversity from the beginning of the employment relationship, all vacancies will be aimed at as wide a group as possible and any advertisement for a vacancy within the Association will state that an equality and diversity policy is in place. In addition, the advert will also display any signs of equality bodies that the Association is affiliated with. The information contained in the advert and all vacancy literature will be clear and accurate to attract the most appropriate candidates from all groups across society, to allow them to decide their own suitability for the vacancy and whether they wish to proceed with applying. For those that wish to apply the Association will ensure that all applications have clear instructions for completion and application forms will be free from personal questions that are not relevant to the vacancy and that may lead to discrimination.
- 7.4. The Association will ensure all staff involved at any stage in the recruitment and selection process will receive equality and diversity awareness training. This will ensure that those involved in the recruitment process will not discriminate either knowingly or unknowingly by asking any questions which may lead to discrimination.

8. **Terms & Conditions of Employment**

- 8.1. As part of the employment relationship all contracts of employment will be issued in accordance with the job role and not the job holder. Employee's Terms and Conditions will be standard across all employees regardless of any of the Protected Characteristics.

Employees will not receive less favourable terms and conditions for any reason other than relating specifically to the job role and the grade it attracts.

9. Training and Development

9.1. Equality and diversity will apply throughout all training activities and resources. Training and development opportunities will be given to all employees according to their job role. It is crucial that all employees are able to participate and enjoy any training opportunities or activities without discrimination or fear of harassment. Every attempt will be made to ensure learning materials will provide a positive image of people reinforcing an image and of equality of opportunity.

10. Redundancy Selection

10.1. Redundancy selection will be made according to the statutory requirements and in accordance with legal advice. The criteria will be set out and will be objectively fair and consistent. This will ensure that employees selected for redundancy are selected according to the chosen selection criteria and not in any discriminatory way, either directly or indirectly.

11. Complaints made by employees

11.1. Where an employee feels they have been discriminated against, victimised or harassed, whether by another employee or another person, then this will be dealt with by the Association's Grievance Policy. Depending on the facts and circumstances, the complaint may be resolved at either the Informal Stage or the Formal Stage of the Grievance Policy.

11.2. If the grievance is against another employee and the facts and circumstances of the grievance warrant formal disciplinary action, this will be conducted in accordance with the Association's Disciplinary Policy.

11.3. If the grievance is against a person who is not an employee, then the Association will investigate the facts and circumstances and take appropriate action.

12. Complaints made against employees

12.1. Where a complaint is made against an employee, whether by another employee or another person, it will be investigated and if necessary dealt with under the Association's Disciplinary Policy.

13. General Data Protection Regulations

13.1. The Association will treat personal data in line with its obligations under the current data protection regulations and its own Privacy and Data Protection Policy. Information regarding how data will be used and the basis for processing data is provided in the Association's Fair Processing Notice for employees.

14. Risk Management

14.1. The risks associated with Equality and Diversity are incorporated within the Association's Risk Management Framework.

15. Equal Opportunities

15.1. The protected characteristics enshrined in the Equality Act 2010 are respected when ensuring compliance with the Equality and Diversity Policy.

16. Policy Monitoring and Review

16.1. The Equality and Diversity Policy will be monitored by the Chief Executive and reviewed every three years or as and when deemed necessary.