



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

1. Equal Opportunities

To show partiality is not good (Proverbs 28:21)

Underlying Principles

- 1.1. All men and women are made in the image of God, but all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Christ's atoning sacrifice was made for all and Christians are instructed not to show favouritism. As an organisation, we are therefore committed to principles of equal opportunity. As well as biblical principles, there are legal obligations. We therefore require all staff to respect and act in accordance with this policy.
- 1.2. This policy is relevant for all those who work for us, but it cannot be applied directly to volunteers, contractors or third parties. If any related issues become apparent in relation to such individuals, these will be raised with them and action taken where appropriate.
- 1.3. We will always operate on the basis of our biblical beliefs about Christian faith and conduct.
- 1.4. We believe diversity brings benefits, after all we all have different experiences, gifts and skills. We seek to be united in use of our differences as we fulfil our mission purpose.
- 1.5. This policy covers all aspects of employment and provision of services. These include, but are not restricted to, the following:
 - pay and conditions of employment
 - training and continuing professional development
 - recruitment processes
 - promotion policies
 - procedures for addressing grievances and disciplinary matters

- ending an employment contract
- how suppliers are treated
- how those who use our services are treated

Discrimination

- 1.6. Discrimination occurs when someone directly or indirectly treats a person or a group of people less favourably. It may also be unlawful when it relates to a protected characteristic. Protected characteristics include: race, (including colour, nationality and ethnic origin) age, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marital status, religion or belief, disability, pregnancy and maternity.
- 1.7. Any reference to 'discrimination' or similar in this policy means unlawful discrimination relating to a protected characteristic.
- 1.8. Although there may be circumstances justifying different treatment, which are not unlawful (for example: to appoint a Christian to a position where there is an occupational requirement for a Christian; to comply with a matter of doctrine; or to make an adjustment in order to accommodate a person with a disability), we will not tolerate discrimination.
- 1.9. **Direct Discrimination:** Direct discrimination basically occurs where you are treated less favourably than another person, because of a protected characteristic. An example would be if you are not appointed to a position because you are pregnant. Direct discrimination may be objectively justified when it relates to age.
- 1.10. **Indirect Discrimination:** Indirect discrimination basically occurs when a requirement or condition is applied generally, but which has a detrimental impact upon a group that share a protected characteristic. An example would be requiring staff to be over a certain height, which would make it disproportionately harder for women to be appointed. There is no discrimination if the requirement can be objectively justified.
- 1.11. **Disability – Reasonable Adjustments:** The Equality Act 2010 sets out an additional obligation upon employers to make "reasonable adjustments" so that a disabled employee (or job applicant) is not substantially disadvantaged. We will accordingly make reasonable adjustments to ensure career opportunities are available to all people with disabilities. An example could be ensuring providing documents in braille for the visually impaired.
- 1.12. **Disability-Related Discrimination:** The Equality Act 2010 also prohibits disability-related discrimination, that is treating someone less favourably because of something relating to a disability. An example would be dismissing someone for absence that was disability-related. There is no discrimination if the requirement can be objectively justified.

Harassment

- 1.13. We are committed to providing a work environment free from harassment.
- 1.14. Harassment is, in general terms, unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating another person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for another.
- 1.15. Harassment may be unlawful, particularly where the harassment occurs because of a protected characteristic.
- 1.16. Please also see our separate policy regarding harassment and bullying for more information.

Christian Ethos

- 1.17. As a Christian organisation, the nature and context of some positions may mean that personal characteristics, such as religious beliefs, will lawfully and properly inform decisions. However, this does not detract from the principle that we are an Equal Opportunity employer and recognise the benefit of employing a diverse workforce. All applicants who can fulfil the role and meet any occupational requirement are welcomed. They will be assessed against the job description and any person specification.
- 1.18. For the avoidance of doubt, discrimination on the grounds of religious belief or absence of religious belief will not be tolerated.

Our Responsibilities

- 1.19. Where there are breaches of this policy, we will take appropriate action. For employees, this may include taking steps through the disciplinary procedure; serious incidents may be treated as gross misconduct. As a reflection of the seriousness with which we view discrimination, if an allegation of discrimination is made in bad faith, that will also be viewed seriously.
- 1.20. Where we have to make decisions, such as selecting someone for employment or promotion, they will be based on merit using non-discriminatory and, where practicable, objective criteria. An occupational requirement will not be applied to a role unless this is objectively justified.
- 1.21. Advertisements for vacancies should seek to avoid using wording that could discourage some groups of people from applying, or stereotype in any way.
- 1.22. Unless it is objectively justifiable to restrict advertising, vacancies should normally be advertised in order to reach a wide and diverse pool of potential candidates. Where an occupational requirement applies, we will normally make that clear in any advertisement and may take that into account when deciding where it is appropriate to advertise.
- 1.23. Nobody wanting to work for us should be asked about their health or whether they have a disability, before a job offer is made, except in very limited situations. It may, for example, be justifiable to ask whether the

applicant needs any disability-related measures put in place for the interview, or to check that they are capable of carrying out a key part of the job. It may be appropriate for some job offers to be dependent upon a medical examination.

- 1.24. Job applicants should not be asked anything that might suggest intent to discriminate. An example would be asking applicants whether they intend to have children, indicating an intention to discriminate against women and for reasons relating to pregnancy.

Your Responsibilities

- 1.25. We will treat matters raised sensitively and, where possible, in confidence including complying with requests for anonymity.
- 1.26. Everyone has an essential role in ensuring the success of this policy, with their own duties and responsibilities. If you do not meet your duties and responsibilities, you may be personally sued for discrimination and held liable.
- 1.27. Line Managers have a particular responsibility to ensure that everyone is respected and that workplace decisions are made for right and justifiable reasons.
- 1.28. We expect everyone to:
- Co-operate with any measures introduced to ensure equal opportunity
 - Report any suspected discriminatory acts or practices
 - Not induce or attempt to induce others to practise discrimination
 - Not treat anyone less favourably as a result of them having reported or provided evidence of discrimination (“Victimisation”)
 - Not subject others to harassment
- 1.29. If you are concerned about any breaches of this Policy, you should raise your concerns with your Line Manager. Alternatively, formal complaints can be made under the Grievance Procedure.

Policy Agreed Dec 24

Policy Review due Dec 26