

## Definitions

### Our beliefs

As a Christian charity, we believe that all humans are endowed by God with value by being made in his image as his representative. Genesis 1:27 states:

*27 So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.*

Likewise, we find our primary identity in Christ. Though the Church of Christ is diverse, it is united in its relationship with him. As our saviour welcomes all, so do we. Galatians 3:27-29 says:

*27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.*

### Our commitment

We are committed to providing equal opportunities in employment and to avoiding unlawful discrimination. This policy is intended to assist putting this commitment into practice.

We are also committed to ensuring that the work environment is free of harassment and bullying and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

### The law

It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of a 'protected characteristic'. The Equality Act defines the protected characteristics as being age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief.

Discrimination after employment may also be unlawful. For example, refusing to give a reference for a reason related to one of the protected characteristics.

It is also unlawful to discriminate against or harass a member of the public or service user in the provision of services or goods or to fail to make reasonable adjustments.

### Types of unlawful discrimination

1. Direct discrimination is where a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic. However, discrimination may be lawful if there is an occupational requirement which is core to a job role and a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
2. Indirect discrimination means putting in place, a rule or policy or way of doing things that has a worse impact on someone with a protected characteristic than someone without one, when this cannot be objectively justified.

3. Harassment is where there is unwanted behaviour related to a protected characteristic (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity) which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or which creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It does not matter whether or not this effect was intended by the person responsible for the conduct.
4. Associative discrimination is where the individual treated less favourably does not have a protected characteristic but is discriminated against because of their association with someone who does (for example the parent of a disabled child).
5. Perceptive discrimination is where the individual discriminated against or harassed does not have a protected characteristic, but they are perceived to have a protected characteristic.
6. Third-party harassment occurs where an employee is harassed by third parties such as service users, due to a protected characteristic.
7. Victimisation is treating someone unfavourably because they have taken some form of action relating to the Equality Act. For example, because they have supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because they are suspected of doing so. However, an employee is not protected from victimisation if they acted maliciously or made or supported an untrue complaint.
8. Failure to make reasonable adjustments is where a rule or policy or way of doing things has a worse impact on someone with a protected characteristic compared with someone who does not have that protected characteristic and the employer has failed to make a reasonable adjustment. Whilst the Equality Act refers to reasonable adjustments with regards to disability, it may also be discriminatory to ignore making reasonable adjustments for people with other protected characteristics (for example, to enable someone to respect a religious belief, providing gender neutral toilets, making adjustments for a woman experiencing severe menopausal symptoms etc).

### **Reasonable adjustments**

A 'reasonable adjustment' is a change to remove or reduce the effect of:

- an employee's disability so they can do their job
- a job applicant's disability when applying for a job

What is reasonable will depend on the circumstances of each case, but adjustments could be to:

- the workplace (making changes to overcome barriers created by the physical workplace)
- the ways things are done (where the disabled job worker is put at a substantial disadvantage by a provision, criterion or practice).
- providing extra equipment or getting someone to assist the employee or job applicant

When deciding whether an adjustment is reasonable, we will consider:

- how effective the change will be in avoiding the disadvantage the employee would otherwise experience.
- its practicality
- the cost

- our resources and size
- the availability of financial support.

The overall aim will be, as far as possible, to remove or reduce any substantial disadvantage faced by a staff member or job applicant which would not be faced by a non-disabled person.

### **Recruitment**

Our recruitment practices aim to attract applicants with the knowledge, skills and experience required for the job role. A diverse staff team supports us to better understand the needs of a diverse range of stakeholders.

We may therefore take positive action to improve our diversity amongst our volunteers or staff. We will:

- Remove any unnecessary requirements from person specifications (those unrelated to effective performance) that may otherwise have deterred applicants.
- Ensure Shortlisting and Interviews are conducted by panels are themselves diverse, which each panel member having equal input
- Ask interviewees whether any adjustments are needed to participate in the selection process.
- Make decisions based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).

### **Equal opportunities in employment**

We will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline and selection for redundancy.

We will:

1. Base decisions on objective criteria. We will make reasonable adjustments in recruitment as well as in day-to-day employment.
2. Encourage equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace as they are good practice and make business sense
3. Create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued. This commitment includes training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the equality, diversity and inclusion policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination. All staff should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, customers, suppliers and the public
4. Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any

others in the course of the organisation's work activities. Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice. Further, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

5. Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
6. Review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.

### **Service users, suppliers and others**

We will not discriminate unlawfully against service users using or seeking to use the services we provide.

If you are bullied or harassed by a service user, suppliers, contractor, visitor or others, or if you witness someone else being bullied or harassed, you are asked to report this to your manager who will take appropriate action.

### **Your responsibilities**

All staff are responsible for supporting the organisation in meeting its commitment and avoiding unlawful discrimination. If you experience a level of discomfort or disagreement with something that happens when you are at work, you are encouraged to bring it to the attention of a manager or someone in authority.

It is possible that others are not aware or have not considered the impact of their actions, have not understood our policy, or possibly our practices need to be updated.

If you believe that you have been discriminated against you should report this to your line manager or the chief executive under the grievance procedure.

We take any complaint seriously and you will not be penalised for raising a grievance, even if your grievance is not upheld, unless your complaint is both untrue and made in bad faith.

If you witness what you believe to be discrimination you should report this to your line manager or the chief executive as soon as possible.

Employees can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, the organisation for any act of unlawful discrimination. Employees who commit serious acts of harassment may be guilty of a criminal offence.

Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against employees or customers are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure.

Discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal without notice.

### **Monitoring and review**

This policy will be monitored periodically to judge its effectiveness and will be updated in accordance with changes in the law. We will report to the board of trustees on any actions or activities undertaken to improve equality of opportunity.

Any information provided by job applicants and employees for monitoring purposes will be used only for these purposes and will be dealt with in accordance with the data protection legislation.

Signed on behalf of the Board of Trustees



C Suddes, T Nichol , 21st April 2024