

Introduction

The Seagull Lowestoft Community Interest Company recognises the need for encouraging diversity and support a policy of equal opportunities in all areas of our work and responsibilities.

This policy provides guidance to enable all who work with or for the Organisation to comply with anti-discrimination legislation. The policy will also address anti-discrimination issues involving areas that currently fall outside any legislation.

Failure to follow the procedures in the policy may lead to disciplinary or other appropriate action.

The Organisation will review this policy on an annual basis, monitor the effectiveness of its implementation and tackle any problems where they arise. All employees and volunteers will receive a copy of the policy and appropriate induction/training.

The Organisation urges employees, volunteers and directors to be aware of the less obvious types of discrimination which result from general assumptions and pre-conceptions about the capabilities, interests and characteristics of individuals.

Definitions

Equal Opportunities ensures that policies, procedures and practice within the Organisation do not discriminate against its employees, volunteers and stakeholders. It is about treating people fairly and equally regardless of whom they are, their background or their lifestyle.

Diversity ensures that all people are valued as individuals and are able to maximise their potential and contribution to the Organisation and to the community. It recognises that people from different backgrounds can bring fresh ideas and a different approach, which can make the way we work and learn more fun, more creative, more efficient and more innovative.

Direct Discrimination, as defined in law, occurs when an individual is dealt with less favourably than other people on the grounds of race, ethnic or national origin, disability, sex, actual or perceived religion or belief or sexual orientation.

However in terms of this policy the definition is taken to be wider and includes, for example, colour, nationality, marital status or caring responsibility, age, mental health, political, class, HIV status, employment status, unrelated criminal convictions, union activities.

Indirect Discrimination occurs when a provision, criterion or practice puts people of a particular group at a disadvantage and is not justified in relation to the job, for example a rule about clothing that disproportionately disadvantages a racial group cannot be justified.

Victimisation means that if a person has made or is making an accusation of discrimination in good faith, it is unlawful to discriminate against them for having done

so, or because they intend to do so or it is suspected that they intend to do so. People must be able to act against unlawful discrimination without fear of reprisals.

Harassment means unwanted conduct based on race, sex or age etc. which has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person. Harassment can be sexual, racial, directed against people with disabilities or indeed related to any characteristic exhibited by the individual. (See the Organisation's Harassment Policy for guidance where harassment has occurred).

Positive Action refers to measures taken to assist employees, or learners who have been under-represented in specific areas, to reach a level of workplace knowledge and competencies that is comparable with 'representative' employees. These measures could take the form of additional training or providing the job application form in other languages to encourage applicants from these communities. 'Positive discrimination' at the point of selection for work is not permissible.

Policy Statements

Diversity

The Organisation will encourage diversity to maximise achievement, creativity and good practice and to bring benefit to individuals and communities.

The Organisation encourages all people it works with, and for, to contribute to an environment in which people feel comfortable expressing how they feel and what they need, knowing they will be treated with respect and that their contribution will be valued.

The Organisation will make reasonable adjustments to working practices, equipment and premises and offer, where appropriate, additional support to Directors, staff and volunteers to ensure they are able to take a full and active part in the Organisation's work.

The Organisation will endeavour to deliver services in a way that genuinely recognises the importance of an inclusive society that brings opportunities and access, not barriers to individuals.

Equal Opportunities

The Organisation is an equal opportunities employer (staff and volunteers) and provider of services. No job applicant, employee, volunteer, Director, member or service user should receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin; sex; marital status or caring responsibility; sexual orientation; age; physical, sensory or learning disability; mental health; political or religious beliefs; class; HIV status; employment status; unrelated criminal convictions; union activities. Nor will such person's sex, disability, race, marital or civil partnership status, sexual orientation, religion, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origin, age, trade union membership or non-membership, be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable.

Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the Equality and Diversity Policy are:

- To encourage, promote and celebrate diversity in all our activities and services
 - To ensure equal access to jobs, volunteer opportunities
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- To ensure compliance with legislation on discrimination and equality including Equal Pay Act 1970, Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Race Relations Act 1976, Disability Discrimination Act 1995, Employment Rights Act 1996, Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, Employment Act 2002, Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) Regulations 2003, Religion or Belief Regulations 2003, Sexual Orientation Regulations 2003 and Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006.
- To promote equal opportunities in other areas not currently covered by legislation.
- To create environments free from harassment and discrimination.
- To maximise the use of resources in the best interests of staff, volunteers and service users.
- To confront and challenge discrimination where and whenever it arises whether it be between colleagues, or in any other area relating to the Organisation's work.
- To ensure, through positive action and so far as is practicable, that all the Organisation premises and services are accessible to all people.

Policy Implementation: Expectations

The Organisation recognises that passive policies do not provide equality and encourage diversity in employment/training/services. The Organisation will seek to promote equality and diversity within the following framework of responsibilities.

Responsibility for implementing and developing the policy rests with the Directors.

We believe that all who work with or for the organisation have an individual responsibility: to accept the policy and ensure a personal involvement in its application; to co-operate actively to ensure that the environment we desire is a reality. Therefore the Organisation requires individuals:

- to implement measures introduced by the Organisation to ensure equality of opportunity, diversity and non discrimination.
- not to harass, abuse or intimidate any other employee or participant on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin; sex; marital or civil partnership status or caring responsibility; sexual orientation; age; physical, sensory or learning disability; mental health; political or religious beliefs; class; HIV status; employment status; unrelated criminal convictions; union activities.
- to inform management if they suspect discrimination is taking place.

Policy Implementation: Recruitment and Selection

The Organisation strives to ensure that Directors, staff and volunteers reflect the wider community. Clear and accurate information on vacant posts should be available through advertisement, job descriptions, person specifications and interview. Vacancies should be advertised sufficiently widely to reach the widest possible range of candidates, either internal and/or external. All recruitment material should not imply any preferred group, unless a genuine occupational qualification exists limiting a post to a particular group. Person specifications may include 'essential' and 'desirable' requirements that are necessary and justifiable. Care, and advice where necessary, is needed to ensure these are not discriminatory.

The recruitment process will select candidates on the basis of an objective assessment of their match with the requirements as described in the job description and person specification; this will not take into account the gender, name, race, religion or belief, possible disability or age of the candidate.

Policy Implementation: Training

In line with the intentions of this policy, the Organisation will not discriminate in the provision of training courses/ opportunities wherever possible. Appropriate training will be offered to enable Directors, staff, volunteers and committee members to perform their jobs effectively. The training offered will take into account the needs of all people. Briefing on this policy will form part of the Induction Procedure for Directors, staff, volunteers and committee members

Enforcement

The Organisation recognises the need for a continuing commitment to genuine equal opportunities and diversity within the organisation. The effectiveness of the policy's aims and objectives can only be judged by how the policy operates in practice.

Policy Enforcement - Grievances

- Any staff member or volunteer who feels they have been a victim of discrimination or unfairly treated in a way contrary to the intention of this policy should raise the issue with the Theatre Manager or Directors.
- Any service user who feels he/she has been unfairly treated in a way contrary to the intention of this policy should make a complaint to the Theatre Manager, who must report any such complaint to the Directors. If the complaint is about the Theatre Manager, this should be made to the Directors.
- Any job applicant who believes that he/she has been treated unfairly and contrary to the intention of this policy should raise the issue with the Theatre Manager or the Directors.

Policy Enforcement - Disciplinary Procedure

- Any member of staff found to be in breach of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action in line with the ACAS Disciplinary and Grievance code.
- Any volunteer, including Directors of any committee, found to be in breach of this policy will be counselled on his/her actions and may, where necessary, be asked to leave the Organisation.
- Any service user found in breach of this policy will, where appropriate, be counselled on his/her actions and may, where necessary, be referred back to their organisation or refused future services from the Organisation.

ARTISTIC POLICY

- The Seagull will seek to work with as wide a range of artists as possible, and all artists, performers and workshop leaders will be engaged solely on the basis of their quality or work and communication skills.
 - The Seagull will ensure that all programme material will adhere to our policy of non-discrimination and that no material will portray any group in a negative way.
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- Artists will be recruited who can demonstrate that they will empower and encourage self-determination when working with people with minority or disadvantaged groups or those with disabilities.

Monitoring

The Directors will have responsibility for implementing the Equality and diversity Policy and will have it as an agenda item at their monthly meetings. They will assess and review the effectiveness of the policy on an annual basis. All policies and procedures shall be kept under review to ensure that they do not operate against the Equal and Diversity Policy.

Where it appears that there may have been or there is a breach of the policy, the Directors will investigate the circumstances and action will be taken to counter any proven breach of policy.

Des Reynolds

Revised 2015

Note: With thanks to SAVO for providing a model policy
