

Vale Centre for Voluntary Services (VCVS)

Your local county voluntary council

6. Employing and managing people

6.15 Equal opportunities policy



Employees have a right to be treated fairly and considerately, which is supported by law. Organisations therefore should be committed to taking positive steps to promote and sustain equal opportunities amongst its trustees, staff and volunteers.

An equal opportunities policy should state the organisation's values on equality and diversity (fairness) and how it will be put into practice. The policy will also demonstrate to staff, potential recruits, volunteers and customers that the organisation is serious about fairness at work and will help to identify the behaviour expected, the behaviour which is not acceptable and what can be expected from the organisation. An equal opportunities policy may assist organisations to obtain funding, it underpins the organisation's action plan and assists the organisation to comply with the law. There are several pieces of legislation that combat discrimination and promote equal opportunities and diversity. These are:

- 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
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- Work and Families Act 2006

For an equal opportunities policy to be effective, it must have the support of everyone in the organisation and be an integral part of the business strategy. Involve managers at all levels to gain their commitment and develop the policy in consultation with employees and their representatives. All employees should be made aware of the organisation's equal opportunities policy and it is good practice for all existing and new employees to receive training.

The following is an example of an equal opportunities policy, which should be adapted to suit your own organisation. It is provided for guidance only and should not be regarded as an authoritative statement of the law., This example concentrates on employing and managing people.

You may wish to include additional requirements (eg service delivery, provision of services). See Information Sheet 2.9 for more information.

Example Policy

<Name of Organisation> is committed to eliminating discrimination and encouraging diversity amongst our workforce. Our aim is that our workforce will be truly representative of all sections of society and each employee feels respected and able to give of their best.

To that end the purpose of this policy is to provide equality and fairness for all employees, workers and applicants, whether full-time or part-time, and not to discriminate on grounds of gender (including sex, marriage, gender re-assignment), race (including ethnic origin, colour, nationality and national origin), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, or age. (NB there may be other categories that are relevant to your organisation or local circumstances e.g. trade union membership, which could be included here). <Name of Organisation> opposes all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination.

1. Responsibility

The overall responsibility for ensuring effective implementation of <Name of Organisation's> Equal opportunities policy is assigned to <Insert position>. This responsibility includes ensuring that all employees and workers are notified of the details of this policy and are aware of its implications through the provision of appropriate training.

All line managers have responsibility for promoting equality of opportunity, and should ensure that their own procedures and practices comply with the provisions of <Name of Organisation's> Equal opportunities policy. The performance and example of managers is crucial to improving opportunities for all.

Individual employees and workers at all levels have responsibility for ensuring that equality of opportunity is consistently provided in all of <Name of Organisation's> employment practices and activities.

2. Recruitment and selection

<Name of Organisation> will strive to:

- Ensure that all employees are recruited on the basis of ability and other objective relevant criteria.
- Work towards ensuring that through recruitment, its workforce better represents all sections of society.
- Ensure that it communicates job opportunities to all sections of the community, ensuring that it does not discriminate against, or discourage applications from any section of the community.

- Ensure that all involved in the recruitment selection are trained on equalities issues.
- Use appropriate legislation as a framework for action to support the recruitment process in a positive way.
- Offer fair terms and conditions of employment to employees.

(NB If the organisation has a separate Recruitment and selection policy, it should be referred to in this section).

3. Training and organisational development

<Name of Organisation> will:

- Seek to ensure that all employees are developed by the provision of appropriate and accessible learning opportunities in line with organisational and individual needs.
- Ensure that vacancies are open to existing staff.
- Ensure that equalities training is provided as part of its overall training and organisational development programme.

(NB if the organisation has a separate Training and development policy, it should be referred to in this section).

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring will be carried out to measure the effectiveness of <Name of Organisation's> Equal opportunities policy and to check that the policy is working and to act as a basis for future plans. This will be done by:

- Monitoring recruitment and selection procedures to ensure discrimination is not occurring.
- Checking the representation of applicants.
- Checking the representation of <Name of Organisation's> workforce.

5. Disciplinary

All employees should be aware that whilst an employer can be held liable in law for acts of discrimination committed by employees, employees too can be held personally liable in law for acts of discrimination which they commit, authorise, contribute to, or condone in relation to other employees, workers and members of the public.

Employees therefore should be aware that breaches of <Name of Organisation's> Equal opportunities policy and will be dealt with through <Name of Organisation's> Disciplinary policy.

6. Grievances

Should an employee have an issue or concern in relation to <Name of Organisation's> Equal opportunities Policy, then they should follow <Name of Organisation's> Grievance policy.

Should an employee believe they are being, or have been, discriminated against or harassed in any way, then they should follow <Name of Organisation's> Bullying and harassment policy.

Further information

See Information Sheet 2.9 *Equal Opportunities*

ACAS

Tel: 08457 474747

www.acas.org.uk

The Commission for Racial Equality

Tel 020 7939 0000

Web Site: www.cre.gov.uk

The Disability Rights Commission

Tel: 08457 622 633

www.drc.org.uk

The Equal Opportunities Commission

Tel: 0845 601 5901

www.eoc.org.uk

Acas Equality Direct Helpline

Tel: 08456 00 34 44

www.acas.org.uk

Disclaimer

The information provided in this sheet is intended for guidance only. It is not a substitute for professional advice and we cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned as a result of any person acting or refraining from acting upon it.

For further information contact

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