

Policy & Procedure for CESSA Charity & Housing Staff & Committee Members

E 1 - EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Author: CEO

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Definitions

The Organisation defines equality and diversity as follows:

- Equality is ensuring that there is equality of outcome for individuals who use the Organisations' services and for all employees.
- Diversity is accepting that each individual is unique and that we are all different. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embrace and celebrate the differences contained within all of us and the benefits these differences bring.

Policy

The Organisations are committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion among their workforces, and eliminating unlawful discrimination. The aim is for our workforces to be truly representative of all sections of society and our beneficiaries, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best. The Organisations - in providing goods and/or services and/or facilities - are also committed against unlawful discrimination of beneficiaries or the public.

Purpose

The policy's purpose is to:

- provide equality, fairness and respect for all in our employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time.
- not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation.
- oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities.

The Organisations commit to:

- encourage equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace as they are good practice and make business sense.
- 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 policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the Organisations 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, beneficiaries, suppliers and the public.

- take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, beneficiaries, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the Organisations' work activities.

Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the Organisations' grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and any 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.

- 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.
- decisions concerning staff being based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
- 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.
- monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality and diversity, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in this policy.

Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

This policy is fully supported by Committee members and senior management. Details of the Organisations' grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures can be found in the Employment Handbook. This includes with whom an employee should raise a grievance – usually their line manager. Use of the Organisations' grievance and/or disciplinary procedures does not affect an employee's right to make a claim to an employment tribunal within three months of the alleged discrimination.

Any Related Documents: Employment Handbook, B19 – Bullying and Harassment, Complaints – S1, T1H & T1G as appropriate.

Distribution: All Staff & Committee Members, File