Equal Opportunities Policy

**INTRODUCTION**

All Saints Church, Little Bealings, hereinafter referred to as the Organisation, strives for high standards both as an employer and as a provider of services. In so doing, we wholeheartedly support a policy of equal opportunities in all areas of our work and responsibilities.

The Organisation is an equal opportunities employer and promotes equality of opportunity through all of its activities. It aims to ensure that no job applicant, employee, volunteer, trustee, member or service user receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, gender, marital and civil partnership status, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, physical, sensory or learning disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, nor is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable.

The principle of Equal Opportunities will apply to recruitment, promotion, transfer, training, benefits, facilities, procedures and all terms and conditions of employment. The Organisation is committed to reviewing this policy on an annual basis and will ensure that its personnel are regularly reminded of these statements of policy.

However, given that the Church is a Christian organisation where there is a genuine occupational reason for a specific post it may require the post holder to be a practising Christian of a recognised denomination.

This policy has been produced to provide guidance, which will enable the Parochial Church Council (PCC), Trustees, Committees, staff, volunteers, members and service users of the Organisation to comply with anti-discrimination legislation. The policy will also address anti-discrimination issues involving any other people who currently fall outside any legislation. Failure to follow the procedures in the policy may lead to disciplinary or other appropriate action.

**Definitions**

The Equality Act (2010) describes nine “protected characteristics”.

**Discrimination** - a situation where a person is treated less favourably on the grounds of:

* face, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
* gender
* marital and civil partnership status
* sexual orientation
* age
* physical, sensory or learning disability
* gender reassignment
* religion and belief (including lack of belief)
* pregnancy and maternity.

In addition to the nine “protected characteristics”, the Organisation would not discriminate against people, because of:

* mental health
* caring responsibilities
* class
* HIV status
* employment status
* unrelated criminal convictions
* union activities

**Associated Discrimination** is direct discrimination against a person because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.

**Discrimination by Perception** is direct discrimination against a person because it is perceived that they possess a particular protected characteristic.

**Indirect Discrimination** is the imposition of a requirement or condition, which has disproportionate and / or adverse effect e.g. only recruiting people with English qualifications.

**Victimisation** means subjecting a person to detrimental treatment because they are or are believed to be bringing proceedings under the Equality Act; giving evidence or information in connection with proceedings under the Equality Act; doing any other thing for the purposes or in connection with the Equality Act or making an allegation that a person has contravened the Equality Act.

A person must be able to act against unlawful discrimination without fear of reprisals or being subjected to a detrimental effect.

**Harassment** means unwanted behaviour that has the purpose or effect of violating a person’s dignity or creates a degrading, humiliating, hostile, intimidating or offensive environment.

**Harassment by a third party** means unwanted, repeated conduct by a third party based on a protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for a person and where the employer does nothing to prevent it from reoccurring. A third party is defined in law as not being the employer or employees of the employer, but people such as customers or clients.

**POLICY**

* Positive action will be taken to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable that all the Organisation’s premises and services are accessible to all people.
* Trustees, staff, volunteers, members and service users will be encouraged, by example and guidance, to challenge discrimination where and whenever it arises, whether it be between colleagues, or in any other area relating to the Organisation's work.
* The Trustees will monitor and review annually equality of opportunity relating to the Organisation's services.
* Recruitment and selection procedures will be monitored and reviewed annually by the PCC.
* In order to address discrimination and disadvantage within the workplace, the Organisation will ensure that employment and advancement within the Organisation is determined by objective criteria and personal merit.
* Recruitment and employment practices will reflect a commitment to Equal Opportunities.

**Implementation**

* Responsibility for implementing and developing the policy rests with the PCC.

On a day-to-day basis this responsibility is delegated to the Organisation's Incumbent and Churchwardens, however, all trustees, volunteers, and employees have a responsibility to implement the policy.

* Any staff member or volunteer who feels they have been unfairly treated in a way contrary to the intention of this policy should raise the issue through the Organisation’s established Grievance Procedure as set out in each employee's Contract of Employment or volunteer’s agreement.
* Any service user who feels they have been unfairly treated in a way contrary to the intention of this policy should make a complaint through the Churchwarden or Incumbent, who must report any such complaint to the PCC.
* Any member of staff found to be in breach of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action in line with the Standard Terms of Employment.
* Any volunteer found to be in breach of this policy will be counselled on their actions by an appropriate member of the leadership team and may, where necessary, be removed from their role(s).
* Any member of the PCC, any committee or working party of the Organisation found to be in breach of this policy will be counselled on their actions by an appropriate member of the leadership team and may, where necessary, be asked to leave their role or leave the Organisation.
* Any service user found in breach of this policy will be counselled on their actions by an appropriate member of the leadership team and may, where necessary, be referred back to their Organisation.
* Any job applicant who believes that they have been treated unfairly and contrary to the intention of this policy should raise the issue with the Churchwarden or Incumbent.

* All aspects of personnel policies and procedures shall be kept under review to ensure that they do not operate against the Equal Opportunities Policy. If it is found that the policy is excluding or discouraging Trustees, staff, volunteers’ development or restricting service users, the PCC, through the Churchwarden or Incumbent, should take positive action to re-adjust the policy.

**REFERENCES**

1. Equality Act 2010 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents

**DOCUMENT CONTROL**

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