

Model Equal Opportunities Policy

Principles

This Association wholeheartedly supports the principle of equal opportunities in employment. We aim to encourage, value and manage diversity and we recognise that talent and potential are distributed across the population. Not only are there moral and social reasons for promoting equality of opportunity, it is in the best interest of this organisation to recruit and develop the best people for our jobs from as wide and diverse a pool of talent as possible. That diversity adds value.

The Association recognises that many people in our society experience discrimination. Discrimination is acting unfairly against a group or individual through for example exclusion, verbal comment, denigration, harassment, victimisation, a failure to appreciate needs or the assumption of such needs without consultation.

Discrimination can be direct or indirect (where there is a requirement or condition on all, but which has an adverse impact on a particular group and cannot be justified).

All forms of discrimination are unacceptable, regardless of whether there was any intention to discriminate or not. Employees have a duty to co-operate with the Association to ensure that this policy is effective in ensuring equal opportunities and in preventing discrimination. Employees should draw the attention of their line manager to suspected discriminatory acts or practices or cases of bullying or harassment.

Statement of Intent

The Association aims to create a culture that respects and values each others' differences, that promotes dignity, equality and diversity, and that encourages individuals to develop and maximise their true potential.

We aim to remove any barriers, bias or discrimination that prevent individuals or groups from realising their potential and contributing fully to our organisation's performance and to develop an organisational culture that positively values diversity.

We are committed wherever practicable, to achieving and maintaining a workforce that broadly reflects the local community in which we operate.

Every possible step will be taken to ensure that individuals are treated fairly in all aspects of their employment at the Association.

One major area for consideration under equal opportunities is the organisation's recruitment and selection procedure. Many organisations have a separate recruitment policy which would include all aspects of ensuring equal opportunities and monitoring and reviewing.

It is also important to remember that other policies should clearly reflect the Association's commitment to equality and diversity, such as those covering flexible working practices, parental and dependants leave, annual leave, discipline, grievance and induction, development, promotion, supervision and appraisal, and working environment as well as contract terms and conditions.

Our aim is that the workforce will be truly representative of all sections of society. Selection for employment or promotion or any other benefit will be on the basis of merit and ability only. Selection for training will be on the basis of job requirement only. Intimidation, harassment and bullying will not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action. Details of how harassment and bullying will be tackled are covered in the Association's separate 'Dignity at Work' policy.

Many organisations develop a separate anti-harassment/anti-bullying or **dignity at work policy**. This can tackle the issue of potential harassment and bullying of all employees and clearly show that such behaviour is not tolerated.

A dignity at work policy can work alongside and support the equal opportunities policy and other policies, such as for [disciplinary and grievance](#) (see Grievance Procedures and Disciplinary Procedures documents on the LVSC website www.lvsc.org.uk/disciplinary for further information).

The Association will challenge discrimination in its own policies. It aims to provide equality and fairness for all job applicants, employees whether part-time, full-time, fixed term or temporary, volunteers and Management Committee members irrespective of gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, colour, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or age.

These are all the areas that are covered by law or will be by the end of 2006. Your organisation may also want to include other categories that are particularly relevant to the organisation or local circumstances e.g. social class, refugee status.

If your organisation works with children or vulnerable adults, this type of work may require employees to undertake criminal record disclosure checks. As part of the required code of practice for registered persons (those receiving this disclosure information), organisations should have a written policy on the **recruitment of ex-offenders**, as job applicants may be asked to reveal all past offences whether spent or unspent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (for further information go to www.disclosure.gov.uk). Organisations may also wish to include this policy or refer to it within their equal opportunities and recruitment policies.

Implementation

The Chief Officer [or Management Committee where there is no Chief Officer] is responsible for the policy's day-to-day implementation. Consultation will take place with a staff working group [or recognised trade union if there is one] on the implementation and development of this policy. The Association has drawn up an Action Plan detailing how it will deliver this policy and challenge discrimination in other policies.

It is the responsibility of the Management Committee to monitor effectiveness, and to review and develop the policy where necessary. Monitoring and review will take place annually.

Each employee, volunteer, consultant, trainer, facilitator or Management Committee member is responsible for their own compliance with this policy. Breaches of the Equal Opportunities Policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary action against employees, appropriate action against a member of the Management Committee, termination of contracts for services of consultants or trainers, or withdrawal of volunteer agreements.

Employees who feel they have been discriminated against should raise the matter with their line manager. Initially the employee and manager should aim to resolve the matter informally. It may be that discriminatory action is unwitting and easily resolved once the problem is clear.

If they are dissatisfied with the outcome, the complaint is very serious, or their line manager is the cause of the complaint, the employee should raise the matter, in writing, as a formal grievance under the Association's Grievance Procedure. Employees may also find the Association's Dignity at Work Policy relevant.

The Association will ensure that all new employees, volunteers, and Management Committee members will receive induction on the policy and action plan and that consultants, trainers and facilitators will be fully informed.

Appropriate training and guidance will be provided to develop equality and diversity. Adequate resources will be made available to fulfil the aims of this

policy. The policy will be widely promoted, and copies will be freely available and displayed in the Association's offices.

Letting people know about the Policy

- **Consider how your equal opportunities policy statement is publicised and promoted across the organisation and to stakeholders?** E.g. through posters, flyers, newsletters, statements on advertisements, the annual report, induction and staff meetings etc.
- **Are people provided with additional information?** E.g. providing documents to read, providing training on rights and responsibilities, keeping committees informed with monitoring reports etc.
- **How else could the equality culture be promoted?** E.g. by including a specific reference in the mission statement, clearly demonstrating that the policy is endorsed by the Management Committee etc., ensuring that managers have the skills and knowledge to lead on the policy
- **Have you consulted widely?** E.g. with staff or Management Committee members, perhaps setting up an advisory group – this helps ensure ownership of the policy throughout the organisation. Also with similar organisations or umbrella bodies to learn from good practice elsewhere (e.g. disabled people or disabled-led organisations for advice on improving access – physical, attitudinal and access to information)