

## GROUP POLICIES

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

**1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to support a working environment and culture in which unlawful and unfair discrimination is not condoned or tolerated.
- 1.2 This policy intends to communicate the commitment of the organisation to the promotion of equal opportunities and encouraging diversity both as an employer and a provider of services.

It is our policy to provide employment equality to all, irrespective of:-

- Gender (including gender reassignment)
- Marital or civil partnership status
- Having or not having dependents
- Religious belief
- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin)
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Part time or fixed term contract status

- 1.3 Therefore all service users, employees, volunteers (both present and potential) and contractors who work on behalf of the organisation will be treated fairly and will not be discriminated against on any of the above grounds.
- 1.4 Decisions about recruitment and selection, promotion, training, remuneration (including benefits), access to services and service delivery will be made objectively, and without unlawful discrimination.
- 1.5 The organisation has developed policies, procedures and practices to ensure that discrimination does not occur in either employment, access to services and service delivery. The organisation is committed to regular monitoring and review of its policies, procedures and practices to ensure that they are effective in this regard, and will ensure that all those involved in recruitment, management and the procurement and provision of services are aware of, adhere to and promote this policy.

**2 SCOPE**

- 2.1 All Sadeh Lok Housing Group and subsidiary employees/volunteers and those that deliver services on behalf of the organisation and members of the public that use our service should demonstrate behaviour that adheres to this policy.

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### 3 DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 **Equal Opportunity** - The development of policies, procedures and practices that promote fairness and equality in all aspects of employment to enable development to full potential, together with the removal of barriers of discrimination and oppression experienced by certain groups.
- 3.2 **Diversity** - The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.
- 3.3 **Direct Discrimination** - Occurs where someone is treated less favourably from others in the same circumstances due to a particular characteristic. An example would be a refusal to appoint someone to a particular post simply because of his or her sexual orientation.
- 3.4 **Indirect Discrimination** – It is also unlawful to discriminate indirectly against anyone. That means applying a provision, criterion or practice which although applied equally to everyone is such that a considerably smaller proportion of a particular group can comply with it and which cannot be justified. An example would be making a rule about dress or uniform which would disadvantage those from a certain racial or ethnic group and for which there was no justification.
- 3.5 **Associative Discrimination** - is discrimination against a person because they have an association with someone with a particular protected characteristic. This already applies to race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation and is now to be extended to cover age, disability, gender reassignment and sex.

An example of associative discrimination might be a non-disabled employee who is discriminated against because of action she needs to take to care for a disabled dependant.

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- 3.6 Perceptive Discrimination** - is discrimination against a person because the discriminator thinks the person possesses that characteristic, even if they do not in fact do so. Perceptive discrimination already applies to age, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation, and is now extended to cover disability, gender reassignment and sex.
- 3.7 Harassment** – Subjecting someone to harassment can amount to discrimination. Harassment is unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment having regard to all the circumstances and the perception of the victim. The organisation has in place a **Dignity at Work Policy** with a view to preventing harassment in the workplace and to ensure that appropriate action is taken when allegations of harassment by employees/volunteers, service users or members of the public are made.
- 3.8 Victimisation** – occurs where an individual is treated less favourably than colleagues because he/she has initiated complaints proceedings or taken action to assert their legal rights or have assisted a colleague in that regard.
- 3.9 Positive Action** - discrimination is only permitted in limited circumstances if there is a genuine occupational requirement for an individual to have a particular characteristic. Selection for recruitment or promotion is currently on merit: however in some circumstances it is possible to take certain steps to redress the effects of previous inequality of opportunity. This is called positive action and employers may give special encouragement to or provide training to individuals with a specific characteristic.

#### 4 PRINCIPLES

The organisation is committed to:-

- Promoting equality of opportunity for all employees/volunteers, customers, contractors and service users both present and prospective
- Promoting a good and harmonious working environment in which all persons are treated with dignity and respect
- Creating an open and trusting environment where individuals are encouraged to discuss issues relating to equality of opportunity and diversity and are encouraged to challenge inequality in an appropriate manner
- Preventing occurrences of unlawful direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation

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- Fulfilling all our legal obligations under the equality legislation and associated codes of practice
- Complying with our own equal opportunities policy and associated policies
- Taking lawful affirmative or positive action, where appropriate
- Regarding all breaches of equal opportunities policy as misconduct, which could lead to disciplinary proceedings

## 5 MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 Those with specific responsibilities for implementing this policy shall do so by:-

- Communicating the policy to all employees, volunteers, service users, contractors, job applicants and potential relevant others
- Ensuring that the principles laid out in this policy are built into working practices
- Conducting equality impact assessments on all policies and procedures
- Providing equality training and guidance as appropriate, including training during induction and management courses
- Ensuring that those who are involved in assessing candidates for recruitment or promotion will be trained in non-discriminatory selection techniques.
- Incorporate equal opportunities notices into general corporate communication practices
- Obtaining commitments from other persons or organisations such as subcontractors or agencies that they too will comply with the policy in their dealings with our organisation and our workforce
- Ensuring that adequate resources are made available to fulfil the objectives of this policy.

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**6 MAKING A COMPLAINT**

- 6.1 Any person who feels that they have been treated less favourably than others in the same circumstances has the right to use the organisations Grievance Policy and Procedure to seek redress. All complaints and grievances in respect of equality and equal opportunity issues will be thoroughly investigated and dealt with fairly and consistently.
- 6.2 All employees/volunteers have a right to work in an environment, which is free from harassment. Harassment at work in any form is unacceptable behaviour and will not be permitted or condoned. Any individual who considers they have been subject to harassment may take action in accordance with the organisations Dignity at Work Policy.
- 6.3 Service users/potential service users or applicants can make complaints via the organisations Complaints Procedure.

**7 RELEVANT LEGISLATION**

- 7.1 Implementation of this Equal Opportunity Policy ensures that the organisation complies with the Equality Act 2010 and associated legislation.

**8 RESPONSIBILITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE POLICY**

- 8.1 The Board and Executive Team in consultation with the Human Resources Department have specific responsibility for effective implementation of this policy.
- 8.2 All Managers are responsible for implementing fair non-discriminatory practices within their areas and or departments.
- 8.3 All employees, volunteers, service users and contractors (those carrying out activities on behalf of the organisation) are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of, understand and comply with this policy and associated procedures, and that they help create the equality environment which is its objective.
- 8.4 The Human Resources Department is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the policy in accordance with legislation and good practice.

**9 MONITORING**

- 9.1 The Human Resources Department will undertake equal opportunities monitoring and report statistics to the Board on a quarterly basis.

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In addition an annual report will be produced on the workforce profile. All monitoring will be carried out on an anonymous basis.

- 9.2 Specific departments within the organisation will conduct equal opportunity monitoring as deemed appropriate for their service activity. All monitoring will be carried out on an anonymous basis.

## 10 ASSOCIATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Dignity at Work Policy
- Grievance Policy and Procedure
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Flexible Working Rights Policy
- Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy
- Redundancy Policy
- Dress Code Policy
- Handling and Use of Disclosures Policy
- Parental Leave Policy
- CRB Code of Practice Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Procurement Policy
- Complaints Procedure
- Candidate Induction Handbook for Qualifications

## 11 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- 11.1 Further information can be obtained from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) at [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com).
- 11.2 The organisation has in place an Equality Strategy and Action Plan which should be read in conjunction with this policy document.

## 12 REVIEW

- 12.1 The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis or earlier if subject to legislative changes.

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