



Equality and Diversity Policy

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1. Introduction

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3: 28

Hope into Action UK is an Equal Opportunities and Diverse organisation. The policy reflects both the vision, mission and values of Hope into Action and the spirit and intentions of legislation, which outlaws discrimination. Hope into Action believes: in equal opportunity for all, and declares that there will be no unlawful discrimination with regard to the Protected Characteristics given in the Equality Act 2010, namely: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation in any of our operations such as in recruitment, deployment, training or promotion.

This policy sets out Hope into Action’s approach to equality and diversity. Hope into action is committed to promoting equality and diversity and promoting a culture that actively values difference and recognises that people from different backgrounds and experiences can bring valuable insights to the workplace and enhance the way we work.

Hope into Action aims to be an inclusive organisation, committed to providing equal opportunities throughout employment including in the recruitment, training and development of employees, and to pro-actively tackling and eliminating discrimination.

2. Policy Summary

The vision, mission and values of Hope into Action commit the Movement to further the work of Christ in the world.

It is the responsibility of every individual to eliminate discrimination and to ensure the practical application of this policy and reporting of incidents of discrimination to an appropriate senior person.

All allegations will be treated seriously. Any discrimination is totally unacceptable to Hope into Action and anyone found to be discriminating would face disciplinary action.

This policy is in line with

- Equality act 2010
- Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Commission of Racial Equality Code of Practice
- Housing Corporation Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Guidelines
- Equal Opportunities Act 2010

3. Procedure

This means that:

1. In the provision of housing and other services, and employment of staff to provide these services, Hope into Action will seek to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment for all persons.
2. It values diversity and welcomes interest from all sections of the community.
3. No person or group of persons applying for housing, employment, partnership or for other services or contracts with the Hope into Action will be discriminated against or treated less favourably because of gender, colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origin, marital status, age, sexual orientation or because of disability or seeming disability.
4. Hope into Action aims to ensure that people with disabilities are given equal opportunity to enter employment or to become a Board Member or volunteers. In so doing, it will fully consider making reasonable adjustments to working practices, equipment and premises to ensure a disabled person is not put at a substantial disadvantage due to their disability. In addition, when someone becomes disabled, every effort will be made through reasonable adjustment, retraining or redeployment to enable them to remain in the service of Hope into Action.
5. No health or disability related questions will be asked at interview or before making a job offer (as per section 60 of the Equality Act 2010). We may

ask such information in order to assess whether a candidate is physically capable of carrying out a manual role or an intrinsic part of the job. This would, however, still require us to consider whether reasonable adjustments could be made for a disabled candidate (section 20 of the Equality Act).

6. It will actively assist disadvantaged minority groups to benefit from its services.
7. It will seek to establish close relationships with disadvantaged minority groups in its area of operation.
8. It will actively seek to partner with churches where the majority of worshippers are from ethnic minorities.
9. It will actively seek to recruit franchise partners lead by people from minorities groups.
10. It will actively seek to advertise for jobs, events, in media with greater reach in minority groups.
11. It will seek to include in the annual budget, funds, to ensure we are more accessible and inclusive.
12. It will collect and monitor records of the gender and ethnic origin of all those applying for housing, employment and other services and willing to consent to giving such information.
13. It will ensure that its policy and procedures for handling complaints about all forms of harassment are implemented.
14. It will regularly monitor the composition and operation of its management and other committees.
15. It has a working definition of racial and sexual harassment.
16. It will have a copy of the Race Relations Code of Practice in Rented Housing available for inspection.

Supporting those Transitioning:

From time to time we will receive referrals from people who self-identify as being a different gender to the one they were anatomically born with or people who describe themselves as non-binary (someone who does not identify as male or female). In these circumstances we encourage staff assessing them to consider carefully whether they put them into a male house or a female house. At different times we have chosen to either:

- Put someone with a female anatomical body (transitioning to become a male) in a female house, because we didn't think we could protect them in the male house.

- Put someone with a female anatomical body (transitioning to become a male) in a male house, because we felt this is where they would most 'fit.'

The decision is a difficult one, should be made in discussion with the potential 'tenant' while assessing the risk in both a male and a female house.

We do also ask the 'potential' tenant if they would be prepared to be open with the other tenants they will be living with.

We also ask that existing tenants are included in the decision as it gets nearer to being made.

Top tips:

- It is fine to be honest with the potential tenant. One of our Empowerment Workers opened her first conversation with the potential tenant with the words: 'I have to be honest and say I do not have a lot of experience, either professionally or personally, with someone transitioning. However I am keen to learn and listen so I can try and understand and make the best decisions in how to support you.' This honest approach will probably be better received than one which feigns a falsely knowledgeable one.
- One of the key ways that you might be able to cause offence or hurt is by referring to a tenant transitioning by the gender that they no longer identify as. Another thing which can be upsetting is being referred to by a birth name if they have chosen a new name that better fits with the gender they now identify as (it's called dead naming).
- People who describe themselves as non-binary may prefer to use pronouns 'they or them' rather than 'he' or 'she'. It is best to discuss this with them in a non-judgemental way and listen to their response.

From a theological perspective, we would remind you of three things:

- Jesus implored us: 'Do not judge'.
- Jesus loves the person transitioning so much he would be prepared to die for him/her.
- Remember – you may well meet Jesus in this individual; your humanity will grow, you will be richer for it.

Appendix A – Hope into Action Equal Opportunities Statement

1 Hope into Action is a Christian organisation committed to social justice and resolutely opposed to discrimination in society. We are committed to providing services on a fair and equitable basis, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, life-style, sex, sexuality, physical/mental Disability, offending background or any other factor. No person requiring services from Hope into Action will be treated less favourably than any other person on any grounds.

2 In employment we actively seek to recruit with the right mix of talent, skills and potential, promoting equality for all, and welcome applications from a wide range of candidates. We select all candidates for interview based on their skills, qualifications, experience and commitment to the values of the organisation.

3 As an organisation seeking to deliver services within a Christian context, posts are consequently filled by Christians. All staff demonstrate a clear personal commitment to the Christian faith. This policy is implemented in accordance with Employment and Race Directives issued by the government and ACAS guidance.

4 As an organisation using the DBS system to assess applicants' suitability for positions of trust, the church/organisation undertakes to comply fully with the DBS Code of Practice and to treat all applicants for positions fairly. It undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any person on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed.

5 A Disclosure is only requested if relevant for the position concerned. For those positions where a Disclosure is required, all application forms, job adverts and recruitment briefs will contain a statement that a Disclosure will be requested in the event of the individual being offered a position.

6 Where a Disclosure is to form part of a recruitment process, we encourage all applicants called for interview to provide details of any criminal record at an early stage in the application process. We request that this information is sent separately and in confidence to the Recruiter within the organisation and we guarantee that this information will only be seen by those who need to, as part of the recruitment process.

7 Unless the nature of the position allows questioning about your entire criminal record, we only ask about "unspent" convictions as defined in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

8 We ensure that all those in the organisation who are involved in the recruitment process have been suitably trained to identify and assess the relevance of offences. We will also ensure that they have received appropriate guidance and training in the relevant legislation relating to the employment of ex-offenders e.g. the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

9 At interview, or in separate discussion, we ensure that an open and measured discussion takes place on the subject of any offences or other matter that might be relevant to the position. Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment or voluntary work.

DBS Checks

10 Every person under-going a DBS check will be made aware of the DBS Code of Practice on the Government website, a copy of which will be available on request.

11 We undertake to discuss any matter revealed in a disclosure with the person seeking a position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar you from working with us. This will depend upon the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of your offences

In consideration of our use of the DBS Disclosure Service, to help assess the suitability of applicants for positions of trust, we agree to comply with the DBS Code of Practice, Data Protection Act and other legislation in regard to the correct handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of Disclosures and Disclosure information including any electronic information.

Storage & Access

Results of the Disclosure is kept on an Applicant's personnel file that is always kept securely online or in lockable, non-portable, storage containers with access strictly controlled and limited to those who are entitled to see it as part of their duties. Electronic disclosure information is held on a secure password protected system accessible only to those authorised to view it in the course of their duties.

Disclosure results are only sent to the Applicant and are not made available to Hope into Action.

Handling

In accordance with section 124 of the Police Act 1997, Disclosure Information is only passed to those who are authorised to receive it in the course of their duties. We maintain a record of all those to whom Disclosure Information has been revealed and we recognise that it is a criminal offence to pass this information to anyone who is not entitled to receive it.

Usage

Disclosure Information is only used for the specific purpose for which it was requested and for which the Applicant's full consent has been given.

Retention

Once a recruitment (or other relevant) decision has been made, we do not keep Disclosure ID information for any longer than is absolutely necessary, whether in electronic or paper format. In line with our GDPR policy. If, in very exceptional circumstances, it is considered necessary to keep Disclosure information for longer than six-months, we will consult UCHECK Disclosure Unit who will seek advice from the DBS giving full consideration to the Data Protection rights and Human Rights of the individual subject before doing so. Throughout this time, the usual conditions regarding safe storage and strictly controlled access will continue to apply.

Disposal

Once the retention period has elapsed, we will ensure that any Disclosure Information is immediately suitably destroyed by secure means, i.e. by shredding, pulping or burning or as per our retention policy. While awaiting destruction, Disclosure Information will not be kept in any insecure receptacle (e.g. waste bin or confidential waste sack). We will not keep any photocopy or other image of Disclosure Information or any copy or representation of the contents of Disclosure Information. However, we may keep a record of the date of issue of Disclosure

Information, the name of the subject, the type of Disclosure Information requested, the position for which Disclosure Information was requested, the unique reference number of Disclosure Information, and the details of the recruitment decision taken. For disposal of electronic Disclosure results and information, the system automatically deletes the record in line with DBS retention guidelines above, automatically archiving only the minimum information as laid out in the DBS Code of Practice and in line with the paper process. Our relationship with UCHECK as an Umbrella Organisation. We accept that the UCHECK Disclosure Unit, as our umbrella organisation, has a responsibility to ensure, as far as possible, that we comply with all the requirements in the DBS Code of Practice, this and other policy statements, and in other DBS procedures and processes. We undertake to keep UCHECK informed of any changes in our organisation, personnel or practices which could materially affect our ability to work within these expectations

Appendix B - Definitions of Discrimination and Protected Characteristics

There are several types of discrimination:

- **Direct discrimination** means treating someone less favourably than someone else because of a protected characteristic.
- **Direct discrimination by perception** means treating one person less favourably than someone else, because you incorrectly think they have a protected characteristic.
- **Indirect discrimination** means putting in place, a rule or policy or way of doing things that has a worse impact on someone with a protected characteristic than someone without one, when this cannot be objectively justified.
- **Discrimination arising from disability** means treating a disabled person unfavourably because of something connected with their disability when this cannot be objectively justified.
- **Direct discrimination by association** means treating someone less favourably than another person because they are associated with a person who has a protected characteristic.
- **Failing to make reasonable adjustments** for disabled people is also a form of discrimination.
- **Harassment** is unwanted behaviour related to a protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or which creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.
- **Victimisation** is treating someone unfavourably because they have taken some form of action relating to the Equality Act, e.g. made a complaint under the Act or supported somebody who is doing so, such as appearing as a witness.