



Equality and Diversity Policy

Our Commitment

Bay Volunteers known as 'the Organisation' which operates as part of Hope Church Lancaster known as 'the Employer' hence forward, is committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion among its employees and volunteers, and avoiding unlawful discrimination. This policy is intended to assist putting this commitment into practice. The aim is to be open to all sections of society for our employee and volunteer roles, and for our service users. Employees and volunteers should feel respected and able to give their best, and service users should feel respected and treated with dignity in the service they receive. The Organisation is also committed to making sure that there is no unlawful discrimination towards its employees, volunteers and service users who are part of The Organisation.

Our Values

- We promote diversity and challenge oppression and prejudice. We will challenge discrimination based on age, disability, gender identity and expression, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, ethnicity, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, while actively promoting equality and diversity.
- We are friendly and make everyone feel welcome and supported.
- We are community-focussed and locally relevant.
- We are inclusive and accessible.

The Law

It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of a 'protected characteristic'. The Equality Act 2010 defines the protected characteristics as being age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality, caste and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership.

Discrimination after employment may also be unlawful, e.g. refusing to give a reference for a reason related to one of the protected characteristics.

It is also unlawful to discriminate against or harass a volunteer or to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers in enabling them to volunteer. It is similarly unlawful to discriminate against service users in the provision of services.

Types of Unlawful Discrimination

- Direct discrimination is where a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic. However, discrimination may be lawful if there is an occupational requirement which is core to a job role and a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- 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.
- Harassment is where there is unwanted behaviour related to a protected characteristic (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity) which has the purpose or effect of

violating someone's dignity or which creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It does not matter whether or not this effect was intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

- Associative discrimination is where the individual treated less favourably does not have a protected characteristic but is discriminated against because of their association with someone who does e.g. the parent of a disabled child.
- Perceptive discrimination is where the individual discriminated against or harassed does not have a protected characteristic but they are perceived to have a protected characteristic.
- Third-party harassment occurs where an employee or volunteer is harassed by third parties such as service users, due to a protected characteristic.
- Victimisation is treating someone unfavourably because they have taken some form of action relating to the Equality Act, e.g. because they have supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because they are suspected of doing so. However, an employee is not protected from victimisation if they acted maliciously or made or supported an untrue complaint.
- Failure to make reasonable adjustments is where a rule or policy or way of doing things has a worse impact on someone with a protected characteristic compared with someone who does not have that protected characteristic and the employer has failed to make reasonable adjustments to enable the person with a protected characteristic to overcome the disadvantage.

Equal Opportunities in Employment

The Organisation will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline and selection for redundancy. Job descriptions will avoid any unnecessary requirements except for when there is a genuine occupational requirement (those related to effective performance) that may otherwise have deterred applicants. The Organisation will base decisions on objective criteria. The Organisation will consider making reasonable adjustments in recruitment as well as in day-to-day employment.

Decisions concerning staff being based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).

After taking into account any genuine occupational requirement, entry into employment and promotion or change of post within Hope Church is determined by personal merit and ability.

The Organisation will 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.

Service Users

The Organisation will not discriminate unlawfully against service users using or seeking to use the services that it provides. If employees or volunteers are bullied or harassed by a service user, or any other member of the public, or if employees or volunteers witness someone else being bullied or harassed, they are asked to report this to the Manager of the Organisation, who will take appropriate action.

Training

The Organisation will provide information and guidance to those involved in recruitment or other decision-making where equal opportunities issues are likely to arise to help them understand their responsibilities and to avoid the risk of discrimination. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves in a manner that helps the Organisation to provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

The Organisation will make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff and volunteers, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the Organisation and to best support the service users.

Employee and Volunteer Responsibilities

All staff and volunteers are responsible for supporting the organisation in meeting its commitment and avoiding unlawful discrimination. If you believe that you have been discriminated against, you should report this to the Manager of the Organisation, Matt Parker, or if this is not appropriate, then to the Assistant Pastor of Hope Church, Jamie Haxby. If your complaint involves bullying or harassment, this should also be reported to the Manager of the Organisation, Matt Parker, or if this is not appropriate, then to the Assistant Pastor of Hope Church, Jamie Haxby. The Organisation take any complaint seriously and employees and volunteers will not be penalised for raising a grievance, even if their grievance is not upheld, unless their complaint is both untrue and made in bad faith.

If an employee or volunteer witness what they believe to be discrimination, they should report this to the Manager of the Organisation, Matt Parker, or if this is not appropriate, then to the Assistant Pastor of Hope Church, Jamie Haxby.

Employees can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, the Organisation for any act of unlawful discrimination. Employees who commit serious acts of harassment may be guilty of a criminal offence. Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against employees or customers are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure. Discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal without notice.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored periodically to judge its effectiveness and will be updated in accordance with changes in the law. Any information provided by job applicants, employees and volunteers for monitoring purposes will be used only for these purposes and will be dealt with in accordance with the Data Protection legislation.

The Organisation will monitor the make-up of the employees, volunteers and service users regarding information such as age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality, diversity and inclusion policy.

The equality, diversity and inclusion policy is fully supported by Hope Church Lancaster.