

# Equal Opportunities & Diversity Policy

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## What this policy covers

The Organisation recognises the benefits of a diverse workforce and is committed to providing a working environment that is free from discrimination. We believe that people from different backgrounds can bring fresh ideas, thinking and approaches which make the way work is undertaken more effective and efficient.

The Organisation will seek to promote the principles of equality and diversity in all its dealings with employees, workers, job applicants, clients, customers, suppliers, contractors, recruitment agencies and the public.

All employees and those who act on the Organisation's behalf are required to adhere to this policy when undertaking their duties or when representing the Organisation in any other guise.

This policy is also incorporated within Healthwatch Cornwall's Employee Manual.

## Your entitlements and responsibilities

### Unlawful discrimination

Unlawful discrimination of any kind in the working environment will not be tolerated and the Organisation will take all necessary action to prevent its occurrence.

Specifically, the Organisation aims to ensure that no employee or job applicant is subject to unlawful discrimination, either directly or indirectly, on the grounds of gender, gender reassignment, race (including colour, nationality, caste and ethnic origin), disability, sexual orientation, marital status, part-time status, pregnancy or maternity, age, religion or belief, political belief or affiliation or trade union membership. This commitment applies to all aspects of employment, including:



- Recruitment and selection, including advertisements, job descriptions, interview and selection procedures
- Training
- Promotion and career-development opportunities
- Terms and conditions of employment, and access to employment-related benefits and facilities
- Grievance handling and the application of disciplinary procedures

## **Selection for redundancy**

Equal opportunities practice is developing constantly as social attitudes and legislation change. The Organisation will review all policies and implement necessary changes where these could improve equality of opportunity or outcome.

### **Recruitment of ex-offenders**

The Organisation actively promotes equality of opportunity for all candidates, including those with criminal records where appropriate.

The Organisation requires you to provide details of any relevant criminal record at an early stage in the application process. Specific rules about which convictions and spent convictions you should disclose and those you need not disclose – known as "protected convictions" – are contained in legislation.

Any such information should be sent in a separate confidential letter to the Business Support Manager. Only those who need to see it as a formal part of the recruitment process will have access to this information.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily prevent you from being appointed.

Any recruitment decision will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of the offence(s). The Organisation will discuss with you the relevance of any offence to the job in question.

If you fail to reveal any information relating to disclosures in accordance with the Organisation's Disclosures Policy, this may lead to the withdrawal of an offer of employment.

The Organisation's policy in relation to the handling of criminal records data is contained in the Disclosure and Disclosure of Information Policy.



## Career development

While positive measures may be taken to encourage under-represented groups to apply for employment opportunities, recruitment or promotion to jobs will be based on merit.

All employees will have equal access to training and other career-development opportunities appropriate to their experience and abilities.

However, the Organisation will take appropriate positive action measures (as permitted by equal opportunities legislation) to provide specialist training and support for groups that are under-represented in the workforce and encourage them to take up training and career-development opportunities.

## Procedure

### Complaints of discrimination

The Organisation will treat seriously all complaints of discrimination made by employees, clients, customers, suppliers, contractors or other third parties and will take action where appropriate.

If you believe that you have been discriminated against, you are encouraged to raise the matter as soon as possible with your manager or other senior employee using the Organisation's Grievance Procedure (outlined elsewhere in the Employee Handbook).

Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated thoroughly. If you make an allegation of discrimination, the Organisation is committed to ensuring that you are protected from victimisation, harassment or less favourable treatment. Any such incidents will be dealt with under the Organisation's Disciplinary Procedures.

### Investigating accusations of unlawful discrimination

If you are accused of unlawful discrimination, the Organisation will investigate the matter fully.

During the course of the investigation, you will be given the opportunity to respond to the allegation and provide an explanation of your actions.

If the investigation concludes that the claim is false or malicious, the complainant may be subject to disciplinary action.



If the investigation concludes that your actions amount to unlawful discrimination, you will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal without notice for gross misconduct.

### Equal Opportunities Monitoring

The Organisation may carry out monitoring for the purposes of measuring the effectiveness of its Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy.

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