

HCC Equality and Diversity Policy



Introduction

1. Huntingdonshire Community Church (HCC) is committed to encouraging equality and diversity among our staff and membership and eliminating unlawful discrimination. The aim is for our staff/volunteers to be truly representative of all sections of society and for each employee/volunteer to feel respected and able to give their best. The organisation is also committed to preventing unlawful discrimination of church members or visitors to church services or events. We will not accept unfair discrimination or less favourable treatment.

Scope and Responsibility

2. The Trustees and Senior Leader have primary responsibility for ensuring equal opportunities in ministry delivery and employment practice. All members, employees and volunteers must adhere to this policy in the course of their work, monitor it on a day-to-day basis and report on its operation to the Trustee Board if required. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

Purpose

3. The policy's purpose is to:
- a. provide equality, fairness and respect for all in our employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time
 - b. oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities
 - c. to ensure no-one is discriminated against either directly or indirectly on the grounds below (the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010):
 - age
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage and civil partnership
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - race
 - religion or belief
 - sex/gender
 - sexual orientation.

Employer's Responsibilities

4. HCC will:
 - a. Communicate the policy to all staff and volunteers, through the use of notice boards, circulars, written notification to individual employees and church members and other methods of communication as appropriate.
 - b. Discuss and, where appropriate, agree with employees any proposed changes in the policy's contents and implementation.
 - c. Make it known to all job applicants and, where appropriate, to all who take part in church events.
 - d. Ensure that disciplinary and grievance procedures incorporate principles of equal opportunity and non-discrimination.
 - e. Regularly examine existing procedures and criteria, including recruitment practices, and terms and conditions of employment, and change them where they are actually or potentially discriminatory.
 - f. Ensure that the organisation is kept up to date and within the law.
 - g. Provide training and guidance to enable staff to carry out the policy and provide specific training for relevant decision makers, including members of the Board of Trustees where appropriate.
 - h. 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.
 - i. Monitor the make-up of the staff regarding information such as age, gender, ethnic background and disability in encouraging equality and diversity, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality and diversity policy.
 - j. Monitor to assess how the equality and diversity policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

Recruitment and Selection

5. We will endeavour through appropriate training to ensure that employees making selection and recruitment decisions do not discriminate, whether consciously or unconsciously, in making these decisions.
6. Job descriptions, where used, will be in line with this equal and diversity policy. Job requirements will be reflected accurately in any personnel specifications.
7. We will adopt a consistent, non-discriminatory approach to the advertising of vacancies.
8. We will not confine our recruitment to areas or media sources which provide only, or mainly, applicants of a particular group.

9. All applicants who apply for jobs with us will receive fair treatment and will be considered solely on their ability to do the job.
10. All employees involved in the recruitment process will periodically review their selection criteria to ensure that they are related to the job requirements and do not unlawfully discriminate.
11. Short listing and interviewing will be carried out by more than one person where possible.
12. Interview questions will be related to the requirements of the job and will not be of a discriminatory nature.
13. We will not disqualify any applicant because he/she is unable to complete an application form unassisted unless personal completion of the form is a valid test of the standard of English required for the safe and effective performance of the job.
14. Selection decisions will not be influenced by any perceived prejudices of other staff.

Ministry Activities

15. We will work actively towards ensuring that our ministry activities are relevant to all members of the church. We will examine each activity to determine whether:
 - The activity is offered in an accessible and relevant way
 - Alternative methods would be more appropriate
 - Additional activities should be developed
 - There are any practices/procedures which are discriminatory
16. All written resources for groups and individuals produced by HCC will reflect the mixed community within which we work and stereotyped images of particular groups will not be reinforced. All employees and volunteers must ensure that their work reflects these principles.
17. Members must have easy access to information about HCC's activities which may involve making materials available where appropriate in a variety of media, e.g. in large print or electronically. In particular, all printed materials will be in a minimum of 10pt type.
18. It is recognised that there may from time to time be complaints against members of staff or church volunteers. A notice will be displayed in the office giving details of how a complaint may be made. The procedure will also be regularly publicised (e.g. on our website).

Employment

19. HCC opposes and avoids all forms of unlawful discrimination for all job applicants, employees or volunteers, whether temporary, part-time or full-time. This includes in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities.
20. HCC is committed to creating a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.

21. All church workers should understand that they, as well as the organisation, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination in the course of their work, against fellow employees, church members and the public.

22. The organisation takes seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of HCC's activities. Such acts may be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and any appropriate action may be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

23. Sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 (which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic) is a criminal offence.

24. The organisation's commitment includes training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the equality and diversity policy. HCC recognises that training is an important factor and all staff will be helped and encouraged to develop to their full potential. Induction training is particularly important and will be made available to all new staff. When other needs are identified, every effort will be made to ensure that training is provided.

25. Promotion and advancement will be made on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act 2010) and all decisions relating to this will be made within the overall framework and principles of this policy.

26. HCC recognises that from time to time family and social circumstances may change and consequently workers may need to change their conditions of work. HCC will attempt, where circumstances and resources permit, to accommodate the needs of those workers.

Purchasing

27. HCC will try to ensure that the goods and services it offers are accessible to all groups. It will not knowingly receive or purchase goods and services from agencies which practise discrimination.

Conclusion

28. This equality and diversity policy is fully supported by HCC's Board of Trustees and has been agreed with staff members.

29. Details of the HCC's grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures can be found on noticeboards. This includes with whom an employee should raise a grievance (usually their line manager).

30. Use of the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures does not affect an employee's right to make a claim to an employment tribunal within three months of the alleged discrimination.