

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Policy and procedures

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Document control

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Version History

Version	Date	Modified by	Notes of Changes
1	May 2022	Maria Khan (HR & EA)	Reviewed and Approved by Mark Hobbs (CEO) and Marvin R (Trustee)
2	Jan 2023	Jordan I (MD) Marvin (Trustee)	Approved
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4	10 th March 2025	Hannah Lashley	Under review for trustees approval Summer 2025.
5	11 th August 2025	Hannah Lashley	Implementing changes after Keely's review and feedback.
6	4 th November 2025	Hannah Lashley	Review and update.

Related documents

- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Sexual and/or Harassment Policy
- Disciplinary and Grievances Policy
- Complaints policy
- Safeguarding Policy

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1. Purpose and Principle of policy and procedure

Our aim is that the workforce will be truly representative of all sections of society. The policy sets out the organisation's policy on equality, diversity, and inclusion and explains the law and our commitment in relation to equality of opportunity.

We are committed to being an equal opportunities employer and oppose all forms of unlawful discrimination.

We believe that individuals should be treated on their merits and that employment-related decisions should be based on objective job-related criteria such as aptitude and skills. For these reasons, all employees, particularly managers and/or Trustees with responsibility for employment-related decisions, must comply with the policies described below.

We start by explaining the law and how it relates to certain employment practices. We then explain some specific legal issues and go on to set out our policy in the following areas:

- Recruitment, selection, and induction
- Pay and benefits
- Promotion and training
- Disciplinary, performance improvement, and redundancy procedures

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all Reaching Higher employees whether part-time, full-time, fixed-term, or temporary, volunteers and members of the Board of Trustees.

3. The law

1. It is unlawful to discriminate against employees and other workers because of Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin)
 - Religion or belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation
2. The law divides discrimination into four broad categories – direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.
3. It is not normally an answer to an allegation of discrimination to say that the discrimination was not intentional or deliberate.

4. The law makes it unlawful to discriminate against job applicants (in recruitment arrangements and decisions), employees, and other workers (in relation to terms and conditions of employment/work, opportunities for training and promotion, dismissal, and other matters) and to ex-employees (e.g. in relation to references).
5. The law prohibits treating someone unfavourably because of something arising from their disability and requires making reasonable adjustments to accommodate their needs. This may include modifying workstations, adjusting duties or hours, changing procedures, or providing auxiliary aids. Protection applies even in cases where an employer is unaware of the disability, so organisations should consider potential hidden disabilities when making decisions that affect employees.

4. Definitions and terms

Term	Definition
Direct discrimination	Involves treating a person less favourably because of a protected characteristic (for example not promoting an individual because of his or her race or sexual orientation). It includes discrimination because of perceptions or assumptions about a person's characteristics, even if these are incorrect (for example, not promoting an individual because he is assumed to be gay). It also includes discrimination because a person associates with someone who has a protected characteristic (for example, not promoting an individual because he or she has a disabled child). Direct discrimination cannot be justified (with the exception of age discrimination).
Indirect discrimination	Occurs when an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice is applied across all groups, but this would put those with a particular protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage when compared with others who do not share this characteristic (for example imposing a requirement that candidates for promotion be over six foot tall, which would particularly disadvantage women). Indirect discrimination will not be unlawful if it can be justified.
Harassment	Is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic or of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • violating an individual's dignity; or • creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for that individual.
Victimisation	has a particular legal meaning and involves subjecting a person to a detriment because he or she has complained about discrimination or assisted somebody else in doing so.
Disability Discrimination	The unfair treatment of individuals based on their disability, which includes both physical and mental impairments that have a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This extends beyond obvious physical disabilities to include mental health conditions, chronic illnesses, and other less visible impairments.

5. Responsibilities

Role/ Position in Charity	Responsibilities in relation to this policy and procedures
Board of Trustees	Has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy but has delegated responsibility for overseeing its implementation to the Executive Team. Suggestions for change should be reported to a member of the Executive Team.
Executive Team	This policy is reviewed bi-annually by the Executive Team, and it will be monitored through line management and feedback processes. Email: info@reachinghigher.org.uk
Heads of Service Team	Have day-to-day responsibility for this policy and staff should refer any questions about this policy to them in the first instance.

All trustees, employees and volunteers are responsible for:

- Familiarising themselves with and complying with this policy.
- Reporting any concerns to Reaching Higher's senior management.
- Seeking guidance and advice from Reaching Higher's senior management if they are unsure about whether any conduct may be in violation of this policy.

Staff have a personal responsibility to comply with this policy and to do their best to ensure that it is adhered to in their day-to-day work. Staff must not discriminate or help others to do so in contravention of this policy. Breaches of this policy will be taken seriously and are likely to result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. Staff may also be personally liable towards anyone they unlawfully discriminate against and may have to pay compensation on top of any compensation we might be ordered to pay.

6. Procedures

Recruitment

- All advertising and recruitment literature should reflect our commitment to equal opportunities and not enhance stereotypes. Wherever possible, all vacancies should be advertised simultaneously internally and externally. Where vacancies are to be filled by promotion or transfer, they should be published to all eligible employees in such a way that they do not restrict applications from particular groups
- The recruitment process should not disadvantage disabled people and reasonable adjustments to the process (and particularly at any interview) should be considered.
- The criteria for selection should be fair and appropriate. Any criteria which disadvantage those with certain protected characteristics should be retained only when justifiable in terms of the job to be done.

- d. Certain roles will be subject to an occupational requirement that they are held by a Christian given the nature of the work and/or the context in which it is carried out.
- e. Questions at interviews, auditions and workshops should relate to the requirements of the job. Questions should not be asked which could disadvantage certain groups, and questions should not be asked of those with a particular protected characteristic that would not be asked of everyone.
- f. Selection procedures should be objective. Each candidate should be assessed according to his or her capability to carry out the job. It should not be assumed that certain groups should perform certain kinds of work or “will not fit in”.
- g. When considering a disabled candidate’s suitability for the job, he/she should be assessed on the assumption that any reasonable adjustments have been made (for example, if someone needs a special keyboard and this is a reasonable adjustment, his/her ability to do the job compared with other candidates should be assessed on the assumption that the keyboard has been provided).
- h. Wherever possible, more than one person should be involved in the recruitment process and all should have some training in equal opportunities.
- i. The reasons for selection and rejection of candidates should, where practical, be recorded.
- j. All new employees, volunteers, and members of the Board of Trustees will receive induction on the policy and action plan. All consultants, trainers, and facilitators will be fully informed.

Pay and benefits

- a. Equal pay should be paid for work of equal value unless there is a material factor that accounts for the variation.
- b. Benefits should be offered to all employees equally unless there is a good justification for not doing so. We will try to be flexible and accommodate cultural or religious holidays and religious restrictions on hours of work.

Promotion and Training

- a. Employees should have equal opportunities for promotion and training. When general ability and personal qualities are the main requirements for promotion to a post, care should be taken to consider properly candidates with differing career patterns and general experience. There should be no stereotypical assumptions about the ambitions or otherwise of any individual from a particular group.
- b. Training and development should not stop because someone is pregnant or has childcare responsibilities. Nor should it be assumed that such employees are not interested in promotion.

Disciplinary, performance improvement and redundancy

- a. Care should be taken to ensure that those with a particular protected characteristic are not sanctioned for performance or behaviour that would be condoned or overlooked in another group. For example, a man who takes emergency time off to

deal with a domestic situation should be viewed no less sympathetically than a woman would be viewed in the same circumstances.

- b. If selection for redundancy becomes necessary, direct and indirect discrimination should not occur in the selection criteria or process. For example, be careful when using absence-related criteria (because these may disadvantage disabled or pregnant workers) and adjustments might need to be made to ensure that such criteria are fair.

Making a complaint

- a. If staff believe that discrimination is taking place, staff could speak informally or formally (in writing; email; phone) to a senior member of staff or person responsible, or a member of the Board of Trustees.
- b. Staff may also consider a grievance or if staff are being harassed, a complaint under our bullying and harassment procedure.

7. Compliance

Reaching Higher will ensure that this policy is effectively communicated to all workers by one or means listed below:

- Publishing this policy in an easily accessible location, that can be accessed by all workers at all times without having to ask another member of staff for the policy e.g. online shared drive
- Making reference to the policy in the contract of employment, or when a sessional worker or self-employed contractor is engaged
- Verbally communicating the policy during the induction process and where it can be found
- Sharing the policy with other organisations that partner with Reaching Higher to ensure they understand the expectations of them
- Ensuring any update to this policy is communicated to all workers.
- Ensuring staff, trustees, and volunteers do not discriminate themselves. Ensuring no one discourages another Reaching Higher member from developing within the organisation.
- Ensuring higher management levels do not discriminate due to their superior positions.
- Ensuring that all staff, trustees, and employees are free to make complaints and are supported in doing so. No discrimination, harassment, or victimisation due to an individual making a complaint.
- Provide a fair working environment for all staff, trustees, and volunteers. To make sure that equal opportunity is promoted in every stage of recruitment to employment. This includes:
 - Advertisement
 - Training and development
 - To seek to remove any discriminatory practice and ill-treatment
 - Appraisals
 - Discipline
 - Terms and conditions of employment

Reaching Higher commits to reviewing the policy on a bi-annual basis to monitor its effectiveness.

In order to review and maintain progress against our policies (and for no other purpose) including publicity, volunteering, employment, services, and events provided by the organisation, to ensure that they are accessible to all sections of the population and do not discriminate, we carry out the following equal opportunities monitoring:

- a. Recruitment, Selection, and Induction** – programs will be reviewed and where applicable recommendations on future programs may be implemented.
- b. Training and Promotion** – programs will be reviewed and where applicable recommendations on future programs may be implemented.
- c. Disciplinary, performance improvement and redundancy** – programs will be reviewed, and where applicable recommendations on future programs may be implemented.
- d. Service monitoring** – programs will be reviewed, and where applicable recommendations on future programs may be implemented.
- e. Effective record-keeping and monitoring**, and acting on information gathered, are essential to measure effectiveness and plan progress. Staff co-operation in this process is valued, as is any feedback or suggestions staff may have for improving this policy.

8. Exceptions

We welcome anyone who wishes to volunteer to help us but there are some circumstances where this may not be possible. For example:

- Staff must have the right to work in the UK and for some visitors to the UK (on visas), asylum seekers and refugees this may not always be the case, or
- The role staff would like may require experience or professional skills staff don't have, and for some roles, there may be specific legal requirements that we must meet.