

# Equality and Diversity Policy

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## Introduction

The Company is committed to eliminating discrimination and encouraging diversity. The Company will choose members, voluntary helpers, or people who are paid to work with us, without discriminating on the grounds of gender, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religious or philosophical beliefs, health status, HIV status, age, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, political beliefs or trade union membership, class, responsibility for dependents, physical attributes, ex-offender status as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, lack of formal qualifications where such qualifications are not formally required, or any other grounds which cannot be shown to be justifiable within the context of this policy.

The Company will abide by the Equality ACT 2010 to promote fairness and eliminate all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination throughout our activities. We aim to make each person who works for us, and with us, to feel respected and able to give his or her best.

This Policy has been compiled with advice from Surrey Community Action, and with reference to ACAS guidelines.

## Legal Obligations

Equal Opportunities and Discrimination (Equality Act 2010).

The new Equality Act came into force in October 2010 and replaces all previous equality legislation in England, Scotland and Wales – namely the Race Relations Act 1976, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Sex Discrimination Act, the Equal Pay Act, the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006, The Civil Partnership Act 2004, the Employment Equality Regulations 2003 (religions and belief and sexual orientation).

The protected characteristics are:

Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief sex and sexual orientation.

In valuing diversity the Company is committed to going beyond the legal minimum regarding equality.

The Equality Act 2010 harmonises, strengthens and replaces most previous equality legislation. The following legislation is still relevant:

The Human Rights Act 1998.

The Work and Families Act 2006.

Employment Equal Treatment Framework Directive 2000 (as amended).

Selection for any type of position, and any benefit connected with it, will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. Everyone will also be encouraged to develop his or her full potential.

## **Recruitment and Selection**

The recruitment and selection process is crucially important to any equal opportunities policy. We will endeavour through appropriate training to ensure that individuals making selection and recruitment decisions will not discriminate, whether consciously or unconsciously, in making these decisions.

Promotion and advancement will be made on merit and all decisions relating to this will be made within the overall framework and principles of this policy.

Job descriptions, where used, will be revised to ensure that they are in line with our equal opportunities policy. Job requirements will be reflected accurately in any personnel specifications.

We will adopt a consistent, non-discriminatory approach to the advertising of vacancies.

All applicants who apply for jobs with us will receive fair treatment and will be considered solely on their ability to do their job.

Short-listing and interviewing will be carried out by more than one person where possible.

Interview questions will be related to the requirements of the job and will not be of a discriminatory nature.

Selection decisions will not be influenced by any perceived prejudices of other staff.

## **Monitoring**

The Company will assess the mix of members and staff annually to ensure that there is no bias which suggests unfair discrimination. The discrimination criteria listed above will be used where we know these facts, but we will not ask anyone to divulge personal information.

The results of any monitoring procedure will be reviewed at regular intervals to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of this policy. Consideration will be given, if necessary, to adjusting this policy to afford greater equality of opportunities to all applicants and staff.

## **Our commitment:**

To create an environment in which individual differences, and the contributions of all our members and all our staff, are recognised and valued.

To ensure that everyone who works with us, and for us, enjoys a working environment that promotes dignity and respect for all.

No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.

We will constantly review all our employment practices and procedures to ensure fairness.

Our policy on Equality is fully supported by senior management and has been agreed with company members.

The Equality policy will be monitored and reviewed every two years, or as soon as necessary.

## **How the policy will be implemented and who is responsible?**

The Operations Manager has specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy. Each person involved in recruitment also has responsibilities and we

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expect all our associates and volunteers to abide by the policy and help create the equality environment which is its objective.

In order to implement this policy we shall:

Communicate the policy to associates, job applicants, volunteers and relevant others. Incorporate specific and appropriate duties in respect of implementing the equal opportunities policy into job descriptions and work objectives of all staff.

Ensure that those who are involved in assessing candidates for recruitment or promotion will be aware of non-discriminatory selection techniques.

Incorporate equal opportunity notices into general communications practices.

Ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfil the objectives of the policy.

## **Conduct and general standards of behaviour**

All staff and volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and considerate manner at all times, and in accordance with our Code of Conduct which can be found in our Induction Policy.

The Company will not tolerate behaviour such as:

Making threats.

Physical violence.

Shouting.

Swearing at others.

Persistent rudeness.

Isolating, ignoring or refusing to work with certain people.

Telling offensive jokes or name calling.

Displaying offensive material such as pornography or sexist / racist cartoons, or the distribution of such material via email / text message or any other format.

Any other forms of harassment or victimisation.

The items on the above list of unacceptable behaviours are considered to be disciplinary offences within the Company and can lead to disciplinary action being taken. The Company does, however, encourage staff and volunteers to resolve misunderstandings and problems informally wherever possible, depending on the circumstances. However, whether dealt with informally or formally, it is important for staff who may have caused offence to understand that it is no defence to say that they did not intend to do so, or to blame individuals for being over sensitive. It is the impact of the behaviour, rather than the intent, that counts, and that should shape the solution found both to the immediate problem and to preventing further similar problems in the future.

## **Complaints of discrimination**

The Company will treat seriously all complaints of unlawful discrimination on any forbidden grounds made by employees, trustees, clients or other third parties and will take action where appropriate.

All complaints will be investigated in accordance with the Company's complaints procedure as appropriate, and the complainant will be informed of the outcome in line with these procedures.

We will also monitor the number and outcomes of complaints of discrimination made by staff, volunteers, clients and other third parties.

## **Types of Discrimination**

### **Direct discrimination**

The Company will not treat any of its members, staff and helpers less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have, or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic (see below).

### **Associative discrimination**

Freewheelers will not condone discrimination against someone because they associate with a person who possesses protected characteristics.

### **Perceptive discrimination**

Freewheelers opposes this form of direct discrimination against individual company members, voluntary helpers, or people who are paid to work with us, because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic.

### **Indirect discrimination**

Freewheelers co-opts all forms of protected characteristics under Equality Act 2010 in its policies and procedures, and proportionately treats individual company members, voluntary helpers, and paid workers with respect, dignity and fairness regardless of their particular disadvantage(s).

### **Harassment**

Freewheelers protects individual company members, voluntary helpers, and paid workers against unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating individuals' dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Employees can complain of direct or indirect offensive behaviour through the Freewheelers Complaints Procedure.

### **Victimisation**

The Company protects individual volunteers, workers and members against any form(s) of discrimination as stipulated in the Equality Act. Any breaches will be treated individually under the internal procedures of the Company.

## **Protected Characteristics: Definitions of key points**

Age:	Reference to a person of a particular age or age group (range of ages).
Any form of Disability:	A person has a disability if: They have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
Ethnic Origin (Race):	Race includes colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins. Thus a reference to a person who has a particular protected characteristic is a reference to a person of a particular racial group.
Gender:	A reference to (a) a man or woman, (b) persons of the same gender.
Gender Reassignment:	if the person is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's gender by changing physiological or other attributes of gender, or trans-sexuality.
Marriage or Civil Partnership:	A person has the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership if the person is married or is a civil partner.
Religion or Belief:	Religion means any religion and reference to religion includes a reference to lack of religion. Belief means any religious or philosophical belief and reference to belief includes lack of belief.
Sexual Orientation:	This means a person's sexual orientation towards; Persons of the same sex Persons of the opposite sex, or Persons of either sex

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END OF POLICY

Next review Jul 2020

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