



## Gloucestershire Rural Community Council

### EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

**Date first issued (in current form) 2012**

**Policy reviewed:** January 2013, February 2014; January 2015; February 2016

**Date last adopted by GRCC Board of Trustees: 12<sup>th</sup> May 2014**

**Next review date:** February 2017

**Related policies:** Recruitment, Learning and Development, Health and Safety, Disciplinary and Grievance Policies, Code of Conduct, Whistleblowing, Comments and complaints

#### Aims of this Policy

GRCC recognises and values people's differences and will assist them to use their talents to reach their full potential. We value the variety of different views, outlooks and approaches that a diverse workforce brings. This assists us to provide improved services and increase our understanding of our service users/clients.

We will do all we can to ensure GRCC recruits, trains and promotes people based on qualifications, experience and abilities for all roles within the organisation and that its services are equally accessible to all people of Gloucestershire who may need GRCC's help. We will do all we can to ensure no one will receive less favourable treatment or be disadvantaged by requirements or conditions which cannot be shown to be justifiable.

This policy is designed to ensure that GRCC complies with its obligations under equality legislation and demonstrates our commitment to treating people equally and fairly.

GRCC is unreservedly opposed to any form of discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation (defined as Protected Characteristics).

Using fair and objective practices, the organisation aims to ensure that:

- All employees and potential employees are treated fairly and with respect at all stages of their employment.
- All employees, volunteers and service users are free from harassment and bullying of any description, or any other form of unwanted behaviour. Such behaviour may come from other employees or by people (third parties) who are not employees of GRCC, such as customers or clients.



- All employees, volunteers and service users have an equal chance to contribute and to achieve their potential, irrespective of any defining feature.
- All employees, volunteers and service users are free from discrimination because they associate with another person who possesses a Protected Characteristic or because others perceive that they have a particular Protected Characteristic, even if they do not.

## Scope of the policy

The policy applies to:

- Job applicants
- Employees
- Agency temps
- Students on work experience or placements
- Volunteers, including trustees
- Service users

The policy applies to all stages of employment including recruitment and selection, promotion and training.

## Definitions:

**Direct discrimination** is when an employee or applicant is treated less favourably than someone else because of their:

- sex
- marriage or civil partnership
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity leave
- sexual orientation
- disability
- race
- religion or belief
- age

and that there is no genuine occupation requirement for it.

People also must not be discriminated against because they are on a part time or fixed term contract.

## Indirect discrimination

This is where there is a working condition, practice or rule that disadvantages one group of people more than another. In other words it is more difficult for people from one group to comply with the requirement. Even if it is done accidentally indirect discrimination is unlawful. Indirect discrimination is only allowed if it is necessary for the way the business works, and there is no other way of achieving it.

## Discrimination arising from disability

This is where a disabled person is treated unfavourably because of something connected to their disability where it cannot be objectively justified. This only applies where the organisation knew or could reasonably be expected to know that the person was disabled.

## Associative Discrimination

This is where someone is treated worse than someone else because they are associated with someone with a Protected Characteristic.

### **Perceptive Discrimination**

This is where someone is treated worse than someone else because there has been an incorrect assumption that they have a Protected Characteristic. This applies even if the person does not possess the characteristic.

### **Third Party Harassment**

This is where an employee is harassed by a third party who is not an employee e.g. volunteers or service users. The organisation becomes liable if it has happened on at least two occasions, it is aware that it took place and has not taken steps to prevent it happening again.

## **Responsibilities**

Employees and volunteers (including trustees) of GRCC have a duty to act within this policy, ensure it is followed and to draw attention to any suspected discriminatory acts or practices.

Responsibility for promoting awareness of this policy and monitoring that it is being followed rests with the Senior Management Team.

## **Breaches of the Equality and Diversity Policy**

Breaches of this policy by employees may be dealt with through disciplinary procedures.

For volunteers, including trustees, breaches of the Equality and Diversity Policy may jeopardise your position as a volunteer with GRCC.

Employees, volunteers and trustees are also personally liable under equality legislation for any act of unlawful discrimination.

## **Equality and diversity in practice**

In carrying out the policy, GRCC will:

- Use selection criteria that do not unlawfully discriminate in recruitment and promotion procedures
- Require entry to employment /volunteering or progression within GRCC to be based on merit
- Not discriminate in opportunities for recruitment, training, promotion or transfer of employees or volunteers
- Ensure that every individual is assessed according to his or her personal capability to carry out a given job/role
- Ensure that all employees are given equal treatment with regard to terms and conditions of employment, provided they do the same or broadly similar work, or work of equal value
- Ensure equal opportunities and non-discrimination in the operation of grievance and disciplinary procedures
- Ensure that all relevant requirements of the Equality Act in relation to disability are met and adhered to. This will include making reasonable adjustments to ensure access to employment and volunteering tasks plus access to GRCC services by users and clients.
- Ensure that any amendments to any legislation relating to discrimination are met and adhered to.

This policy is reflected in the following policies within the organisation:

Recruitment, Learning and Development, Health and Safety, Disciplinary and Grievance Policies, Code of Conduct, Comments and Complaints, Whistleblowing.

### **Implementation of the policy**

All employees, trustees and volunteers will be involved in creating an equality environment and one that values diversity. This will be done through effective communications, work with partners and service users, plus effective monitoring of the policy.

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

Communication of the policy to job applicants and employees / volunteers is through:

- Making available a copy of the policy to prospective applicants, employees, volunteers and service users
- Ensuring all new starters have the opportunity to discuss the policy with line managers/ colleagues
- Making use of team meetings to discuss the policy and defining areas where practice could be improved
- Providing non-discrimination selection training for managers who are recruiting
- Providing Equality and Diversity training and guidance to employees and volunteers (including trustees)
- Including reference to abiding by the policy in employee terms and conditions/ volunteer agreements

### **WORKING WITH PARTNERS**

In selecting and working with our partners we will consider their commitment to Equality and Diversity by:

- Asking to see their policy
- Asking what they do in practice, including monitoring the policy
- Formal partnership agreements which include reference to Equality and Diversity requirements and expectations

### **USERS OF OUR SERVICE**

We will make our services accessible by:

- Considering formats for promotional material
- Appropriate use of language/ formats / fonts/ size/ colours
- Considering whether information should be available in alternative formats e.g. easy read /other languages
- Considering locations where the organisation's services are promoted /advertised
- Considering accessibility of locations from which the service is provided
- Considering the diverse make up of our employees / volunteers in relation to our service users
- Considering the impact of proposed new services on the user group

### **Promoting diversity**

In addition to complying with The Equality Act, GRCC is committed to tackling prejudice and to promoting understanding between people who share a Protected Characteristic and others. We aim to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their Protected Characteristics, to meet the needs of those people with Protected Characteristics and to encourage them to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is low.

## **Monitoring the Policy**

This policy will be monitored to judge to what extent it is working and identify areas for improvement.

Monitoring will relate to employees / volunteers and to service users and will be monitored through individual projects and annually by the Senior Management Team. Methods used may include capturing:

- Diversity data for applicants and service users for specific projects
- Information of location of service users
- Information on how service users heard of/ accessed GRCC's services
- Information on which aspects of GRCC's service are used by people
- Requests from clients to deal with GRCC employees with specific characteristics and the action taken in response to such a request\*
- Data in relation to baseline information – e.g. population statistics, other organisations' work
- Equality Impact assessments for specific projects and activities, as appropriate

## **Reporting discrimination / potential discrimination**

Employees who feel that they have suffered any form of discrimination should raise the issue through their line manager. If necessary, the grievance procedure can be followed.

Volunteers who feel that they have suffered any form of discrimination should raise the issue through the member of staff to whom they report, or a member of the Senior Management Team. If necessary, the Comments and Complaints Procedure and/or the Whistleblowing Policy can be followed.

Service users who feel that they have suffered any form of discrimination should raise the issue through the Comments and Complaints Procedure.

If an employee/volunteer/service user witnesses behaviour that they find offensive in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, even if it is not directed at them, they should use this procedure as above.

## **Review of the policy**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the GRCC Senior Management Team to ensure that it remains up to date and reflects the needs and practices of the organisation.

The policy may also be reviewed if legislation changes or if monitoring information suggests that policy or practices should be altered

\* An example of such a request would be a female client asking for a female GRCC employee/volunteer to help with a medical condition.