

Equal Opportunities Policy

**Introduction**

The Diocese of Bath and Wells is committed to ensuring that all employees, volunteers and job applicants receive equal and fair treatment regardless of their individual backgrounds or individual characteristics. We are committed to eliminating discrimination and encouraging diversity and inclusivity amongst our workforce.

The Diocese aims to create a working environment in which all individuals are able to give their best, where everyone is treated with dignity and respect and where all decisions are made on merit. We aim to ensure that all staff achieve their full potential and that all decisions in respect of recruitment, training and pay are not influenced by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable. The Diocese is committed to a culture where respect and understanding is fostered and the diversity of people’s backgrounds and circumstances will be positively valued.

This policy aims to achieve equality by removing any potential discrimination in the way that church officers are treated by fellow employees and volunteers or by the Diocese including:

* People with disabilities
* People of different sexual orientations
* Transgendered and transsexual people
* People of different races
* People on the grounds of their sex
* Those of faith and of no faith
* In relations to their age
* In relations to their social class or medical condition
* People who work part-time
* Those who are married or in a civil relationship
* Women who are pregnant, have recently given birth or are breastfeeding

Discrimination can either be direct or indirect discrimination. Some of the above are protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2020 and discrimination is prohibited, unless there is a legal exception under the Equality Act.

For jobs which have an essential requirement for the job holder to promote the Christian faith and it is therefore a genuine occupational requirement, the Diocese reserves the right to clearly state this need in relation to recruitment.

**Policy Statement**

1. No person or group of people applying for employment or seeking contracts with the Diocese will be treated less favourably than any other person or group.
2. There will be no discrimination in the selection, recruitment or training of any staff.
3. The employer will collate information and monitor records relating to those seeking employment.
4. The Diocese will ensure all staff are aware and apply the Equal Opportunities Policy and undertake training as necessary for their post.
5. Staff who actively and knowingly breach the Equal Opportunity policy will be subject to the church’s disciplinary procedure
6. The Diocese will ensure that all employees enjoy the freedom to work without suffering discrimination or harassment from other members of staff.

**Forms of Discrimination**

The following forms of discrimination are strictly opposed by the Diocese of Bath and Wells:

**Direct discrimination,** where a person is treated less favourably because of one or more protected characteristics. An example is if someone is refused promotion on the grounds that they are black, disabled or a woman.

**Indirect discrimination,** where a requirement or condition which cannot be justified is applied equally to all groups but has a disproportionately adverse effect on one particular group. An example is the restricting of recruitment to areas which is non essential to the job description which may exclude a disabled person.

**Associative discrimination,** is direct discrimination where a person is discriminated against because of their connection with someone who has a protected characteristic.

**Perceptive discrimination** is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess one of the protected characteristics.

**Victimisation** iswhere someone is subject to detriment because he or she has taken relevant action against the Diocese under the Equality Act.

**Definition of Harassment**

Harassment is defined as unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic that violates a person’s dignity and creates a hostile or degrading environment.

**Discrimination and harassment** may take the form of

* **Physical** – contact, assault or gestures, intimidation, aggressive behaviour.
* **Verbal** – unwelcome remarks, suggestions and propositions, malicious gossip, jokes and banter based on any aspect of discrimination.
* **Non verbal** – offensive literature or pictures, graffiti and computer imagery, isolation or non co-operation and exclusion from social activities.

**All church officers have a duty:**

To report any act of discrimination or harassment known to them.

If any church officer feels they are a victim of discrimination or harassment, they must raise the matter immediately with their Line Manager immediately. Where they feel that their complaint has not been resolved they should raise a formal grievance under the Grievance Procedure.

**Further Information**

If you require further information regarding the key points of the Equality Act 2010 please contact the Diocesan Human Resources department. Further information regarding dealing with bullying and harassment may be found in the Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment Policy.

There will be monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the equal opportunities policy. The personal commitment of every church officer to this policy and application of its principles are essential to eliminate discrimination and provide equality throughout the Diocese of Bath and Wells.