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	Signed:	
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Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy

Introduction

This policy reflects the way in which Acorn AP will meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. This Act replaced all previous equality legislation such as the Race Relations Act, the Disability Discrimination Act and the Sex Discrimination act. This policy will be applied to all staff, volunteers and young people.

We are committed to eliminating discrimination amongst our workforce and young people. Our objective is to create a working environment in which there is no unlawful discrimination, and all decisions are based on merit.

Acorn AP is a Christian organisation with a Christian ethos. Accordingly, as a Christian organisation, there are posts which can only be filled by Christians. The nature of these posts or the context in which they are carried out and their link to the ethos of the organisation give rise to a genuine occupational requirement (OR) for the post-holders to be Christians. All staff in these posts are required to demonstrate a clear, personal commitment to the Christian faith.

This policy has been agreed with senior leaders and has the full support of our board of trustees. The responsibility for effective implementation of this policy has been delegated to the Director of Operations.

Status of this policy

This policy does not give contractual rights to individual employees. Acorn AP reserves the right to alter any of its terms at any time although we will notify you in writing of any changes.

Eligibility

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, job applicants, volunteers and young people.

What is discrimination?

Discrimination is unlawful when it takes place on one of the following grounds (the 'protected characteristics'):

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race

- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Discrimination can take a number of forms:

- Direct discrimination is when someone is treated worse than someone else just because of a protected characteristic.
- It is also direct discrimination when someone is treated worse than someone else because they associate with someone with a protected characteristic or because they are perceived to have a protected characteristic.
- Indirect discrimination is when an apparently neutral practice or requirement disproportionately disadvantages one group and cannot be justified by the needs of the organisation.
- It is also discrimination when a disabled person is treated unfavourably because of something connected to their disability and this cannot be justified by the needs of the organisation or when the organisation fails to make reasonable adjustments for a disabled person.

Policy expectations

It is expected that every person in the organisation will make a positive contribution to this policy, namely:

- All staff whether paid or voluntary
- All visitors
- All young people across our Acorn AP Centres
- All parents/carers of young people

All staff, volunteers, young people and parents/carers of young people have a duty not to discriminate against each other and not to help anyone else do so. We will not tolerate discrimination in our organisation.

Recruitment and selection

We aim to ensure that job requirements and job selection criteria are clear and based only on what is required to get the job done effectively. We will avoid making stereotypical assumptions based on protected characteristics about who is able to do a particular job.

We aim to ensure that no job applicant is placed at a disadvantage by practices or requirements which disproportionately disadvantage protected groups, and which are not justified by the demands of the job.

When recruiting staff, health related questions will only be asked to make necessary adjustments where needed in the interview process and then again, after a job offer is made and only if necessary for the role.

For all jobs, we will draw up a clear job description and person specification to ensure that we remain focussed on what the job involves and the skills, experience and qualifications which are relevant and necessary. If we hold interviews, we will try to ensure that more than one person conducts them to ensure that we avoid unintentional bias.

Promotion and training

Promotion and training decisions will be made on the basis of merit. We will not unlawfully discriminate against any employee in making promotion or training decisions. We believe all employees should have an equal opportunity to progress and develop.

We will try to ensure that promotion opportunities are brought to the attention of all employees. We will ensure that promotions are advertised internally and opened up to competition.

Training needs will be identified through regular reviews, 1-1 supervision with line managers and annual career development interviews.

Working conditions and terms of employment

We will try to accommodate cultural or religious practices such as prayer requirements where we reasonably can.

We aim to ensure that our terms of employment, benefits, facilities and policies are free from unlawful discrimination. We will review our benefits and facilities regularly to ensure that they are available to all employees who should have access to them and that there are no unlawful obstacles to accessing them.

We will ensure that decisions made under our Disciplinary and Performance Management policies and Capability Procedure are carried out fairly and without discrimination. We have a formal appraisal system which helps us to ensure that employees are being assessed fairly on the basis of job performance and are not being discriminated against.

We will open up as many jobs as possible to flexible working arrangements. We will allow all employees to apply for flexible working, and not just those with particular protected characteristics.

We will continue to carry out a regular review of our pay structures to ensure that they are fair and free from discrimination. We aim to ensure that our pay systems are transparent, fair and free from discrimination.

Disability

We will make adjustments to accommodate disabled employees, volunteers and young people where possible and reasonable. For example, we can provide extra equipment or support, we can rearrange duties and we can make changes to our premises in appropriate cases. If you think you may have a disability, you are encouraged to tell the organisation about this so that we can explore what adjustments might be appropriate.

Training on equalities

We will train our whole workforce on understanding and avoiding discrimination.

Monitoring

We monitor information about how many people in the workforce have a particular protected characteristic and the levels within the organisation that they are employed at and their length of service.

In order to do this, we will ask you for information about some of your protected characteristics. We collect this information anonymously and we will use it only for monitoring purposes and not for any other purpose. We will protect the confidentiality of the information you give us.

Our relationships with visitors/young people/parents/carers

You must not discriminate against any of our visitors/young people/parents/carers. Equally, we expect our visitors/young people/parents/carers not to discriminate against you, and we will take appropriate action against any visitors/young people/parents/carers found to have done so.

Our young people

Young people will be informed of the policy and its contents during their induction and where applicable, lessons will be delivered which cover aspects of equal opportunities and diversity. For example – within the PSHE curriculum and SMSC enrichment.

What to do if you have been discriminated against

If you believe you may have been discriminated against, please tell us. You can speak informally with your teacher, line manager or any Acorn AP senior leader. If you want to make a more formal complaint, you are encouraged to raise the matter through our complaint's procedure.

Allegations of potential breaches of this policy will be treated seriously. Those who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. However, false allegations of a breach of this policy which are found to have been made in bad faith by employees will be dealt with under our Disciplinary policy.

What will happen if you act in a discriminatory way?

If, after investigation, we decide that you have acted in breach of this policy you may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. This applies to the most senior levels of management as well as to all other employees.

Policy review and promotion

We will promote and publicise our Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy using our network and at induction. We will review our Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy on an annual basis.

Links to other policies

Complaints procedure

Grievance and Complaints policy

Disciplinary policy