

InterACT Church and Community Partnership: Equality and Diversity Policy

Reviewed September 2021 Date of next review: Sept 2022

Summary of Intent

InterACT Church and Community Partnership (InterACT) is committed to providing an environment that actively promotes productive working relationships and effective service delivery, in which

- everybody feels valued
- potential is realised
- the unique contribution of each individual is recognised

InterACT is committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation in its workplace and will equip staff (including, as appropriate, volunteers and freelance workers), trustees and management with the appropriate skills and knowledge to deliver equality and diversity through all parts of the organisation. The principles of this policy will inform our:

- Ways of working (location, timing, etc)
- Service delivery
- Ways of communicating
- Approach to people management
- The way we behave towards each other

Scope and purpose of the policy and its practice

- provide equality, fairness and respect for all in our employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time.
- In providing services, volunteering opportunities and contracts to freelance workers, prevent unlawful discrimination of customers, the public and those working for InterACT by all means.
- Prevent unlawful discrimination because of the 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 (gender) and sexual orientation.
- Oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities

In Practice

- This commitment includes training managers and all employees about their rights and responsibilities under the equality policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

All staff should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, customers, suppliers and the public.

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- InterACT will take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities

Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and any appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

Further, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

- We will make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
- Decisions concerning staff will be based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
- We will review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.
- Monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality and diversity, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality policy.

Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

The equality policy is fully supported by the trustees and management team.

Details of the organisation's grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures can be found in the staff handbook or InterACT's Policies Folder. This includes with whom an employee should raise a grievance – usually their line manager.

Use of the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures does not affect an employee's right to make a claim to an employment tribunal within three months of the alleged discrimination.

Key Definitions

Unlawful discrimination relates to behaviour that contravenes the Equality Act 2010 and the 9 Protected Characteristics outlined within it:

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Behaviour Outlined in the Act: Bullying, Harassment and Victimisation

Harassment

Harassment may include bullying behaviour, and it refers to bad treatment that is related to a protected characteristic, such as age, sex, disability, race, gender, religion or sexual orientation.

More specifically, the law defines it as 'unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.'

It can include behaviour that individuals find offensive even if it's not directed at them, and even if they do not have the relevant protected characteristics themselves.

Victimisation

Victimisation broadly refers to bad treatment directed towards someone who has made or is believed to have made or supported a complaint under the Equality Act.

It includes situations where a complaint hasn't yet been made but someone is victimised because it's suspected they might make one.

If an individual gives false evidence or makes an allegation in bad faith, then they are not protected from victimisation under the Act.

Bullying

We define bullying as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour; an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates, denigrates or injures the recipient (emotionally or physically).

The Nine Protected Characteristics Outlined in the Act

Age

A person belonging to a particular age (for example 32 year olds) or range of ages (for example 18 to 30 year olds).

Disability

A person has a disability if she or he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Gender reassignment

The process of transitioning from one gender to another.

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Marriage and civil partnership

Marriage is a union between a man and a woman or between a same-sex couple.

Couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act).

Pregnancy and maternity

Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

Race

Refers to the protected characteristic of race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

Religion and belief

Religion refers to any religion, including a lack of religion. Belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief and includes a lack of belief. Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

Sex

A man or a woman.

Sexual orientation

Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex, both sexes or none.