



Equal Opportunities Policy

INTRODUCTION:

This policy sets out the standards to be achieved by staff in relation to providing people with equality of opportunity and valuing people as individuals who have diverse experiences, backgrounds and beliefs.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

This policy applies to all members of staff who are full-time or part time, temporary or permanent, consultants, those on fixed-term contracts, Board Members and contractors who work in any of the premises of LINK.

PROCEDURE:

LINK aims to be an equal opportunities employer and undertakes that staff and prospective employees will be treated equally, fairly and consistently on recruitment, and throughout their employment with LINK.

Unlawful discrimination will take place if someone is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic compared to the treatment of others. This replaces the previous description of discrimination being '*on the grounds of... (e.g. sex)*'. Only maternity and pregnancy discrimination have a different basic definition.

Discrimination can occur in a variety of ways.

Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic.

Direct discrimination by association and perception is a new definition. It occurs where a person is treated less favourably because they are linked or associated with a person who has a protected characteristic.

Direct discrimination can also occur where a person is wrongly thought to have a particular protected characteristic. This definition is now much wider and where previously this only applied to race, it now applies to all protected characteristics listed below

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Indirect discrimination occurs when there is a rule, or a policy or even a practice that applies to everyone, but which particularly disadvantages people who share a particular protected characteristic. Indirect discrimination is not always necessarily unfair, and can on occasions be justified where it can be shown that the rule, policy or practice is intended to meet a legitimate objective in a fair, balanced and reasonable way.

Discrimination arising from disability occurs when a disabled person is treated less favourably because of something connected with their disability, and this treatment cannot be justified. This new form of protection replaces different protection in disability discrimination legislation that was not fully effective.

Dual Discrimination has been introduced to ensure that a person on the receiving end of less favourable treatment because of a combination of protected characteristics, is now able to raise a claim in that way. Previously a claim required to be for an individual act of discrimination and often led to individuals having to choose on which ground to raise their claim.

LINK has therefore put in place the following measures:

- Ensuring that no job applicant, employee, member or volunteer suffers unfair discrimination because, for example, of their sex, marital status, race, ethnic origin, colour, religion, beliefs, age, sexual orientation, age or disability, or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be relevant to performance.
- Ensuring that all employees are valued for their contribution and given the opportunity to realise their potential within the organisation.

LINK regards this as a commitment to make full use of the talents and resources of all its employees and to provide a healthy environment which will encourage good and productive working relations within the organisation. Specific responsibility for the implementation of the policy lies with the LINK Board, the Manager, and staff or others involved in recruitment, employee administration and training. In addition, all employees have a responsibility to accept their personal involvement in the practical application of this policy. An employee found to be practising discrimination will face disciplinary proceedings.

LINK seeks to fulfil its aim of offering equality of opportunity by striving to ensure that:

- advertising, recruitment and selection are free from bias and open to all who are suitably qualified, refer to 'Recruitment and Induction of LINK Employees'.
- employment practices and procedures are developed which maintain equitable treatment for everyone
- employees can achieve a suitable balance between the responsibilities of home and work,
- training opportunities are available where needed for all employees and that everyone is encouraged to develop their potential
- employees doing jobs of equal value are treated equally with respect to pay and other conditions of employment

Any employee who feels that this policy has not been effectively applied is encouraged to approach their line manager, or a member of the LINK Board. In this first instance this can be on an informal basis. Matters can be raised formally through the grievance procedure.