

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. This policy works to ensure LINK remains compliant with The Equality Act 2010 which became law in October 2010 and replaced various discrimination acts.

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. Diversity is about recognising, valuing and taking account of people's different backgrounds, knowledge, skills, and experiences, and encouraging and using those differences to create a productive and effective workforce. This includes the rehabilitation of offenders and rights of part time workers are also covered.

Unlawful discrimination will take place if someone is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic compared to the treatment of others.

Protected characteristics are outlined below. It is unlawful to discriminate against anyone because of their:

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

Although the following groups are not listed as protected characteristics, we also do not discriminate the following groups:

- Looked after children and adults from care
- Carers (e.g., disabled child, elderly parent, sibling, family members etc.)
- Socioeconomic status
- Those who are gender fluid or non-binary

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.

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.

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.

Indirect discrimination occurs when there are rules or arrangements in place that apply to everyone, but that put someone with a protected characteristic at an unfair disadvantage.

Harassment is unwanted behaviour linked to a protected characteristic that violates someone's dignity or creates an offensive environment for them

Victimisation is treating someone unfairly because they've complained about discrimination or harassment

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, pregnancy or maternity status, marital status, race, ethnicity, 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 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, which is found in the staff handbook.



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