

Equal Opportunities Policy – EXAMPLE

This is an example of what an Equal Opportunities policy should contain. It is based on models from the Equality Commission and Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action. The document should be amended and adapted for the purposes of your organisation.

An equal opportunities policy is designed to ensure that, as a minimum, an organisation complies with its equality obligations under the various pieces of anti-discrimination legislation.

The Arts Council would encourage organisations to extend this policy beyond membership to the services delivered to the wider community both in terms of suppliers used, audiences and promoters. The same basic principles apply but organisations must take care to ensure that the wording of their policy is clear and accurate and that they understand what they are committing to.

Key elements in an equal opportunities policy include:

- a statement of intent, including aim and objective of the policy
- who the policy applies to (scope)
- outline of specific commitments/ actions which will be undertaken
- how the policy will be implemented and who is responsible
- monitoring and review
- how complaints will be dealt with

Equal Opportunities Policy – EXAMPLE (suggested wording only)

The aim of this policy is to communicate the commitment of the Committee and members to the promotion of equality of opportunity in(insert name of organisation)

It is our policy to provide equality of membership to all, irrespective of:

- gender, including gender reassignment
- marital or civil partnership status
- having or not having dependents
- religious belief or political opinion
- race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, being an Irish traveller)
- disability
- sexual orientation
- age

We are opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. All members of the organisation will be treated fairly and will not be discriminated against on any of the above grounds. Decisions on membership, selection for office, training or any other benefit will be made objectively, without unlawful discrimination, and based on aptitude and ability.

We recognise that the provision of equal opportunities in all our activities will benefit the organisation. Our equal opportunities policy will help members to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the members will be utilised fully to maximise the effectiveness of the organisation.

.....(name of organisation) recognises that there is a statutory duty under the NI Act 1998, to implement an equal opportunities policy. This policy applies to applicants for employment, volunteers and members of the group alike.

..... (name of organisation) is committed to the principles and practice of Equality.(name of organisation) values the diversity of the local population. We want our services, facilities and resources to be accessible and useful to every citizen regardless of gender, age, ethnic origin, religious belief, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or any other individual characteristic which may unfairly affect a person's opportunities in life.

Equality commitments

We are committed to:

- promoting equality of opportunity for all persons

- promoting a good and harmonious learning environment in which all men and women are treated with respect and dignity and in which no form of intimidation or harassment is tolerated
- preventing occurrences of unlawful direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- fulfilling all our legal obligations under the equality legislation and associated codes of practice
- complying with our own equal opportunities policy and associated policies
- taking lawful affirmative or positive action, where appropriate
- breaches of our equal opportunities policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to termination of membership

This policy is fully supported by the Chair or the band and the Committee and was adopted by the band on(date)

Implementation

The Chair or the band and Committee have specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy. We expect all members to abide by the policy and help to create the equality environment which is its objective.

In order to implement this policy we shall:

- Communicate the policy to members by issuing an induction pamphlet to all existing, and new members
-(name of organisation) will endeavour through appropriate training to ensure that it will not consciously, or unconsciously discriminate in the selection or recruitment of applicants for membership of the group
- Incorporate specific and appropriate duties in respect of implementing the equal opportunities policy into roles and responsibilities of committee members
- Incorporate equal opportunities notices into general communications practices (e.g. announcements, annual report at annual general meeting, notices and newsletters). This policy will be read out to all members at each annual general meeting
- Ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfil the objectives of the policy

Monitoring and review

We will establish appropriate information and monitoring systems to assist the effective implementation of our equal opportunities policy. The effectiveness of the equal opportunities policy will be reviewed regularly (at least annually) and action taken as necessary.

Complaints

Members who believe that they have suffered any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation are entitled to raise the matter through the agreed procedures. A copy of these procedures is available from (specify committee member/ office). All complaints of discrimination will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially.

Every effort will be made to ensure that members who make complaints will not be victimised. Any complaint of victimisation will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially. Victimisation will result in disciplinary action and may warrant dismissal.

Complaints from members of the public will be dealt with under agreed procedures (a copy of these procedures is available from ... (specify committee members/office)

Date:

Signature: Chair of band

For further information contact the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland who can provide free and confidential advice and guidance on promoting equality of opportunity.

Enquiry line: 028 90 890 890 (for all information and advice enquiries)

Alternatively contact Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action who can provide advice on the operation of voluntary and community organisations.

Tel. 028 9087 7777