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EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

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1.1 Policy Statement

It is the policy of the Hospice not to discriminate against its workers on the basis of their gender, sexual orientation, marital status, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability or age, pregnancy or trade union membership or the fact that they are a part-time worker or a fixed-term employee.

Our workers and applicants for employment shall not be disadvantaged by any policies or conditions of service which cannot be justified as necessary for operational purposes. The Hospice shall, at all times, strive to work within legislative requirements as well as promoting best practice.

The following paragraphs deal with the specific categories of workers and areas of work which we have identified as potentially giving rise to equal opportunities issues and provides more specific guidance on the parameters of our policy and approach to equal opportunities.

This policy is for guidance only and shall be provided to all workers, but does not form part of your contract of employment.

1.2 To whom does this policy apply?

This policy applies to all employees, whether permanent, temporary, casual, part-time or on fixed-term contracts, to ex-employees, to job applicants and to individuals such as agency staff, consultants and volunteers who may not be our employees, but who nonetheless work at, or are engaged by, the Hospice (collectively referred to in the policy as 'workers').

All workers have a duty to act in accordance with this policy, and therefore to treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and not to discriminate against or harass other members of staff, whether junior or senior to them. In some situations, the Hospice may be at risk of being held responsible for the acts of individual members of staff and therefore shall not tolerate any discriminatory practices or behaviour.

1.3 Scope and purpose of policy

We will not unlawfully discriminate on grounds of gender, sexual orientation, marital status, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability or age, pregnancy, trade union membership, or part-time or fixed-term status.

This policy applies to the advertising of jobs and recruitment and selection, to training and development, opportunities for promotion, to conditions of service, benefits and facilities and pay; to health and safety and to conduct at work, to grievance and disciplinary procedures and to termination of employment, including redundancy.

The Hospice will take appropriate steps to accommodate the requirements of workers' religions, cultures, and domestic responsibilities. Our policies on parental rights and flexible working should be consulted for specific guidance on our approach to these issues and your entitlements.

1.4 Forms of discrimination

Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally. Direct discrimination occurs where someone is put at a disadvantage for a reason related to one or more of the grounds set out in paragraph 1.3. For example, rejecting an applicant of one race because it is considered they would not "fit in" on the grounds of their race could be direct discrimination. Indirect discrimination occurs where an individual is subject to an unjustified provision, criterion or practice which puts them at a particular disadvantage because of, for example, their sex or race. For example, a height requirement would be likely to eliminate proportionately more women than men. If these criteria cannot be objectively justified for a reason unconnected with sex, it would be indirectly discriminatory on the grounds of sex. Discrimination also includes victimisation (less favourable treatment because of action taken to assert legal rights against discrimination or to assist a colleague in that regard) and harassment (see Anti-Harassment policy for further information).

1.5 Recruitment and selection

We aim to ensure that no job applicant receives less favourable treatment on any of the unlawful grounds listed in paragraph 1.3. Recruitment procedures will be reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities. Job selection criteria are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are justifiable on non-discriminatory grounds as being essential for the effective performance of the job.

We shall take steps to ensure that knowledge of vacancies reaches a wide labour market and where relevant, groups under-represented within the Hospice. Where appropriate, use may be made of lawful exemptions to recruit suitably-qualified people to cater for the special needs of particular groups.

1.6 Staff training and promotion and conditions of service

Staff training needs shall be identified through regular staff appraisals. All workers will be given an equal opportunity and access to training to enable them to progress within the organisation. All promotion decisions shall be made on the basis of merit.

The composition and movement of workers at different levels shall be regularly monitored to ensure equality of opportunity at all levels of the organisation. Where appropriate, steps will be taken to identify and remove unnecessary or unjustifiable barriers and to provide appropriate facilities and conditions of service to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or under-represented groups. Our conditions of service, benefits and facilities will be reviewed regularly to ensure that they are available to all workers who should have access to them and that there are no unlawful obstacles to accessing them. This includes pay, bonus criteria, policies and all benefits offered.

1.7 Termination of employment

We will monitor redundancy criteria and procedures to ensure that they are fair and objective and do not directly or indirectly discriminate against employees. We will also ensure that disciplinary procedures are carried out fairly and uniformly for all workers, whether they result in the giving of disciplinary warnings, dismissal or other disciplinary action.

1.8 Disability discrimination

If you are disabled, or become disabled in the course of your employment with us, you are encouraged to tell us about your condition. This is to enable us to support you as much as possible. You may also wish to advise the HR Department of any reasonable adjustments to your working conditions or the duties of your job which you consider to be necessary, or which would assist you in the performance of your duties. The HR Department may wish to consult with you and with your medical adviser(s) about possible reasonable adjustments. Careful consideration will be given to any such proposals and they will be accommodated where possible and proportionate to the needs of your job. Nevertheless, there may be circumstances where it will not be reasonable for us to accommodate the suggested adjustments and we will ensure that we provide you with information as to the basis of our decision not to make any adjustments.

1.9 Fixed-term employees, agency and temporary workers

We will monitor our use of fixed-term employees and agency workers, and their conditions of service, to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits, training, promotion and permanent employment opportunities. We will, where relevant, monitor their progress within the Hospice to ensure that they are accessing permanent vacancies.

1.10 Part-time workers

The Hospice will monitor the conditions of service of part-time employees and their progression within the Organisation to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits and training and promotion opportunities. We will also ensure requests to alter working hours are dealt with appropriately under our flexible working policy.

1.11 Breaches of the policy

If you believe that you may have been disadvantaged on any of the unlawful grounds listed at paragraph 1.3, you should raise the matter through our grievance procedure. If you believe that you may have been harassed on any of the unlawful grounds listed at paragraph 1.3 you are encouraged to raise the matter through our Anti-Harassment policy.

Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. Workers who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False allegations of a breach in this policy which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure.

If, after investigation, you are proven to have harassed any other worker on the grounds of sex, marital status, sexual orientation, religion or belief, race, disability or age or otherwise act in breach of this policy, you will be subject to disciplinary action. In serious cases, such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. The Hospice will always take a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.

As this policy applies equally to workers' relations with clients and suppliers, if, after investigation, you are proven to have discriminated against or harassed a client or supplier you will also be subject to disciplinary action.