



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY



SCRA Equalities Network



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1. Purpose and scope

The purpose of this Equal Opportunities Policy is to communicate our commitment to equality of opportunity in employment, with the aims of ensuring that all employees and job applicants are treated fairly and equally, and supporting SCRA's objective of providing a working environment that is free from all forms of discrimination.

The policy applies to all staff within SCRA, including employees and other workers, such as agency workers, temporary workers and contractors. All staff are expected to comply with this policy.

A copy of this policy will be available to all employees on Connect and will be made available to other workers on their engagement. Job seekers and applicants can access the policy via the SCRA's website and will be sent a copy of the policy on request. In addition, the induction process for new staff will include a briefing on this policy.

Any questions about the policy should be directed to the SCRA HR Mailbox.

This policy has been developed in partnership with UNISON and as part of SCRA's Equalities Network.

This policy will be reviewed by the Equalities Network every two years.

2. Policy statement

SCRA is fully committed to providing equality in the workplace and all opportunities for, and during employment, will be afforded to individuals fairly and irrespective of age, care experience, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief or sexual orientation (including lesbian, gay, bi-sexual or heterosexual people). These are known as the "protected characteristics". More detail about each of the protected characteristics is available at Appendix A.

To find out about our work to improve equalities and inclusion, visit the Equalities and Inclusion section of Connect. There is a section for each of the five sub groups of the Equalities Network covering all of the protected characteristics. Each sub group has an action plan outlining improvements etc.

We aim to create a working environment that is free from discrimination and harassment in any form, in which all staff, children, young people and their families, our partners and anyone accessing our services are treated with dignity and respect.

SCRA will not unlawfully discriminate in the arrangements we make for recruitment and selection or in the opportunities afforded for employment, training or any other benefit. All decisions will be made fairly and objectively. We aim, as far as reasonably practicable, to ensure that all our working



practices are applied fairly and consistently and, where necessary, we will take reasonable steps to avoid or overcome any particular disadvantage these may cause and to promote equality.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and associated legislation rests with the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive and the Executive Management Team (EMT).

3.2 The Head of Human Resources has responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the policy and ensuring that all employment-related policies, procedures and practices adhere to this policy.

3.3 All Managers have specific responsibility for implementing the Equal Opportunities Policy and for ensuring equality of opportunity in employment matters and service delivery.

In terms of employment, Managers must apply employment practices, procedures and conditions of service fairly and consistently and ensure staff conduct themselves in accordance with this policy. In terms of service delivery, Managers must identify and remove practices or barriers which may lead to discrimination, or offer appropriate alternatives. In both cases managers must take immediate action to address any discrimination, taking advice from Human Resources as appropriate.

3.4 All employees have a responsibility not to discriminate against or harass other staff, children and young people and their families, our partners and anyone accessing our service.

Staff should challenge discrimination and/or report any unacceptable behaviour that comes from any person whether they be a member of SCRA staff or clients, visitors or employees of other organisations, to their manager or the Head of Human Resources.

Staff have a responsibility to act in a manner appropriate to this policy whilst in the course of their employment, and to uphold the principles of fairness and equality in all aspects of their behaviour. This policy covers work related events regardless of the fact that these may be held outwith SCRA's premises and/or in a staff member's own time.

4. Forms of discrimination

The following are forms of discrimination that this policy aims to avoid:

Direct Discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic that they either have or are thought to have. Direct discrimination can also occur by way of association, which is when a person is treated less favourably because, for example, their spouse or partner or other relative has the protected characteristic.

Indirect Discrimination occurs when a provision, criterion or practice is applied equally to everyone, but has a disproportionately adverse effect on people who share a particular protected



characteristic. A person with the protected characteristic who is disadvantaged in that way has the right to complain.

To be justified the provision, criterion, or practice must be necessary for legitimate business reasons in circumstances where less discriminatory alternatives are not reasonably available.

Victimisation occurs where someone is treated unfavourably because they have raised a complaint under this policy or taken legal action, in relation to any alleged act of unlawful discrimination, against SCRA or because they have supported someone else in doing this.

Harassment is unwanted conduct that violates an individual's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment can take many different forms and may involve inappropriate actions, behaviour, comments, emails or physical contact that causes offence or are objectionable.

Harassment may involve a single incident or persistent behaviour that extends over a period of time and can occur even if someone did not mean to cause offence. It also means that a person can be subjected to harassment by behaviour that is not aimed at them directly but which they nonetheless find unpleasant.

Harassment is always unacceptable and where it relates to a protected characteristic it will amount to an unlawful act of discrimination.

Discrimination arising from Disability - In addition to the above, it is unlawful to treat a person unfavourably because of something that is the result, effect or outcome of their disability, unless the treatment is necessary and can be objectively justified. Furthermore, employers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled applicants, employees or other workers are not substantially disadvantaged.

5. Creating equal opportunities in the workplace

There are a number of ways in which SCRA aims to ensure equal opportunities in the workplace, including:

5.1 Service Delivery

Children, young people and their families, our partners and anyone accessing our service will be treated fairly, openly and honestly, with dignity and respect and will not be subject to any form of discrimination. SCRA will also seek to ensure that no condition or requirement, which cannot be shown to be justifiable, will be imposed on anyone using SCRA's services.

5.2 Recruitment and selection

Recruitment and selection procedures will be free from bias or discrimination.

Recruitment procedures will be conducted objectively and will be based upon specific and reasonable job-related criteria. Decisions regarding an individual's suitability for a particular role will be based on aptitude and ability.



We will make appropriate reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process to ensure that applicants with a disability are not substantially disadvantaged.

Wherever possible, vacancies will be advertised as being suitable for flexible working, to encourage applications from individuals seeking work on a part time or job share basis.

SCRA will consider taking appropriate positive action to enable or encourage applications from persons with a protected characteristic that is under represented in the organisation.

6. Career development and training

All staff will be given an appropriate induction to enable them to fulfil the responsibilities of their role.

All employees will be encouraged to develop their full potential and we will not unreasonably deny an employee access to training or other career development opportunities. These will be identified as part of an ongoing performance management and personal development process and will be determined objectively, taking into account the needs of the organisation and available resources.

Selection for promoted posts will be based on objective criteria and decisions will be made on the basis of merit.

7. Terms and conditions

Our terms and conditions of service will be applied fairly and benefits and facilities will be made available to all staff who should have access to them, as appropriate.

7.1 SCRA understands that it is important that employees have confidence in the fairness and transparency of the pay and grading system and we are therefore committed to working in partnership with UNISON.

7.2 SCRA commits to eliminating any unfair, unjust or unlawful practices that impact on pay and taking appropriate remedial action. This will be achieved by analysing and publishing SCRA's Gender, Disability and Race Pay Gap Report and SCRA's Equal Pay Statement, in partnership with SCRA's Equalities Network and UNISON.

In addition, training and guidance will be provided to those involved in determining pay as well as informing employees of how these practices work and how their own pay is determined through the provision of Total Reward Statements.



8. Employment policies and practices

SCRA aims to ensure that employment policies and practices do not directly or indirectly discriminate and are applied in a non-discriminatory manner. In particular we will ensure that all disciplinary and capability decisions are fair and consistent and that selection for any redundancy programmes is based on objective criteria.

SCRA will make appropriate reasonable adjustments to the working environment or any work arrangements that would alleviate any substantial disadvantage these cause disabled staff.

We will aim as far as reasonably practicable to accommodate the requirements of different religions and cultures and will consider applications from staff to vary or change their working hours to enable them to care for a dependant in accordance with SCRA's Flexible Working Policy.



9. Working environment

All individuals have a right to be treated with dignity and respect and SCRA takes reasonable steps to protect staff from discrimination, bullying or harassment. In the event of a complaint, SCRA will take appropriate action to prevent, as far as possible, a further occurrence. SCRA's [Dignity at Work Policy](#) and SCRA's [Staff Code of Conduct](#) sets out the rights and behaviours we can expect of each other.

Examples of unacceptable behaviour for each of the protected characteristics is available at Appendix B.

All staff are encouraged to report any incidents of inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour at work or that occurs during the course of employment, on or off premises, including at work social events (whether organised by the organisation or not) or at formal or informal events involving staff, customers or other work-related contacts.

10. Equal Opportunities Monitoring

SCRA will monitor the effectiveness of this policy to ensure it is achieving its objectives. Monitoring reports will be considered by EMT and the Equalities Network.

As part of this process we monitor:

- the protected characteristics of job applicants and decisions in recruitment
- the protected characteristics of our workforce
- access to training, promotion and other opportunities and benefits
- the impact of our employment policies, including use of the disciplinary and grievance procedure
- dismissals and other terminations

Information collected for monitoring purposes will be treated as confidential and will not be used for any other purpose.

11. Raising a complaint of discrimination

If you believe you have been discriminated against, you should raise the matter in accordance with the [SCRA's Grievance Procedure](#) or [Dignity at Work Policy](#) as appropriate.

Staff are encouraged to raise any concerns internally, but may choose to use [SCRA's Whistleblowing Policy](#) where they consider it appropriate.



Any employee who is found to have committed an act of discrimination, or breached this policy in any other way, will be subject to action under the Disciplinary Procedure, up to and including dismissal.

12. Implementation

12.1 This policy is fully supported by the Executive Management Team (EMT).

12.2 This policy will be communicated to all staff, to ensure that they are aware of the policy and its implications for their work and behaviour. This will be reinforced with on-going equalities and inclusion awareness raising sessions and training as required.



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Protected characteristics in more detail

Protected characteristics are the nine groups protected under the [Equality Act 2010](#).

They are:

Age
Disability
Gender Reassignment
Marriage and Civil Partnership
Pregnancy and Maternity
Race
Religion or Belief
Sex
Sexual Orientation

In more detail...

Age

This is when people are treated differently because of their age. The Equality Act protects employees from discrimination, harassment and victimisation due to their age, where they may be 'younger' or 'older' than any comparative employees.

The treatment could be a one-off action or as a result of a rule or policy based on age. It doesn't have to be intentional to be unlawful.

More information about age discrimination is available on the [Equality and Human Rights Commission website](#).

Disability

A person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out typical day-to-day activities. A number of illnesses, such as cancer, HIV and multiple sclerosis are automatically considered disabilities, under the Equality Act, and other progressive conditions are considered a disability as soon as the symptoms of that condition have an effect, known as "invisible disabilities".

The Equality Act also classes a variety of mental health conditions as a disability (for example, depression) if it is 'long term' (twelve months or more) and may affect your 'normal day to day activity'.



More information about disability (including advice and guidance) is available on the [Equality and Human Rights Commission website](#).

Gender Reassignment

Gender reassignment is where a person has proposed, started or completed a process to change their gender. This does not need to be a transition resulting from medical intervention or surgery. A transgender person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment under the Equality Act.

More information about Gender Reassignment is available on the [Equality and Human Rights Commission website](#).

Marriage and civil partnership

Marriage is a union between a man and a woman or between a same-sex couple. Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. The Equality Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against or treat someone unfairly because they are married or in a civil partnership. People who are not married or civil partners (single/engaged/divorced/widowed) do not have this protected characteristic.

More information marriage and civil partnership discrimination is available on the [Equality and Human Rights Commission website](#).

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. A woman remains protected in her employment in these circumstances, and the Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate, or treat employees unfavourably because of their pregnancy, because they have given birth recently, or are breastfeeding or on maternity leave.

More information about pregnancy and maternity in the workplace is available on the [Equality and Human Rights Commission website](#).

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.

More information about race discrimination is available on the [Equality and Human Rights Commission website](#).



Sex

It is unlawful to discriminate against someone on the grounds that they are female or male or those who identify as non-binary (individuals who do not feel male or female or identify as both).

More information about sex discrimination is available on the [Equality and Human Rights Commission website](#).

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation is a person's emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction to another person (either their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.) The Equality Act applies equally whether someone is a lesbian, gay, heterosexual or bisexual.

More information about sexual orientation discrimination is available on the [Equality and Human Rights Commission website](#).

Care Experience

In addition to complying with the Equality Act (2010), SCRA also recognises equality for children, young people and adults who have experience of the care system. SCRA is therefore treating care experience as a tenth protected characteristic. This means that SCRA considers it unacceptable to discriminate against or treat care-experienced employees or service-users less favourably. Any employee who is found to have committed an act of discrimination against care-experienced people will be subject to action under the Disciplinary Procedure, up to and including dismissal. A [briefing sheet](#) is available giving more information.



Examples of unacceptable behaviour

This section gives some examples of unacceptable behaviour for each of the protected characteristics:

Age

- Stereotyping
- Anti-social behaviour targeted at people because of their age
- Language used which might be ageist

Care experience

- Imposing barriers in relation to employment opportunities
- Lack of awareness in relation to the difficulties faced by care-experienced people, including barriers to education and employment

Disability

- Disability harassment – anti social behaviour targeted at people with disabilities
- Failing to consider accessibility of information, for example, in alternative formats
- Failing to provide reasonable adjustments, for example, appropriate seating options for physically disabled people
- Failing to consider specific dietary requirements

Gender reassignment

- Asking intrusive questions and failing to respect the right to privacy
- Failing to consider time off for medical treatment

Marriage/Civil Partnership

- Imposing penalties or barriers to married people or partners that do not apply to single people
- Treating someone less favourably or differently because of their relationship status

Pregnancy & maternity related

- Failing to consider a change of duties or reasonable workplace adjustments
- Failing to provide access to organisational information during maternity leave
- Failing to support breast feeding

Race, Ethnic or national origin

- Racial harassment or treating someone differently because of the colour of their skin
- Failing to consider accessibility of information, for example translation and interpretation



Religion or belief

- Religious prejudice
- Harassment, hate-crime and targeted violence, for example, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and sectarianism

Sex

- Gender stereotyping
- Exclusionary or intimidating language and behaviour

Sexual orientation

- Asking intrusive questions and failing to respect the right to privacy
- Stereotyping