



Subject	Equality and Diversity Policy
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Policy Owner	Grant Jackson

Policy Statement

Life believes and recognises that the diversity of its workforce, clients and volunteers should be valued and respected. Our objective is to create a working and living environment in which there is no unlawful discrimination, and all decisions are based on merit.

We will provide a framework for all charity employees to understand and deliver their responsibilities and a mechanism for monitoring our performance and outcomes.

We commit to:

- Ensuring our policy, strategy and the legal context on equality and diversity are consistently understood by our clients, volunteers, staff and other stakeholders.
- Demonstrating clear leadership and good governance on issues of equality and diversity.
- Having a board and staff structure which reflects the community we serve and understands issues of diversity.
- Understanding and integrating the key equality and diversity issues in our key service developments.
- Having a comprehensive understanding of our future and current client base.
- Ensuring fair and equal access to all our services.
- Enabling clients from all communities to be involved in our work to the level they desire.

- Taking fast and effective action to deal with harassment and offer appropriate suitable support to those suffering from harassment.
- Seeking to promote community cohesion and social inclusion by understanding and working with a full range of community organisations.

Anyone associated with Life and its services has a responsibility to ensure that their actions comply with both the requirements and the essence of the policy.

We endeavour to provide awareness, support and training to help staff and volunteers to fulfil their responsibilities for the implementation of the Equality & Diversity Policy.

Policy Overview

Life is committed to promoting equal opportunities in the workplace. All persons will receive equal treatment regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

This policy sets out our approach to equal opportunities and the avoidance of discrimination at work. It applies to all aspects of the workplace including recruitment, pay and conditions, training, appraisals, promotion, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment.

This policy covers all persons.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and we may amend it at any time.

Responsibilities

The Trustees have overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with discrimination law. Day-to-day operational responsibility for this policy including regular review of this policy, has been delegated to the Head of HR & Infrastructure.

All managers must set an appropriate standard of behaviour, lead by example and ensure that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote our aims and objectives regarding equal opportunities.

All employees will be given appropriate training on equal opportunities awareness and, where required, managers will be given appropriate training on equal opportunities recruitment and selection best practice.

Discrimination

In line with Life's values, you must not unlawfully discriminate against or harass other people including current and former employees, job applicants, clients, customers, suppliers, contractors, and visitors. This applies in the workplace and outside the workplace, when dealing with customers, suppliers, contractors or other work-related contacts and on work-related trips or events including social events.

The following forms of discrimination are prohibited under this policy and are unlawful:

Direct discrimination: treating someone less favourably because of a Protected Characteristic. For example, rejecting a job applicant because of their religious views or because of their sexual orientation.

Indirect discrimination: a provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone but adversely affects people with a particular Protected Characteristic more than others and is not justified. For example, requiring a job to be done full-time rather than part-time would adversely affect women because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement would be discriminatory unless it can be justified.

Harassment: this includes sexual harassment and other unwanted conduct related to a Protected Characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Harassment is dealt with further in the Harassment and Bullying Policy.

Victimisation: retaliation against someone who has complained or has supported someone else's complaint about discrimination or harassment.

Disability discrimination: this includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability.

Recruitment and selection

Recruitment, promotion, and other selection exercises such as redundancy selection will be conducted based on merit and in line with business need, to avoid discrimination.

Shortlisting should be done by more than one person. Our recruitment procedures should be reviewed regularly by HR to ensure that individuals are treated based on their relevant

merits and abilities.

Vacancies should be advertised to a diverse section of the labour market. Advertisements should avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage particular groups from applying. The advertisements will include a short policy statement on equal opportunities. We take steps to ensure that our vacancies are advertised to a diverse labour market. Where appropriate, the HR Department may approve the use of lawful exemptions to recruit someone with a particular Protected Characteristic, for example, where the job can only be done by a woman. The advertisement will specify the exemption that applies.

Job applicants should not be asked questions which might suggest an intention to discriminate on grounds of a Protected Characteristic.

Job applicants should not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made. There are limited exceptions which should only be used with the approval of the HR Department. For example:

- Questions necessary to establish if an applicant can perform an intrinsic part of the job (subject to any reasonable adjustments).
- Questions to establish if an applicant is fit to attend an assessment or any reasonable adjustments that may be needed at interview or assessment.
- Positive action to recruit disabled persons.
- Equal opportunities monitoring (which will not form part of the selection or decision-making process)

Where necessary, job offers can be made conditional on a satisfactory medical check.

We are required by law to ensure that all employees are entitled to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status should not be made based on appearance or apparent nationality. All prospective employees, regardless of nationality, must be able to produce original documents (such as a passport) before employment starts, to satisfy current immigration legislation.

Provision of this information is voluntary, and it will not adversely affect an individual's chances of recruitment, or any other decision related to their employment. The information is removed from applications before shortlisting and kept in an anonymised format solely for the purposes stated in this policy. Analysing this data helps us take appropriate steps to avoid discrimination and improve equality and diversity.

Further detail is included in the Recruitment and Selection policy

Training, promotion and conditions of service

Training needs will be identified through regular appraisals, 1:1 sessions and through completion of an individual Personal Development Plan. You will be given appropriate access to training to enable you to progress within the organisation and all promotion decisions will be made based on merit.

Life's conditions of service, benefits and facilities are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are available to all of you who should have access to them and that there are no unlawful obstacles to accessing them.

Termination of employment

We will ensure that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory. We will also ensure that disciplinary procedures and penalties are applied without discrimination, whether they result in disciplinary warnings, dismissal, or other disciplinary action.

Disabilities/Medical Conditions

If you are disabled, become disabled or have a medical condition, we encourage you to tell us about your condition so that we can support you as appropriate. A risk assessment will be completed once information has been disclosed.

If you experience difficulties at work because of your disability, you may wish to contact your Line Manager or the HR Department to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty.

Your Line Manager or the HR Department may wish to consult with you in relation to completion of an Occupational Health referral and/or consent to liaise with your GP about possible adjustments. We will consider the matter carefully and try to accommodate your needs within reason. If we consider a particular adjustment would not be reasonable, we will explain our reasons and try to find an alternative solution where possible.

We will monitor the physical features of our premises to consider whether they might place anyone with a disability at a substantial disadvantage. Where necessary, we will take "reasonable" steps to improve access.

Part-time and fixed-term work

Part-time and fixed-term staff should be treated the same as comparable full-time or permanent staff and enjoy no less favourable terms and conditions unless different treatment is justified.

Breaches of this policy

We take a strict approach to breaches of this policy, which will be dealt with in accordance with our Disciplinary Procedure. Serious cases of deliberate discrimination may amount to gross misconduct resulting in dismissal.

If you believe that you have suffered discrimination you can raise the matter through our Grievance Procedure or through our Harassment and Bullying Policy as appropriate. Complaints will be treated in confidence and investigated as appropriate.

There must be no victimisation or retaliation against staff who complain about discrimination. However, making a false allegation deliberately and in bad faith will be treated as misconduct and dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

Trauma Informed promise

By submitting this Policy the author is confirming that they have considered the six principles of a Trauma Informed approach as a means for reducing the negative impact of trauma experiences and supporting mental and physical health outcomes. This includes putting people before protocol, creating a culture of thoughtfulness and communication, and continuously doing our best to learn about and adapt to the different and changing needs of the individuals we work with.