

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

1. Introduction

Real Purpose strives for high standards both as an employer and as a provider of services. In so doing, we recognise the need to encourage diversity and wholeheartedly support a policy of equality and equity in all areas of our work and responsibilities. This policy applies to Real Purpose's Directors, staff, volunteers, and clients/ participants, as well as suppliers and we have a commitment to communicate this policy to all of these.

This policy provides guidance to enable all who work with or for Real Purpose to comply with anti-discrimination legislation. The policy will also address anti-discrimination issues involving areas that currently fall outside any legislation. Failure to follow the procedures in the policy may lead to disciplinary or other appropriate action.

Real Purpose's aims and objectives will be achieved through action planning, effective monitoring, and a willingness to tackle problems where they arise. Real Purpose is committed to reviewing this policy on an annual basis. Through our training, publications, interaction with members and other activities, Real Purpose will ensure those we work with know our statements of policy.

Real Purpose will regularly review the implementation of its Equality and Diversity Policy and strategy. Where evidence is found of ineffectiveness, immediate remedial action will be taken to ensure implementation.

Real Purpose urges staff, directors, volunteers, and clients to be aware of the less obvious types of discrimination which result from general assumptions and pre-conceptions about the capabilities, interests, and characteristics of individuals.

2. General Equality Duty

Real Purpose will have due regard to the three aims of the general equality duty:

- We will eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation as well as other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act (2010);
- Advance equality and equity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

3. Definitions

Equality ensures that policies, procedures, and practice within Real Purpose do not discriminate against its employees, volunteers and stakeholders. It is about treating people fairly and equally regardless of who they are, their background or their lifestyle.

Diversity ensures that all people are valued as individuals and can maximise their potential and contribution to Real Purpose and the community. It recognises that people from different backgrounds can bring fresh ideas and a different approach, which can make the way we work and learn more fun, more creative, more efficient, and more innovative.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act (2010) are below, and this policy recognises that the Act and this policy will protect people with these:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage or civil partnership (in employment only)
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

Direct Discrimination, as defined in law, occurs when an individual is dealt with less favourably than other people on the grounds of race, ethnic or national origin, disability, sex, actual or perceived religion or belief or sexual orientation and other protected characteristics.

However, in terms of this policy, the definition is taken to be wider and includes, for example, ethnicity, nationality, marital status or caring responsibility, age, mental health, political, class, HIV status, employment status, unrelated criminal convictions, union activities.

Indirect Discrimination occurs when a provision, criterion or practice puts people of a particular group at a disadvantage and is not justified in relation to the job, for example, a rule about clothing that disproportionately disadvantages an ethnic group cannot be justified.

Victimisation means that if a person has made or is making an accusation of discrimination in good faith, it is unlawful to discriminate against them for having done so, or because they intend to do so, or it is suspected that they intend to do so. People must be able to act against unlawful discrimination without fear of reprisals.

Harassment means unwanted conduct based on ethnicity, gender, age etc. which has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person. Harassment can be sexual, racial, directed against people with disabilities or indeed related to any characteristic exhibited by the individual. (See Real Purpose's Harassment Policy for guidance on where harassment has occurred).

Positive Action refers to measures taken to assist employees, volunteers, or clients who have been under-represented in specific areas, to reach a level of workplace knowledge and competencies that is comparable with 'representative' employees. These measures could take the form of additional training or providing guaranteed job interviews for disabled applicants who meet all the essential criteria for a post. 'Positive discrimination' at the point of selection for work is not permissible.

4. Policy Statements

4.1 Diversity

Real Purpose will actively encourage diversity to maximise achievement, creativity, and good practice and to bring benefit to individuals and communities. Real Purpose encourages all people it works with, and for, to contribute to an environment in which people feel comfortable

expressing how they feel and what they need, knowing they will be treated with respect and that their contribution will be valued.

The way we work, train, and learn within Real Purpose reflects both the Mission and Objectives of Real Purpose and the spirit and intentions of legislation that outlaws discrimination and promotes equality, diversity and inclusion.

Real Purpose will make reasonable adjustments to working practices, equipment and premises and offer, where appropriate, additional support to directors, staff, and volunteers to ensure they are able to take a full and active part in Real Purpose's work.

Real Purpose will endeavour to deliver services in a way that genuinely recognises the importance of an inclusive society that brings opportunities and access, not barriers to individuals.

4.2 Equal Opportunities

Real Purpose is an equal opportunities employer and provider of services. No job applicant, employee, volunteer, director, member, or client/ participant should receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of ethnicity, colour, nationality, national origin; sex/ gender; marital status or caring responsibility; sexual orientation; age; physical, sensory or learning disability; mental health; political or religious beliefs; class; gender reassignment, HIV status; employment status; unrelated criminal convictions; union activities. Nor will such person's sex/ gender, disability, ethnicity, marital or civil partnership status, sexual orientation, religion, colour, nationality, national origin, age, trade union membership or non-membership, be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable.

This principle applies to all aspects of Real Purpose's activities as an employer and provider of services, including recruitment, promotion, transfer, training, benefits, facilities, procedures and all terms and conditions of employment.

5. Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the Equality and Diversity Policy are:

- To encourage, promote and celebrate diversity in all our activities and services,
- To ensure equal access to jobs, volunteer, and Board opportunities,
- To ensure compliance with legislation on discrimination and equality including the Equality Act (2010) and where it does not replace elements of the following that are still current legislation: Equal Pay Act 1970, Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Race Relations Act 1976, Disability Discrimination Act 1995, Employment Rights Act 1996, Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, Employment Act 2002, Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) Regulations 2003, Religion or Belief Regulations 2003, Sexual Orientation Regulations 2003 and Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006.
- To promote equal opportunities in other areas not currently covered by legislation.
- To create environments free from harassment and discrimination.
- To maximise the use of resources in the best interests of staff, volunteers, and clients.
- To confront and challenge discrimination where and whenever it arises, whether it be between colleagues, or in any other area relating to Real Purpose's work.
- To make a willingness to accept and implement this policy to be a necessary qualification for any position in Real Purpose.
- To ensure, through positive action and so far as is practicable, that all Real Purpose premises and services are accessible to all people.

- To ensure that employment and advancement within Real Purpose is determined by objective criteria and personal merit.

6. Policy Implementation

6.1 Expectations

Real Purpose recognises that passive policies do not provide equality and encourage diversity in employment/ training/ services. Real Purpose will seek to promote equality and diversity within the following framework of responsibilities.

Responsibility for implementing and developing the policy rests with the Board of Directors. The overall coordinating responsibility for equal opportunities and management of diversity lies with the Directors.

However, Real Purpose believes that all who work with or for Real Purpose have an individual responsibility: to accept the policy and ensure a personal involvement in its application; and to co-operate actively to ensure that the environment we desire is a reality. Therefore, Real Purpose requires individuals:

- To implement measures introduced by Real Purpose to ensure equality of opportunity, diversity, and non-discrimination.
- Not to harass, abuse or intimidate any other employee, volunteer or participant on the grounds of ethnicity, colour, nationality, national origin; sex/ gender; marital or civil partnership status or caring responsibility; sexual orientation; age; physical, sensory or learning disability; mental health; political or religious beliefs; class; HIV status; employment status; unrelated criminal convictions; union activities and other protected characteristics.
- To inform management if they suspect discrimination is taking place.

Real Purpose requires its Line Managers:

- To ensure that proper records of employment decisions are maintained, and regular reviews of employment practices are carried out.
- To ensure that grievances are dealt with in a fair and consistent manner and in line with Real Purpose's Grievance Policy and Procedure.
- To ensure that individuals within their area are aware of their legal responsibilities, and Real Purpose's Equality and Diversity Policy.
- To promote actively the benefits of employee and participant diversity, in employment, services and training.

Real Purpose's Directors will have the following responsibilities:

- To support Line Managers, offer advice and discuss recommendations in relation to Equal Opportunities and Diversity and implementing relevant policies and procedures.
- To ensure that the highest standards of Equality Opportunities practice are observed in the delivery of Real Purpose's services and to undertake training and development opportunities to ensure that competence is maintained.
- To offer advice and guidance to members of staff, volunteers and organisations in Real Purpose's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Procedures.
- To seek the views and opinions of employees, volunteers, and clients / participants on the operation of the policy in their locality/ area of responsibility, in particular to meet the diverse needs of the users.

- To facilitate training and discussion on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion issues as appropriate.
- Ensure the Board, Directors and Managers are appraised regularly on the state of equal opportunities and diversity within Real Purpose.
- Ensure that the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and associated documents are reviewed on an annual basis.
- Review and approve policies, procedures and practices that impact on equal opportunities and diversity practice.
- Co-ordinate the delivery of an equality and diversity strategy and action plan.

6.2 Recruitment and Promotion

Real Purpose strives to ensure that our Board members, directors, staff, and volunteers reflect the wider community.

Clear and accurate information on vacant posts should be available through advertisement, job descriptions, person specifications and interview. Vacancies should be advertised sufficiently widely to reach the widest possible range of candidates, either internal and/or external.

All recruitment material should not imply any preferred group, unless a genuine occupational qualification exists limiting a post to a particular group.

Applicants will be informed, through all recruitment material of Real Purpose's commitment to Equal Opportunities and Diversity.

Person specifications may include 'essential' and 'desirable' requirements that are necessary and justifiable. Care, and advice where necessary, is needed to ensure these are not discriminatory.

Staff and volunteers should be encouraged to discuss their development and training needs through a process of regular support and annual appraisals.

Job titles that are discriminatory must be avoided.

6.3 Interviews and Selection

In line with the intentions of this policy, efforts must be made to select a recruitment panel, which is inclusive in terms of gender, disability, and ethnicity.

The shortlisting panel will select candidates on the basis of an objective assessment of their match with the requirements as described in the job description and person specification; this will not take into account the gender, name, ethnicity, religion or belief, possible disability or age of the candidate.

The interview panel must take extreme care not to ask discriminatory questions which do not comply with Real Purpose's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Statements, e.g. questions relating to ethnicity, colour, nationality, national origin; sex/ gender; marital or civil partnership status or caring responsibility, sexual orientation, age, physical, sensory or learning disability, mental health, political or religious beliefs, class, HIV status, employment status, unrelated criminal convictions, union activities and other protected characteristics. It is also a legal requirement that the interview panel does not ask questions relating to health and disability as per the Equality Act (2010).

6.4 Learning

In line with the intentions of this policy, Real Purpose will not discriminate in the provision of training courses/ opportunities wherever possible.

Appropriate learning opportunities will be provided to enable directors, staff, volunteers and Board members to perform their jobs effectively. The learning opportunities offered will take into account the needs of all people.

Briefing on this policy will form part of the Induction Procedure for directors, staff and volunteers.

7. Enforcement

Real Purpose recognises the need for a continuing commitment to genuine equal opportunities and diversity within Real Purpose. The effectiveness of the policy's aims and objectives can only be judged by how the policy operates in practice.

7.1 Grievances

- Any staff member or volunteer who feels they have been a victim of discrimination or unfairly treated in a way contrary to the intention of this policy should raise the issue through Real Purpose's established Grievance Procedure.
- Any client/ participant who feels they have been unfairly treated in a way contrary to the intention of this policy should make a complaint through Real Purpose's Directors, who must report any such complaint to the Board. If the complaint is about the directors, this should be made directly to the other co-director or the Real Purpose Board.
- Any job applicant who believes that they have been treated unfairly and contrary to the intention of this policy should raise the issue with the directors or the Real Purpose Board.
- Incidents of victimisation or harassment will be dealt with in accordance with Real Purpose's Harassment Procedure. Where incidents of victimisation and harassment are proven, the issue will be dealt with under Real Purpose's Disciplinary Procedure included in the Staff and Volunteers Handbook.
- Real Purpose will not treat lightly or ignore grievances from members of disadvantaged groups on the assumption that they are over-sensitive about discrimination.

7.2 Disciplinary Procedure

- Any member of staff found to be in breach of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action in line with the Standard Terms of Employment.
- All incidents of **direct discrimination** are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure.
- Incidents of **indirect discrimination** will be investigated to determine whether they should be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure.
- Incidents of **victimisation** or **harassment** will be dealt with in accordance with Real Purpose's Harassment Procedure. Where incidents of victimisation and harassment are proven, the issue will be dealt with under Real Purpose's Disciplinary Procedure.
- Any volunteer, including Non-Executive Directors or members of any committee, found to be in breach of this policy will be counselled on their actions and may, where necessary, be removed from Real Purpose's volunteer register.

- Any member of any Committee or working group of Real Purpose found in breach of this policy will be counselled on their actions and may, where necessary, be asked to leave Real Purpose.
- Any client/ participant found in breach of this policy will, where appropriate, be counselled on their actions and may, where necessary, be referred back to their organisation or refused future services from Real Purpose.

7.3 Monitoring

Real Purpose regards the collection/ analysis of data as vital in informing change and improving performance. Where appropriate, statistics on Real Purpose's services will be collected and analysed in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion matters. We will review employee turnover and seek information on reasons for leaving. Local and national data or statistics will be used to benchmark our performance.

The Real Purpose Board will review annually equality of opportunity relating to Real Purpose services. Recruitment and selection procedures will be monitored and reviewed annually by the Directors who will report to the Real Purpose Board. All aspects of HR (Human Resources) policies and procedures shall be kept under review to ensure that they do not operate against the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

In order to determine the impact of this policy it is important that a monitoring system be developed which will measure commitment, progress and effectiveness. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy will be monitored and reviewed as follows:

- Equality, diversity and inclusion will be an agenda item at Real Purpose team meetings.
- The Directors and Real Purpose Board will undertake an annual policy review. All relevant parties will be encouraged to submit comments for consideration.
- The review recommendations will be presented to the next Board meeting for their comments and ratification.

Where it appears that there may have been or there is a breach of the policy, the Directors or the Real Purpose Board will investigate the circumstances, and action will be taken to counter any proven breach of policy.

If it is found that the policy is excluding or discouraging the development of directors, staff or volunteers or restricting clients, the Directors or Real Purpose Board should take positive action to re-adjust the policy.

8. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or in response to significant changes in operations.

9. Approval and Version Control

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