

# Milton Keynes Mission Partnership - Equal Opportunities Policy

## Part I: Policy Details

### 1. What does this policy cover?

We do not tolerate discrimination or harassment in any part of MK Mission Partnership's operations. We are fully committed to promoting equal opportunities in employment.

This policy covers any and all aspects of our organisation's operations, how we treat those who work for and with us and how we recruit or engage others to join that community.

This means that our policy covers, but is not limited to, the following:

- a. Pay and employment conditions
- b. Our recruitment processes
- c. How we may appraise, reward, incentivise, promote, train, and commit to the continuing professional development of our workers
- d. Our procedures for addressing grievances and disciplinary matters
- e. How we end employment contracts and exit employees, including related matters, such as how we give references
- f. How visitors, clients and suppliers and other key contacts and stakeholders are treated

It also means that we will ensure, as far as possible:

- a. full access to everyone applying for job vacancies and job opportunities with our organisation, and
- b. that all relevant decisions are made on the basis of objective criteria.

Employees and volunteers should be familiar with this policy and all MK Mission Partnership's other policies, including, in particular our Grievance Policy and our Harassment and Bullying Policy.

### 2. Who does it apply to?

All employees, officers, contractors, volunteers, job applicants, agency and casual workers.

### 3. It is not part of the employment contract

This policy is not part of the employment contract. We, MK Mission Partnership, may amend this policy at any time.

### 4. What is discrimination?

Under UK employment law, there are a number of characteristics relevant to an individual who is covered by the policy that must not unfairly be considered (if accounted for at all) in decisions relating to any aspect of their working life.

These characteristics are called 'protected characteristics' and they are listed immediately below:

- a. Age
- b. Disability
- c. Gender reassignment

- d. Marital or civil partnership status
- e. Pregnancy or maternity
- f. Race (which includes colour and ethnic/national origin)
- g. Religion or belief
- h. Sex
- i. Sexual orientation

If employment-related decisions are made about an individual on the basis (whether wholly or partially), of any of these protected characteristics, it is almost inevitable that unlawful discrimination will have taken place.

The sorts of actions that would fall into this category of unlawful and prohibited initiatives, include (but aren't limited to) those set out below. These actions need not be intended or directly committed by someone (indirect responsibility may be sufficient for someone to have unlawfully discriminated) and an omission or failure to do something may be just as culpable as a positive action.

We will not tolerate their practice by anyone within our organisation:

**a. Direct discrimination...**

when someone with a protected characteristic is treated less favourably than somebody else has or would have been in identical circumstances. An example of this would be where an applicant for a job is rejected on grounds of their racial background. Further examples would be where a pregnant employee, or one with young children, is not promoted

**b. Indirect discrimination...**

when a group of people with one of the protected characteristics is disadvantaged by a provision, criterion or practice that is applied to all staff (unless the treatment may be justified for a good organisational reason).

**c. Harassment...**

covers hostile, humiliating, degrading, intimidating or similarly offensive treatment or conditions to which an individual with one or more protected characteristics is subjected. Any such actions deprive an individual of their dignity and violate them. We draw no distinction between actions that may be labelled as 'joking' and not intended to cause offence, and those that may have been more direct and premeditated in their delivery. Please see the Harassment and bullying policy for fuller details and examples.

**d. Victimisation**

This has a particular meaning under UK employment law and it is narrower than an ordinary dictionary definition, covering the situation only where:

- a. a worker has complained of discrimination (or harassment),
  - b. or has supported a fellow worker in making a complaint about these concerns,
- and has then suffered reprisals from others, including those responsible for that worker's employment prospects and working conditions.

**e. Other discriminatory actions that are also prohibited**

The UK's employment law also identifies other actions that can be unlawful under the equal opportunities legislation. Examples of these include:

- a. Failing to make reasonable adjustments to minimise certain disadvantages suffered by a disabled

- employee (or job applicant)
- b. Instructing another person (or applying pressure on them) to discriminate
- c. Knowingly assisting somebody else when they carry out a discriminatory act
- d. Discriminating against somebody believed to have a protected characteristic, whether or not they actually do, or because they associate with a third party who does.

## **Part II: Our procedures and approach to this policy**

### **1. Duties and responsibilities**

Overall responsibility for the effective implementation and operation of the policy lies with MK Mission Partnership's Director of Ecumenical Mission (DEM) and the Board of Trustees.

### **2. Recruitment, promotions and identifying candidates for other opportunities**

In any selection process that we use within our organisation, whether we're selecting interviewees for job opportunities, offering jobs, identifying individuals for promotion or considering other opportunities or necessities (like redundancy situations), we will apply a rigorous, objective selection process using non-discriminatory criteria, as far as possible.

All job adverts and opportunity announcements must be:

- Discussed with and signed off by the Chair of Trustees one of whose responsibilities is to ensure that any advert is compliant with this policy
- Located and/or circulated so as to reach as wide and diverse a pool of interested candidates as possible, and
- Worded so as to encourage, as far as possible and reasonable, applications from individuals of all characteristics to apply – or, at the very least, so as not to discourage any individuals with protected characteristics from applying.

### **3. Occupational Requirements**

As a religious organisation, MK Mission Partnership is permitted under the Equality Act 2010 to restrict appointments to some posts to followers of the Christian religion. Posts involving promotion of the Christian Religion (eg Director of Ecumenical Mission) should be restricted to applicants who are its followers.

### **4. Monitoring the policy and our personnel**

During any recruitment and onboarding process, we may ask questions that include some protected characteristics to help us monitor our diversity and how we are succeeding in our commitment to promote equal opportunities. Including health or disability questions in equal opportunities monitoring exercises is acceptable, but the data gathered must not be used for any employment-related decisions, such as whether to offer a role or opportunity to a particular candidate.

We may also record and analyse information about equal opportunities more generally within the workplace. We do this so that we can make sure this policy operates successfully. The data helps us to refine it, review the composition of our workforce, and to promote workplace equality.

When a person joins the Organisation, they give us consent to gather and process this data about them.

## **5. Handling breaches and enforcement**

We take all allegations of breach and any breaches that we discover very seriously. All allegations and/or suspicions of breach will therefore be thoroughly investigated.

Complaints or allegations of breach (or potential breach) under the policy should be presented to the DEM or Chair of Trustees as soon as possible. Formal action can be taken after following our grievance procedure and reading our policy on harassment and bullying.

Anyone raising a concern about matters covered by this policy, who does so in good faith, will have our full support and co-operation in getting to the bottom of what has happened and any appropriate action that needs to follow on from that examination. This will be the case regardless of our conclusions and including where we determine that the allegation was mistakenly made. There will never be any reprisals against those who genuinely have, or consider that they have, valid grounds to bring concerns about discrimination to our attention.

However, complaints made in bad faith, for whatever reason (including where this is an attempt to avoid or to deflect disciplinary action), will be treated as misconduct and may lead to a dismissal for gross misconduct.

We will also take prompt disciplinary action against anyone discovered to have harassed or discriminated against anyone else in breach of this policy. If we conclude that this behaviour amounts to gross misconduct, we will be within our rights to dismiss that employee without notice and with no payment in lieu of that notice. In the case of a volunteer in a position of responsibility, this would entail removing them from that position.

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