

# Equality & Non-Discrimination Policy

Policy Owner: HR

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To be revised in line with any new legislation

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## Our Statement

1. We are committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all staff and job applicants. We aim to create a working environment in which all individuals are able to make best use of their skills, free from discrimination or harassment, and in which all decisions are based on merit.
2. **We do not discriminate against staff on the basis 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 ('the protected characteristics').**
3. The principles of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity also apply to the way in which staff treat visitors, clients, customers, suppliers and former staff members.
4. All staff have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and not to discriminate against or harass other members of staff, regardless of their status.
5. This policy applies to all aspects of our relationship with staff and to relations between staff members at all levels. This includes job advertisements, recruitment and selection, training and development, opportunities for promotion, conditions of service, pay and benefits, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment.
6. We will take reasonable steps to accommodate the requirements of different religions, cultures, and domestic responsibilities.

## Forms of Discrimination

1. Discrimination by or against an employee is prohibited. Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.
2. Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics set out above. For example, rejecting an applicant on the grounds of their race because they would not "fit in" would be direct discrimination.
3. Indirect discrimination occurs where someone is disadvantaged by an unjustified provision, criterion or practice that also puts other people with the same protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage within the workplace. For example, a requirement to work full time puts women at a particular disadvantage because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement will need to be objectively justified.
4. Harassment related to any of the protected characteristics is prohibited. Harassment is unwanted conduct that 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 our Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy.
5. Victimisation is also prohibited. This is less favourable treatment of someone who has complained or given information about discrimination or harassment, or supported someone else's complaint.

## Disability Discrimination

1. In order to demonstrate our compliance with anti-discrimination legislation, such as the Equality Act 2010, we need to recognise and empower everyone within our organisation. Our objective is to authentically deliver work that are available to everyone and that we are inclusive and compassionate in all of the work that we do. This requires that we challenge ourselves to eliminate physical and attitudinal blockers that currently lead to discrimination.
2. Discrimination can have a profound and negative effect on our people's ability to contribute to their full potential and feel integral to the organisation. It can manifest itself in areas such as technology, recruitment, access to learning and development and physical access to the built environment.
3. Attitudinal barriers can also prevent disabled people from giving their best. It is vital, therefore, that there is a visible commitment to take steps to prevent discriminatory practices and raise the level of accessibility to a point where disadvantages are either removed altogether or minimised as much as reasonably possible.

## Definitions

- **Substantial:** The impairment is neither minor nor trivial.
- **Physical impairment:** Can include long term conditions such as deafness, visual impairment, mobility impairments, heart conditions, diabetes, asthma, cancer or progressive conditions such as motor neurone disease.
- **Mental impairment:** Can include mental health conditions such as depression, learning difficulties and learning disabilities.
- **Neurodivergent conditions:** Can include autism, ADHD, ADD, dyslexia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia.
- **Fluctuating conditions:** Conditions that change such as arthritis, MS, ME, Crohn's disease.
- **Long term:** Means that the condition or impairment has lasted twelve months, is expected to last for at least twelve months, or is likely to last for the rest of someone's life.
- **Reasonable adjustment:** making changes to a disabled person's environment or the way their employment is structured to mitigate any disadvantage and allows them to work safely and productively. This may include removing physical barriers, providing extra support, and providing flexibility.

## Standards

1. All reasonable adjustments will be provided both proactively and when requested. This may include the provision of specialist equipment or alterations in practical arrangements such as reduced working hours or a reassignment of some duties. It should be assumed that adjustments will be provided unless it can be proven that the request is unreasonable.
2. During their employment or engagement, an employee may become disabled as defined by the Equality Act 2010. In these circumstances, every effort will be made to assist the individual through making appropriate adjustments.
3. An employee should seek advice from the HR as to how they can provide support. There may be instances where medical advice should be sought from an individual's doctor, the organisation's occupational health service, and from any relevant specialist organisations to ensure the most appropriate support can be provided.
4. In order to ensure that disabled applicants are not placed at a disadvantage, managers should ask short-listed candidates if they have any particular requirements when making the arrangements for the interview and make appropriate adjustments. This may include for example ensuring the interview venue is accessible or arranging for an

induction loop or sign language interpreter for hearing impaired candidates.

## Monitoring & Compliance

1. We will achieve the objectives set out in this policy through:
  - a. Assessing the equality impact of all new policies, projects and decisions around changes such as technology.
  - b. By ensuring accessibility forms part of the recruitment and selection criteria and is clearly reflected in requirements for commissioned services or products.
  - c. By holding a risk register owned by the HR to monitor issues and provide focus for areas requiring priority attention.
  - d. By undertaking regular surveys to collect the views of disabled people.

## Breaches of the Policy

1. If you believe that you may have been discriminated against or have been subject to harassment you are encouraged to raise the matter through our [Grievance Procedure](#).
2. Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. Staff who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False allegations which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.
3. Any member of staff who is found to have committed an act of discrimination or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. We take a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.

## Appendix 1: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Statement

The Advocacy Academy is committed to promoting equitable opportunities and an equitable working environment for all its people.

Beyond diversity, we actively encourage equity, fairness, and justice in all its forms across the organisation. Justice is at the core of our beliefs and is a core component in all we strive to do. Our goal is for The Advocacy Academy to be truly representative of all sections of society (especially oppressed and marginalised groups) and further for all those who interact with our work to feel celebrated, respected and enabled to be present in whatever manner they see fit. Our goal is to create a work environment that is open to individuals from different cultures, with different perspectives and experiences of injustice.

The Advocacy Academy commits to:

- Treating all employees, job applicants and volunteers fairly and equitably.
- Offering services fairly to all people, ensuring that anyone in contact with The Advocacy Academy is treated with respect
- Supporting employees with disabilities to access financial support from the "Access to work" scheme and making all reasonable adjustments. We happily facilitate Access to Work assessments and reclaims, and we encourage job applicants who would need this to apply for our jobs
- Supporting employees to recognise cultural and religious holidays
- Ensuring that our environment is one where all people are valued and respected and creating spaces for feedback and discussion on how we can improve on current provisions
- Ensuring mechanisms are in place for responding to complaints of discrimination and harassment from our staff, our volunteers and our alumni.
- Making our equitable opportunity policy known to all our staff, job applicants, our volunteers and our membership
- Complying with the Equality Act 2010.

The Advocacy Academy will make opportunities for training and development available to all staff to help them understand their responsibility towards supporting the organisation to achieve a safe environment for all, where all are encouraged to develop their full potentials, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised for their development and the growth of our movement.

### **Bullying, Harassment and unlawful discrimination**

The Advocacy Academy will actively work to create an environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting

transparency, dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.

Our commitment includes training our managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under our equitable opportunity policy and Equality Act 2010. Responsibilities include staff support to help the organisation provide equitable opportunities in employment, and preventing bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

We also encourage our staff to understand that they, as well as The Advocacy Academy, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, young people, alumni, suppliers and the public.

The Advocacy Academy understands that complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, volunteers, alumni, suppliers and the public and any others in the course of the organisation's activities should not be taken lightly. Due to this, such acts are classified as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and appropriate action will be explored after communication with all parties involved. Particularly, serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

Further, we recognise that sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

## **Recruitment**

A core part of enacting this work is how we recruit and induct our staff members. We have a strategic commitment to conducting a recruitment system that is equitable and inclusive. We encourage applications from black, brown and other racialised communities, those who identify as LGBTQIA, working class as well as disabled people, those living with mental health conditions, refugees and migrants, and all communities who have faced injustice and oppression.