

NORTHERN VISIONS EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY STATEMENT

Northern Visions is committed to developing and implementing a Policy of Equal Opportunities.

We recognise that many groups and individuals have been, and continue to be, disadvantaged by society and its institutions, with a key feature of this disadvantage being discrimination. Northern Visions is opposed to discrimination on any grounds, including age, disability, employment status, ethnic origin, gender, linguistic preference, marital status, nationality, political affiliation, race, religious conviction, sexual identity or socio-economic group.

We will act positively with the intention of contributing to the eradication of discrimination whether it be direct or indirect, individual or group, cultural or institutional, and will comply with any relevant requirements of the Good Friday Agreement and other relevant legislation. In all its work Northern Visions will actively promote and strive to establish a safe and supportive working environment, affording equal respect to all.

Northern Visions will adopt a positive action strategy in contributing to the elimination of discrimination and creating additional opportunities for disadvantaged groups. This strategy will include, where necessary and appropriate:

- All programmes of work to be actively working towards embracing equality of opportunity;
- Support and encouragement to Northern Visions' user groups, participants, volunteers and workshop/course tutors in addressing specific forms of discrimination and disadvantage, including, where appropriate and necessary, targeted audiences and issue based agendas: (eg: Irish language, women only);
- Support and encouragement to Northern Visions' staff and volunteers, and those undertaking duties on behalf of Northern Visions, to enable them to make a positive contribution to combating discrimination and disadvantage;
- Monitoring and review of all Northern Visions activities to ensure that its policy applies to its own structures.

Northern Visions will rigorously observe the principles and actively pursue the objectives set out in the discharge of its responsibilities so that this policy is fully implemented.

It is our policy to provide employment equality to all, irrespective of:

- Gender (including persons who intend to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment)
- Pregnancy or Maternity Leave
- Marital status or Civil Partnership or family status
- Religious belief
- Political opinion

- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, being an Irish Traveller)
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Having or not having dependents

All full-time and part-time employees and job applicants (actual or potential) will be treated fairly and selection for employment, promotion, training or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability.

Our Equal Opportunities Policy will help all employees to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation. We are committed to:

- Promoting a good and harmonious working environment in which all persons are treated with respect and dignity.
- Preventing any form of direct or indirect discrimination or victimisation.
- Promoting equal opportunities for women and men.
- Securing fair participation for Catholics and Protestants.
- Promoting equal opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Promoting equal opportunities for the beliefs of all individuals.
- Promoting equal opportunities for ethnic minorities.
- Promoting equal opportunities for people of different sexual orientation.
- Promoting a good and harmonious working environment where all men and women are treated with respect and dignity and in which no form of intimidation or harassment will be tolerated.
- Fulfilling all legal obligations under the relevant legislation and associated Codes of Practice.
- Taking any necessary positive/affirmative action.
- Any act which contravenes the equal opportunities policy and practice will be regarded as gross misconduct and could lead to disciplinary action including dismissal being taken against an employee in breach of the procedure.

Affirmative action

Where appropriate, lawful positive action measures such as special encouragement in advertisements or special training will be developed. These measures are available to us in certain circumstances; for example where there is an under-representation of a particular group in specific areas of work.

Monitoring and review

The provision of equality of opportunity between women and men will be monitored through the collection and analysis of statistical data on the community background, ethnic background, gender, age group, marital status, status as a disabled person of all employees and job applicants. Northern Visions will also monitor the workforce composition and undertake periodic reviews as required by Article 55 of the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998. Progress on the implementation of this policy and any equal opportunities and affirmative/positive action programmes will be reviewed annually.

Direct discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another on the grounds of their gender, marital or family status, religious belief or political opinion, disability, race or ethnic origin, nationality, sexual orientation and age.

Indirect discrimination

Indirect discrimination can occur when a requirement or condition, which cannot be justified on grounds other than gender, marital or family status, religious belief or political opinion, disability, race or ethnic origin, nationality, sexual orientation and age is applied equally but has the effect in practice of disadvantaging a considerably higher proportion of persons in one or other of the above groups.

Disability discrimination

Disability discrimination occurs when for a reason related to their disability, a disabled person is treated less favourably than other people, and this treatment cannot be justified. It also occurs when an employer fails to comply with the duty to make a reasonable adjustment in relation to the disabled person, and the failure cannot be justified. An employer cannot justify less favourable treatment if, by making a reasonable adjustment, it would remove the reason for the treatment.

Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another because that person has, for example, asserted rights under any of the discrimination laws or has helped another person to assert such rights or given information to the relevant statutory body, or because it is suspected that the person might do any of these things.

In determining policies and priorities, Northern Visions will:

- Respond to the distinctive needs of Northern Ireland in terms of its demographics and cultural profile;
- Recognise that certain groups and individuals in society are discriminated against, and seek through partnerships and the allocation of its resources to promote programmes of work which militate against such disadvantage;

- Ensure that its own advisory groups are representative of Northern Ireland and that their decisions are taken within a transparent framework for the ethical conduct of business
- In the provision of direct services, including information, advice, training, research and resources.

Northern Visions will:

- Publish information about the services which are available and promote them to the widest possible constituency within available resources;
- Wherever possible, provide staff and volunteer training and services in forms and media which address the special needs of particular groups or individuals;
- Publish and promote information which provides details of the criteria under which resources are available, and the process and time scale within which decisions are made;
- Target resources through available legal provisions to redress disadvantage and under-representation.

In its work with partners, Northern Visions will:

- Ensure that the views of affected constituencies are taken into account in developing policies and programmes of action;
- Seek to raise awareness of the needs of groups and individuals who may be subject to direct or indirect discrimination within current provision;
- Promote equal opportunities practice in both strategy development and service delivery.

As an employer, Northern Visions will:

- Operate employment, selection, and contracting procedures and practices, which promote equality of opportunity;
- Provide clear and unambiguous specifications for the responsibilities and services against which it invites applications;
- Produce guidelines for the advertising of such opportunities;
- Substantiate the appointments made under such procedures and provide feedback to unsuccessful candidates;
- Take positive action to redress under-representation in the workforce making use of available statutory and legal provisions as appropriate.

In all areas of its work, Northern Visions will:

- Produce plans to support development, and set targets for achievement, as appropriate;

- Develop codes of conduct and provide training to ensure that its staff are fully equipped to implement this policy;
- Monitor and review its policies, programmes and procedures against stated targets for achievement;
- Advocate good practice in equal opportunities policy development and implementation.

Volunteering opportunities are open to anyone who is resident in Northern Ireland on a permanent basis, completes the required procedures as outlined in the Volunteer Guidelines document and accepts our policies. We reserve the right to close membership from time to time if we feel our resources have become too constrained or staff overburdened. When membership is closed it is done so on a universal basis.

Implementation

The Chairperson has specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy. Each Director, Manager and Coordinator also has responsibilities and we expect all our employees to abide by the policy and help create the equality environment, which is its objective.

In order to implement this policy we shall:

- Communicate the policy to employees, job applicants and relevant others (such as contract or agency workers)
- Incorporate specific and appropriate duties in respect of implementing the equal opportunities policy into job descriptions and work objectives of all staff
- Provide equality training and guidance as appropriate, including training on induction and management courses.
- Ensure that those who are involved in assessing candidates for recruitment or promotion will be trained in non- discriminatory selection techniques
- Incorporate equal opportunities notices into general communications practices (staff newsletters)
- Obtain commitments from other persons or organisations such as subcontractors or agencies that they too will comply with the policy in their dealings with our organisation and our workforce
- Ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfil the objectives of the policy.

Monitoring and review

We will establish appropriate information and monitoring systems to assist the effective implementation of our equal opportunities policy.

The effectiveness of our equal opportunities policy will be reviewed regularly [at least annually] and action taken as necessary. For example, where monitoring identifies an

under-representation of a particular group or groups, we shall develop an action plan to address the imbalance.

Complaints

Employees who believe that they have suffered any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation are entitled to raise the matter through our Grievance Procedures. A copy of these procedures is available from the Chairperson. All complaints of discrimination will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially.

In addition to our internal procedures, employees have the right to pursue complaints of discrimination to an industrial tribunal or the Fair Employment Tribunal under the following anti-discrimination legislation:

- Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976, as amended
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended
- Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, as amended • Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003
- Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, as amended
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006
- Equal Pay Act (Northern Ireland) 1970, as amended.

Complaints of sex/marital status, sexual orientation, race/nationality/ethnic/national origin, disability and age discrimination should be lodged with an industrial tribunal within three months from the date of the alleged act of discrimination. In respect of equal pay, the complaint can be lodged at any time while the person is in the job or within six months of leaving the job.

Complaints to a Fair Employment Tribunal must be lodged within three months from which a complainant first knew, or might reasonably have known, of the act of discrimination or within six months from the date when the act occurred, whichever is earlier.

Every effort will be made to ensure that employees who make complaints will not be victimised. Any complaint of victimisation will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially. Victimisation will result in disciplinary action and may warrant dismissal.

Reviewed June 2020

Chairperson