

Equal Opportunities Policy

Writing an equal opportunities policy

An equal opportunities policy simply sets down how your organisation is going to make sure that your group is open to all.

It is important because:

- H A number of individuals, groups and communities in this country face discrimination.
- H Groups can ignore or discriminate against particular minority or disadvantaged groups, quite unintentionally.
- H Writing an equal opportunities policy will help you think about the practical things that you can do to make sure that your group is equally open to everyone, and that all people involved will be treated with the same respect.
- H It will show that you are aware of discrimination and are willing to take measures to stop it happening within your group and the services that you offer.
- H Most funders require you to have an equal opportunities policy

Your equal opportunities policy does not have to be long and fancy: a simply worded, one side of A4 paper would be fine. The most important thing is that you have thought about what you put in it, that it's useful for your group and that you will and can do what you have said.

There is no point in having a policy that is written hastily, then put in a drawer and forgotten about.



Equal Opportunities Policy

Each equal opportunities policy will be different depending on the type of group that you are in (see the examples at the end of this sheet). However there are certain things that most policies will contain, and you will probably want to think about:

1. Aims:

H Why you want an equal opportunities policy and what you want it to do.

2. Actions:

H How you make sure your group is equally open to all

H How you ensure equality of employment (only relevant if you employ workers)

H Your policies on harassment, treatment and behaviour of users, workers and volunteers.

3. Is your policy working?

H When you will review your policy.

The rest of this sheet will work through each of these three sections giving advice on how to think about each one. At the end there are three different policies to give you an idea of what the finished product looks like.

Before you start

Don't try and write your equal opportunity policy without talking about it in your group first. Here are some ideas that you can use as starting points for a discussion:

H How does discrimination affect us?

What kind of discrimination are you aware of? Do any of your group have any personal experiences of being treated less well or excluded because of who they are? What other groups of people do you know who face discrimination?

H How is your group working at the moment?

Are your services used by a wide range of people? Are there practical things that might stop certain people using your group and attending your meetings? Do you all feel equally important and valued within your group?

H What do you want to achieve?

How will a good equal opportunities policy affect your group? What difference will it make to the people that use your service? What difference will it make to members of your group?

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See example policies at the end of the sheet for different ways of expressing your aims

The next step is to start working through all the areas that you want to cover in your policy and get some things written down.

1. Aims

Your aims simply say why you want an equal opportunity policy and what you want it to do. The 'aims' section of a policy is sometimes called a 'statement of intent.'

You could include something on:

- H The fact that discrimination exists
- H How being discriminated against can affect people.
- H Why you want your organisation to have an equal opportunities policy
- H What you hope that it will achieve

Most groups will have something in their aims about being opposed to all kinds of discrimination. There are two ways of dealing with this. You can either list all the types of discrimination, for example:

"(Name of group) believes that equal opportunities is the central principle underlying all the work we do. We are trying to work against all forms of oppression, including those based on race, creed, gender, marital status, culture, class, sexuality, learning ability, physical impairment, political beliefs, age and unrelated criminal conviction."

Or more simply just say:

"(name of group) recognises the existence of discrimination against people because of particular characteristics or beliefs."

2. Action

This the most important part of your policy because it is about the practical things that your group is doing or will do to make sure everybody is treated equally. You can get ideas about what to write from other people's policies but it is no good trying to copy them word for word. You need to think about what action **your** group is taking or will take in the future.

You may want to consider what practical steps you will take to:

- a. Make sure your group is equally open to all
- b. Ensure equality of employment
- c. Prevent harrassment, and make sure everyone is treated equally.



The Resource Centre has an induction loop and an infra-red hearing system that you can hire to make your event or meeting more accessible to people who use hearing aids. Contact us on 01273 606160 to book it.

It is sometimes useful to contact different disability groups and talk to them about how to make your group more open and welcoming. Try Brighton and Hove Federation of disabled people: 01273 208934 www.bhfederation.org.uk

If you need more information about employing workers the Resource Centre has more details in our reference library.

See example policies at the end of this sheet to see how different groups have dealt with this aspect of equal opportunities in their policies.

A. Making sure your group is equally open to all

Things to consider:

- H Look at each aspect of the service you provide and the people that use those services. How will you ensure that everybody gets the same amount of use out of the services and is treated equally?
- H Are there practical barriers that prevent some people from getting the most out of the services that you provide? eg steps to your venue, or not having an induction loop, or holding meetings at times when children have to be picked up from school?
- H Is publicity about your group and its events written in plain English and designed to be easy to read? Should it be translated into other languages? Have you got it available in large print?
- H Are all users of your service treated equally? If users have particular needs for example, can you think of ways that you could accommodate these needs?
- H Do you have any difficulties within your group? For example, do you have difficulties in getting some members of your community involved, or are you too short of money to have a wheel chair ramp put in? Remember: It is better to admit your difficulties and show that you are trying to resolve them. Nobody will expect your group to be perfect!
- H How will you make sure that everyone is aware of the equal opportunities policy?

Remember - It may not be possible for you to bring in measures to counter all types of discrimination, but make sure that you are aware of what you are lacking and can be responsive to individuals' needs when they arise.

B. Equality of employment:

This part only applies to those groups that employ workers. It should cover everything from vacancy advertising, selection, recruitment and training to conditions of service and reasons for termination of employment.

Here are some things you should think about:

- H How will you make sure that all sections of the community see your job advertisement?
- H How will you make sure that no one feels discriminated against by the advert or the position offered?
- H How will you pay your workers and on what grounds?
- H Do you have an open system for recording selection and rejection of applicants for vacancies?

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C. Preventing harassment and general treatment of people

This section should look at the way that workers and users of your group are treated and the way that people conduct themselves. It is sometimes known as the 'code of conduct'.

Things to consider:

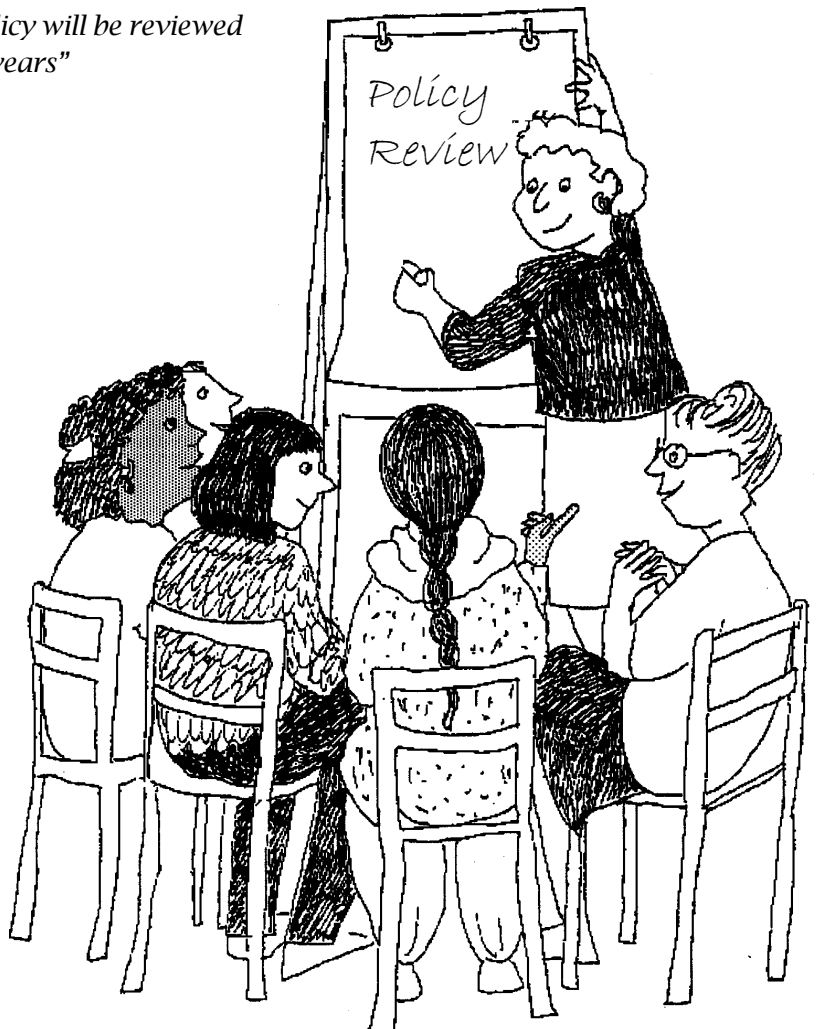
- H How do you want people to be treated in your workplace?
- H What do you mean by harassment?
- H If someone feels harassed what should they do about it - who should they tell? What will you do about it?
- H How will you make sure that everyone concerned is aware of your code of conduct?

3. Is your policy working?

At the end of your policy you need to say when you will be looking at it again. It is a good idea to look at your policy after a year because by then you will have an idea if it is working and the things that you need to change or update.

You can simply say:

"This policy will be reviewed every ... years"



The Resource Centre has contact details for other interpreting services in our Beachcomber database. Search on our website or phone us for details

The Resource Centre has a Community Matters information sheet on writing equal opportunities which includes a sample policy.

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Useful contacts

Interpreters:

Sussex Interpreting Services provides trained interpreters to enable individuals to access public services.

They are based in Community Base, 113-117 Queens Road, Brighton
01273 702005 or 01273 380013
www.sussexinterpreting.org.uk

Brighton Deaf Centre can provide sign language interpreters
01273 671899
www.sussexdeaf.co.uk

Braile and large print

Inside Out Trust can translate your publications into braile and large print
01273 833050

Equal Opportunities Policies on line

The University of Brighton
www.brighton.ac.uk/equalopportunities/index.php?PageId=425

Woodcraft Folk
www.woodcraft.org.uk/library/attach.php?action=view&id_item=36

Brighton and Hove Volunteer Bureau

The volunteer bureau has produced a good practice guide for community groups who work with volunteers. It includes sample forms and policies for groups to adapt, including a sample equal opportunities policy and sample equal opportunities monitoring form. The guide is available on the volunteer bureau's website at
www.brightonhovevolunteers.org.uk/goodpractice/

Sample Policies

Note on the following Equal Opportunities Policies

We have chosen the following policies as examples because they demonstrate that there is no set way of writing and presenting an equal opportunity policy.

Although they look very different, each example policy is as valid as the others. They all cover in varying degrees the different aspects that are discussed in this sheet but most importantly they are each written specifically with the individual group in mind.

Equal Opportunity Policy for The Under 5's Centre

Aims

The Under 5's Centre believes that no child, individual, or family should be excluded from the Centre's activities on the grounds of age, gender, health, sexuality, class, family status, means, ability, colour, ethnic origin, culture, religion, or belief. We aim to ensure that all who wish to work in, or volunteer to help with, our Centre should have an equal chance to do so.

Admissions

The Centre is open to every family in the community. It has a waiting list but priority is given to children with special needs.

Employment

The Centre will appoint the best person for each job and will treat fairly all applicants. No applicant will be rejected on grounds that contravene the Centre's Policy Statement. Commitment to implementing the Centre's Equal Opportunities Policy will form part of the job description of all Centre workers, paid or unpaid.

Families

The Centre recognizes that many different types of family successfully love and care for their children. The Centre will offer as flexible payment system as is possible to account for families of differing means.

The Curriculum

All children will be respected and their individuality and potential recognized, valued and nurtured. Activities and the use of play equipment offer children opportunities to develop in an environment free from prejudice and discrimination. Opportunities will be given to children to explore, acknowledge and value similarities and differences between themselves and others. Due to the cultural diversity at Under 5's Centre, no religious festivals are celebrated.

Equipment

This will be chosen to give children a balanced view of the world and an appreciation of the rich diversity of our multiracial society. Materials will be selected to help children to develop their self-respect and to respect other people by avoiding stereotypes and derogatory pictures or messages about any group of people.

Special Needs

The Centre recognizes the wide range of special needs of children and families in their community, and will attempt to offer places to any child whatever their, or their families, special need.

Discriminatory Behaviour/Remarks

This is unacceptable in the Centre. The response will aim to be sensitive to the feelings of the victim(s) and to help those responsible to understand and overcome their prejudices.

Language

Information, written and spoken, will be clearly communicated in as many languages as necessary. Bilingual/multilingual children and adults are an asset, they will be valued and their languages recognised and respected in the Centre.

Breastfeed Drop In Equal Opportunity Policy

- The Breastfeed Drop in is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity to all users, volunteers and staff. Staff and volunteers are expected to actively implement this policy.
- All staff and volunteers will be considered on their own merits and abilities to do the work they wish to do. Neither staff, volunteers nor users should receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, age, marital status, mental or physical disability, religion or sexual orientation.
- The Breastfeed drop in believes that all staff, volunteers and users should be treated with dignity and respect
- It is the policy of the Breastfeed Drop in to provide the necessary information and support to empower women to make informed choices on regarding the feeding of their babies.
- The Breastfeed drop In also aims to involve all staff, volunteers and users in the decision making involved in running the Drop In .

Equal Opportunities Policy: Hindu Elders' Group

Aims

1. The Hindu Elders' group recognises that in our society power is not held equally, and that groups and individuals have been and continue to be discriminated against on many grounds including, for example, race, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, class, religion, marital status and where they live.
2. The Hindu Elders' group also recognises that where direct or indirect discrimination occurs within the Hindu Elders' group, it is both morally and legally unacceptable.
3. The purpose of the Equal Opportunities Policy is to set out clearly and fully the positive action the Hindu Elders' group intends to take to combat direct and indirect discrimination in the organisation, the services it provides and in its relationships with other bodies.
4. In adopting this Equal Opportunities Policy, the Hindu Elders' Group is also making an unequivocal commitment to implementing it, so as to ensure that equal opportunity becomes a reality.

Code of Practice

1. The Hindu Elders' group provides activities, guidance and assistance for Hindu men and women over 50 years old. The group will take action to ensure that group activities and events are open and welcoming to everybody entitled to become a member.
2. We aim to make our meetings and events accessible to people with disabilities – e.g. provide transport, meet in accessible premises, provide sign language interpreters and produce information in large print.
3. We use the Brighton, Hove and Lewes interpreting services to provide interpreters in both Hindi and Gujarati at all our activities and meetings so everyone can participate.
4. We aim to use local training opportunities to help our committee and members better understand how discrimination occurs and how to prevent it.
5. All members of the Hindu Elders' group will have the Equal Opportunities Policy explained to them, and as group members, will undertake to comply with and implement this policy.
6. Members who have experienced discrimination can make complaints to the co-ordinator, who is present at all weekly meetings. If the co-ordinator is unable to resolve the complaint, it will be referred to the Management Committee.

Code of Conduct

1. People will be treated with dignity and respect regardless of race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, disability and age.
2. At all times people's feelings will be valued and respected. Language or humour that people find offensive will not be used e.g. sexist or racist jokes or terminology which is derogatory to someone with a disability.
3. No one will be harassed, abused or intimidated on the ground of his or her race, sex, age, nationality or sexual orientation. Incidents of harassment will be taken seriously.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years

Date:.....

Signature.....
(Chair)

Signature.....
(Secretary)