

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

1. ABOUT THIS POLICY

- 1.1. Kings Church High Wycombe (KCHW) is a Christian organisation committed to social justice and to seeing everyone experience the Good News of the Christian faith. Our vision is to be “A diverse church of thousands that surrounds and saturates High Wycombe with the love of Jesus.” We are committed to treating all people fairly and with equal dignity regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexuality, physical/mental disability, offending background or any other factor (defined by the Equality Act 2010 (“The Act”) as *Protected Characteristics*). This policy sets out KCHW’s approach to equal opportunities and the avoidance of unlawful discrimination at work. It applies to all aspects of employment with KCHW, including recruitment, pay and conditions, training, appraisals, promotion, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment.
- 1.2. In some circumstances, as permitted by The Act, roles will require applicants to demonstrate a clear personal commitment to the Christian faith and adhere to certain religious requirements relating to sex, marriage, sexual orientation etc in accordance with KCHW’s doctrine on such matters. This will be clear in any recruitment documentation and will be applied where necessary and in compliance with the Act.
- 1.3. The Trustees are responsible for this policy but the content has been drafted in consultation with and has received the approval of the Elders. As such, any future amendments to this policy require consultation and agreement with the Elders. Day-to-day application of the policy is delegated to the Administrative Lead.
- 1.4. This policy does not form part of any employee’s contract of employment and KCHW may amend it at any time.

2. DISCRIMINATION

- 2.1. This policy prohibits the unlawful discrimination, bullying or harassment of other people including current and former employees, job applicants, users of the Church’s buildings, suppliers and visitors. This applies in the workplace, outside the workplace (when dealing with suppliers or other work-related contacts), and on work-related trips or events including social events.
- 2.2. The following forms of discrimination are prohibited under this policy and are unlawful:
 - 2.2.1. *Direct discrimination*: treating someone less favourably because of a Protected Characteristic except where an Occupational Requirement exists as permitted by The Act (see 1.3, 3.2 & 3.3).
 - 2.2.2. *Indirect discrimination*: a provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone but adversely affects people with a particular Protected Characteristic more than others, and is not justified.
 - 2.2.3. *Harassment*: this includes sexual harassment and other unwanted conduct related to a Protected Characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating someone’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

2.2.4. *Victimisation*: retaliation against someone who has complained or has supported someone else's complaint about discrimination or harassment.

2.2.5. *Disability discrimination*: this includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability.

3. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

3.1. Recruitment, promotion and other selection exercises such as redundancy selection will be conducted on the basis of character, merit, skills, qualifications, experience and commitment to the values and purposes of the Church. These factors will be considered against objective criteria that avoid discrimination. Shortlisting of applicants for a role, promotion or redundancy should be done by more than one person if possible.

3.2. Where an occupational requirement is needed for a particular role this will be drafted and applied to the job description and any associated job advert within the provisions of the Act. Occupational Requirements will be proposed and drafted under the supervision of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) but must be approved by the Board of Trustees.

3.3. KCHW is a Christian organisation which seeks to operate in and for the name of Christ. For some roles, sharing and living out the Christian faith in accordance with KCHW's doctrinal statement will be recognised as an Occupational Requirement. This requirement will be outlined in the relevant Job Description.

3.4. KCHW will not state or imply that it will discriminate against a Protected Characteristic in job adverts except where an Occupational Requirement is being applied. Job advertisements should avoid the use of stereotyping or using wording that may discourage particular groups from applying.

3.5. Job applicants must not be asked questions which might suggest an intention to discriminate on grounds of a Protected Characteristic. For example, applicants should not be asked whether they are pregnant or planning to have children.

3.6. Job applicants should not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made, except in the very limited circumstances allowed by law: for example, to check that the applicant could perform an intrinsic part of the job (taking account of any reasonable adjustments), or to see if any adjustments might be needed at interview because of a disability. Where necessary, job offers can be made conditional on a satisfactory medical check.

4. DISABILITIES

4.1. KCHW encourages anyone covered by this policy if they are disabled or become disabled, to tell their line manager or another appropriate person within KCHW about their condition so that KCHW can consider what reasonable adjustments or support may be appropriate.

5. FIXED TERM AND PART TIME EMPLOYEES

5.1. Part-time and fixed-term employees should be treated the same as comparable full-time or permanent employees and enjoy no less favourable terms and conditions (on a pro-rata basis where appropriate), unless different treatment is justified given the nature of the job role and tasks required under the job description.

6. EX-OFFENDERS

6.1. KCHW aims to ensure that people with a criminal background are given equal opportunity to enter employment. KCHW will only ask an individual to provide details of convictions and cautions that they are legally entitled to know about and for roles in which such checks are deemed necessary. KCHW will only ask about convictions and cautions that are unspent. KCHW undertakes to discuss any matter revealed on a DBS with the individual seeking a role before withdrawing the offer of a role.

7. BREACHES OF THIS POLICY

7.1. KCHW take a strict approach to breaches of this policy, which will be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy & Procedure. Serious cases of deliberate discrimination may amount to gross misconduct resulting in dismissal.

7.2. If anyone believes that they have suffered discrimination they can raise the matter through the Grievance Policy & Procedure. Complaints will be treated in confidence and investigated as appropriate.

7.3. No one will be victimised or retaliated against for complaining about discrimination. However, making a false allegation deliberately and in bad faith will be treated as misconduct and dealt with under the Disciplinary Policy & Procedure.

January 2022