



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY POLICY

BACKGROUND

WDSA (UK) recognises that there is inequality in our society. Inequality causes disadvantage and deprivation that some areas and communities encounter. Discrimination, unfair treatment, harassment in various forms by individuals and organisations, contribute to social exclusion. This in turn has an impact on the well-being and prosperity of everyone.

WDSA's (UK) commitment to equal opportunity will ensure that steps are taken to integrate equality and the diversity of different groups into all its programmes and services. Diversity may be as a result of:

- Race/ethnic background
- Gender
- Marital or family status
- Age
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- Ex-offender
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Gender reassignment

WDSA (UK) recognises that this list is not exhaustive and will be regularly reviewed as the equal opportunities policy develops.

WDSA (UK) believes there are moral, social, economic, environmental as well as legal reasons for adopting and implementing an EO policy. WDSA (UK) aims to lead by example and become an exemplar in promoting equality for all.

WDSA (UK) EO Policy covers all aspects of employment and service delivery-related duties and functions. These include Human Resource, Customer and Beneficiary and Goods and Services policy including commissioning/procurement. The Policy also provides a framework and reference document for WDSA (UK) partners, employees and programme/service deliverers.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The WDSA (UK) Trustees Board is responsible for evaluating the performance of the EO policy.

WDSA (UK) managers are responsible for engendering an equal opportunities culture within the workforce and by suppliers/providers of services with whom they contract.

WDSA (UK) employees are responsible for implementing all aspects of WDSA (UK) equal opportunities policy.

IMPLEMENTATION

WDSA (UK) will implement all policies taking account of the relevant responsibilities as set out above for the WDSA (UK) EO policy. Policies covered include: HR, Customer Access to Services, and Procurement. WDSA (UK) will actively encourage the involvement and participation of all disadvantaged groups to ensure that, wherever possible, policies, practices and procedures recognise and meet their needs.

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Should individuals/organisations believe that they have been unfairly treated in connection with the equal opportunities policy, they should follow the grievance or complaints procedures set out within this document.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Jobs advertised by WDSA (UK) are open to all applicants regardless of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, marital status or disability. No assumptions or prejudgements are made by WDSA (UK) or its employees about the suitability of any prospective employee for a particular job.

Recruitment and selection procedures and practices within the WDSA (UK) organisation will be regularly reviewed to ensure that no group is put at a disadvantage either directly or indirectly. To aid WDSA (UK) in this process a monitoring system will be implemented relating to the ethnic origin, sex and disability of those applying for a position within WDSA (UK). It is WDSA (UK) policy that, wherever possible, staff involved in interviewing and selection will be given training to avoid discrimination in these processes.

All applicants to WDSA (UK) are given equal consideration. Particular regard is made to internal as well as external advertising for applicants. WDSA (UK) recruitment publicity positively encourages applications from suitably qualified and experienced people. It offers opportunities at all levels to people of any race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, marital status or disability and avoids any stereotyping of roles.

Vacancies are advertised in the national/trade and local press as well in local job centres, and WDSA (UK) will ensure that advertisements are designed to be accessible to all groups. Job titles and job content are presented without. Jobs are described in such a way that no qualified or experienced person is deterred from applying.

Applicants and existing staff are made aware of WDSA (UK) policy and practice on recruitment.

Staff and managers who conduct recruitment interviews are trained and briefed on WDSA (UK) policy and practices on equal opportunities, as follows:

- (a) To take an unbiased approach regardless of the applicants' race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, marital status, disability or offender background.
- (b) To only ask questions that relate to the job and which are non-discriminatory (for example, questions about marriage plans and intention to have a family are excluded on the grounds that these may be considered as demonstrating discrimination against women).
- (c) Trained in the use of fair selection criteria, based on merit, and the need for consistent application.
- (d) Given guidance and training on the effects of stereotyping. Generalised assumptions and prejudices about race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, marital status, disability or offender background can have on selection decisions.
- (e) Made aware of possible requirements which can occur in interviewing applicants whose gender or ethnic background is different, or requirements due to the applicant's disability.

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Selection criteria should be strictly job-related, and requirements for educational and professional qualifications are valid and job-related. Previous experience is taken into account including pay and employment. Prime consideration is given to the relevance of an applicant's experience rather than to the length of time spent in a particular job or type of job. WDSA will also guarantee interviews for prospective disabled employees who meet the minimum criteria set out in a job description.

Recruitment criteria and practices will be examined and regularly reviewed by the Trustees to ensure that they are not actually, or potentially, unlawful or discriminatory.

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

Reasonable adjustments are changes that allow disabled people to work safely and productively.

WDSA (UK) will make reasonable adjustments for a disabled person who:

- Applies for a job, is offered employment, or is an employee or a volunteer or contractor, and
- Requires the adjustments in order to participate in the recruitment process or perform the requirements of the job/role.

Examples of reasonable adjustments can include:

- Reviewing and, if necessary, adjusting the performance requirements of the job/ role
- Arranging flexibility in work hours (see 'Flexible work arrangements')
- Providing telephone typewriter (TTY) phone access for employees with hearing or speech impairments
- Purchasing screen reading software for employees with a vision impairment
- Approving more regular breaks for people with chronic pain or fatigue
- Providing desks with adjustable heights for people using a wheelchair.

When considering adjustments WDSA (UK) will take account of the expense of implementing the change and its effect on the workplace.

In some cases WDSA (UK) can discriminate on the basis of disability, if:

- The adjustments needed are not reasonable, or
- The person with the disability could not perform the genuine and reasonable requirements of the job/role even if the adjustments were made.
- The cost or disruption are excessive

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

WDSA (UK) will not discriminate in the provision of staff training and development on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, marital status or disability.

WDSA (UK) will, where appropriate, provide or amend employee training or facilities to match particular minority group's needs on request. Specific steps will be taken to ensure that disabled employees have the same opportunity as other employees to develop their full potential within the organisation.

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Induction training programmes will include reference to the relevant section of EO policy and its implications for employees and volunteers.

WDSA (UK) employees will be given guidance and training on the effects of stereotyping, generalised assumptions and prejudices about race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, marital status or disability.

PAY AND BENEFITS

Employees undertaking equivalent roles, regardless of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, marital status or disability, are treated equally with respect to pay and other conditions of their contracts of employment.

Pay increases are made on an equitable basis and the same rules are followed in all cases. In addition, benefits, facilities and services, including those covered by law (for example maternity rights), are reviewed on a regular basis by the WDSA (UK) Trustees to see if, and how, they can be improved.

HARASSMENT

WDSA (UK) requires respect for the dignity of all individuals at work, and therefore views any form of harassment, intimidation, bullying or victimisation as unacceptable.

WDSA (UK) would consider such behaviour to be particularly distasteful if it were related to the race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, marital status, disability or offender background of an individual or group.

Appropriate awareness/training programmes will be carried out. If any form of Harassment had taken place this policy would be carried out, to ensure that action is taken against such behaviour.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

The grievance procedure for employees should be followed as detailed in the staff procedures manual, the contents of which are made known to all employees as part of the induction process. It is made clear to employees both at induction, and at the time of staff manual updates that they are entitled to use the grievance procedure should they feel they have been subject to victimisation or discrimination that is contrary to the WDSA (UK) EO policy.

REPORTING PROCEDURE

In any circumstances of alleged discrimination, the incident must be reported in writing, in the first instance to the employee's manager and always and immediately presented to the WDSA (UK) senior management team for investigation. In cases of alleged discrimination or victimisation involving an employee, WDSA (UK) will investigate the circumstances of the allegation or delegate this responsibility to a named individual. A detailed written report, signed, dated and witnessed, will be prepared by the manager at the time of the alleged incident and copied to the WDSA (UK) Board.

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Should discrimination be identified the employee will be invited to a formal hearing, provided with a copy of the report and informed of her or his legal rights. The employee may be accompanied by a colleague of her/his choice. A written record of the meeting will be made and any action taken will be formally recorded in writing and provided to the WDSA (UK) board.

BENEFICIARIES AND CUSTOMERS ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

WDSA (UK) believes in equal access to its goods and services regardless of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, marital status, disability or offender background. The only exception to this is positive action, where it is legally permitted.

For beneficiaries benefiting from the products, programmes and services of WDSA (UK), the main legislative policies covering discrimination are listed on the Commission for Equality and Human Rights. WDSA (UK) expects those organisations and suppliers providing services or practical experience for customers and beneficiaries to actively support and to abide by the policies and best practice listed by this commission.

GENERAL ACCESS CRITERIA

The only criteria for selecting customers and beneficiaries should be whether or not it is possible to provide the type of service required. It is not permissible to reject a customer or beneficiaries on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, marital status, disability or offender background.

It is important that customers and beneficiaries are served consistently, and that those employees and partners who are involved in service delivery on behalf of WDSA (UK) should have received equal opportunities training and guidance, including disability awareness.

It is important to ensure that customers and beneficiaries receive equal treatment when they are receiving WDSA (UK) services and that they have access to all relevant parts of the service. To this end WDSA (UK) will ensure:

- (a) Customers and beneficiaries are not dissuaded from taking a particular form of service or programme on offer by WDSA (UK) because they might have difficulty in accessing services on account of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, marital status, disability or offender background.
- (b) That staff and partners responsible for customers and beneficiaries have received training and guidance in equal opportunities and disability issues.
- (c) Random monitoring will be carried out by WDSA (UK) staff to ensure that customers and beneficiaries are given equal access to services and project provisions.
- (d) Marketing, communications and websites produced by WDSA (UK) and supported programmes will be designed to legal minimum standards and will be accessible, informative and available in different formats required by customers and beneficiaries.
- (e) Any incidents of harassment by employees or partners towards any customers and beneficiaries will be promptly investigated by WDSA (UK) and may, if proved, result in disciplinary action.
- (f) Completion of an equality impact assessment (EIA) on WDSA (UK) and its programmes, policies, practices and procedures.

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PROCUREMENT

WDSA (UK) will ensure that equality of opportunity and fairness is integral to its policies on procurement. It will use its influence to persuade providers and suppliers of WDSA (UK) programmes and services to develop and implement equal opportunities policies.

To this end WDSA (UK) will:

- (a) Ensure that providers and suppliers contracting with WDSA (UK) will have received training and guidance in equal opportunities and disability issues.
- (b) Ensure that providers and suppliers are aware of, and undertake to abide by, WDSA (UK) equal opportunities policy.
- (c) Ensure that any incidents of harassment are dealt with promptly and firmly in line with WDSA (UK) harassment policy and procedure.
- (d) Ensure that Branches and Partners by WDSA (UK) will incorporate equal opportunities from the conception of the programme.

Providers and suppliers who are found to act in a way which contravenes this policy will be informed and advised of changes required. If appropriate, licence may be withdrawn; contracts may be terminated or not renewed.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

In any circumstances of alleged complaint of discrimination, the incident must be reported in the first instance to the WDSA (UK) senior management team at the time of the alleged incident.

When any case of alleged discrimination has been fully investigated a report will be prepared and forwarded to the senior management team. Should discrimination be identified, the matter will be reported to the WDSA Trustees, and the Branch will be withdrawn from the WDSA (UK) list of suppliers and providers, or if discrimination is found within a Branch, WDSA (UK) will withdraw the Branches Agreement. The details of the report and the board's decision will be made known to the customer/ beneficiary concerned, who will be informed of her or his legal rights.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

WDSA (UK) realises that without monitoring it will have no way of knowing whether or not its EO policy is effective. It is therefore important that written records are kept of all beneficiaries and leavers to ensure that checks can be carried out under WDSA (UK) equal opportunities policy. The record should reveal any bias or possible discrimination in the selection and allocation processes for service delivery. Any problem areas revealed will need to be dealt with by the WDSA (UK) Trustees.

The WDSA (UK) management team are responsible for taking follow-up action on any requirements resulting from statistical monitoring.