

The Unity Centre equalities, diversity and inclusion policy 2021-2024

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Part I: Policy Details

1. Introduction

As an ethical organisation, we are committed

- to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion, including equality of opportunity, throughout our organisation, and to eliminating unlawful discrimination. We believe that the people in our organisation should feel respected and able to give their best,
- to creating a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff and volunteers are recognised and valued,
- not to tolerate unethical and unlawful discrimination against clients, customers, contractors and the public.

2. Whose policy is this?

This is the equalities, diversity and inclusion policy of Unity Lewes CIC trading as The Unity Centre and hereinafter referred to as 'Unity', 'we', 'us' and 'our'.

3. Who does this policy apply to?

It applies to all Unity's directors, officers, managers, employees, volunteers, contractors, consultants, apprentices, interns, job applicants, agency workers and casual workers, hereinafter referred to as 'you'.

4. What does this policy cover?

This policy covers any and all aspects of our operations, governing how we treat those (including volunteers and contractors) who work for and with us, how we recruit or engage others to join our community and how we behave towards our clients, customers and suppliers.

Unity is proud to call itself an ethical organisation. We do not tolerate discrimination or harassment in any part of our operations. We are fully committed to promoting equal opportunities in employment and volunteering, and to treating all contractors, clients and customers equally.

This means that our policy covers, but is not limited to, the following:

- a. Your pay and employment conditions if you are an employee
- b. Your conditions of work if you are a volunteer
- c. Our recruitment processes
- d. How we may appraise, reward, incentivise, promote, train and commit to the continuing professional development of our employees
- e. How we may appraise, reward and incentivise our volunteers
- f. Our procedures for addressing grievances and disciplinary matters
- g. How we end employment contracts and volunteering agreements and how we exit employees and volunteers, including related matters such as how we give references
- h. How we and you treat clients and customers
- i. How we and you treat contractors, suppliers and other key visitors, business contacts and stakeholders

It also means that we will ensure, as far as possible:

- a. full access to everyone applying for job vacancies and job opportunities with our business, and
- b. that all relevant decisions are made on the basis of objective criteria.

You should familiarise yourself with this policy and all our other policies, including, in particular our Grievance Policy and our Harassment and Bullying Policy.

5. Your employment contract or volunteer agreement with Unity

This policy is not part of your employment contract or volunteer agreement with us. We, Unity, may amend this policy at any time.

6. What is discrimination?

Under UK employment law, including the [Equality Act 2010](#), there are a number of characteristics relevant to an individual who is covered by the policy, who must not unfairly be considered (if accounted for at all) in decisions relating to any aspect of their working life.

These characteristics are called 'protected characteristics' and they are listed immediately below:

- a. Age
- b. Disability
- c. Gender reassignment
- d. Marital or civil partnership status
- e. Pregnancy or maternity
- f. Race (which includes colour and ethnic/national origin)
- g. Religion or belief
- h. Sex
- i. Sexual orientation

If employment-related decisions are made about an individual on the basis (whether wholly or partially) of any of these protected characteristics, it is almost inevitable that unlawful discrimination will have taken place.

The sorts of actions that would fall into this category of unlawful and prohibited initiatives include (but are not limited to) those set out below as practices that we will not tolerate. These actions need not be intended or directly committed by someone: indirect responsibility may be sufficient for someone to have unlawfully discriminated. An omission or failure to do something may create just as culpability as a positive action.

We will not tolerate the following by anyone within our business, including you:

a. Direct discrimination...

...occurs when someone with a protected characteristic is treated less favourably than somebody else has or would have been in identical circumstances. An example of this would be where an applicant for a job is rejected on grounds of their racial background. Another example would be where an employee is not promoted on the grounds of being pregnant or of having the care of young children.

b. Indirect discrimination...

...occurs when someone or a group of people with one of the protected characteristics is disadvantaged by a provision, criterion or practice that is applied to all employees or all volunteers (unless the treatment may be justified for a good business reason). Examples of this would be:

- a. Insisting, without good reason, that all employees must work full time, (which indirectly discriminates anyone with child-care responsibilities, women in particular)
- b. Requiring all employees to work onsite and refusing to consider a request to work remotely or under alternative conditions, such as flexible hours to avoid commute times, which could disadvantage someone with a disability or a phobia (eg someone who suffers claustrophobia or panic attacks on commuting routes)
- c. Refusing to provide a room for reflection and prayer, which would discriminate against individuals practising certain faiths
- d. Dismissing or not employing someone because they are of child-bearing age and are perceived as likely to become pregnant.

c. Harassment...

...covers hostile, humiliating, degrading, intimidating or similarly offensive treatment or conditions to which an individual with one or more protected characteristics is subjected. Any such actions deprive an individual of their dignity and violate them. It also covers areas such as sexual harassment, which may include direct and indirect threats or perceived threats to and violations of an individual's safety, wellbeing and liberty.

We draw no distinction between actions that may be labelled as 'joking', and not intended to cause offence, and those that may have been more direct and premeditated in their delivery. So, for

example, in line with legal definitions, reflecting general standards of decency, we will regard any of the following as falling within the definition of harassment:

- a. using unkind, derogatory or otherwise unwelcome names or nicknames to address or identify someone
- b. making insensitive jokes, whether about someone directly or the content of which would be evidently offensive to anyone with a protected characteristic
- c. refusing to recognise and respect someone's gender identity
- d. making lewd comments and/or displaying pornographic material
- e. excluding colleagues and/or making them feel that they have no option but to exclude themselves
- f. sexual harassment, which may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in 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.

You should refer to our Bullying and Harassment Policy for a full run-down of the matters that we consider to be covered by this definition.

d. Victimisation

This has a particular meaning under UK employment law and it is narrower than an ordinary dictionary definition, covering the situation only where a worker:

- a. has complained of discrimination (or harassment),
or
- b. has supported a fellow worker in making a complaint about these concerns,

and has then suffered reprisals from others, including those responsible for that worker's employment prospects and working conditions.

e. Other discriminatory actions that are also prohibited

The UK's employment law also identifies other actions that can be unlawful under the equal opportunities legislation. Examples of these include:

- a. Failing to make reasonable adjustments to minimise certain disadvantages suffered by a disabled employee or volunteer (or applicant for a job or volunteering role)
- b. Instructing another person (or applying pressure on them) to discriminate
- c. Knowingly assisting somebody else when they carry out a discriminatory act
- d. Discriminating against somebody believed to have a protected characteristic, whether or not they actually do, or because they associate with a third party who does.

We will also not tolerate discriminatory behaviour or attitudes on the basis of any of these protected characteristics, whether actual, perceived or assumed, towards our clients, customers, contractors or suppliers, nor towards members of the public.

Part II: Our procedures and approach to this policy

1. Duties and responsibilities

Overall responsibility for the effective implementation and operation of the policy lies with Unity's directors and managers. All directors and managers are expected to lead by example, and managers are expected to attain and maintain appropriate standards of behaviour within the teams they manage.

However, everyone to whom this policy applies, including you, is responsible for ensuring that this policy works to prevent the activities that it prohibits from taking place within our organisation.

Because we are an ethical business, this responsibility goes beyond your legal obligations and it exists regardless of your job title or how long you have been associated with Unity.

You also need to be aware that the breach of these legal obligations alone will mean that you can be found personally liable for unlawful discrimination where you have breached this policy; you will face disciplinary action by us and potentially other legal actions. This is because if you breach this policy, you may also make Unity liable for your actions and both you and we may have to pay compensation to anyone who claims against us.

We therefore expect you to

- a. take personal responsibility for adhering to this policy's aims and commitments
- b. promptly and appropriately draw any breaches of this policy's aim and commitments to the attention of your manager or, if that is not appropriate in the specific circumstances, a director of the company, who in turn we expect to notify Unity's managing director.

We always welcome your feedback on how we can best promote and ensure equal opportunities throughout Unity. Please let your manager know if you have any ideas or would like to be involved in any of our existing initiatives.

2. Recruitment, promotions and identifying candidates for other opportunities

In any selection process that we use within Unity, whether we're selecting interviewees for job or volunteering opportunities, offering jobs and posts, identifying individuals for promotion or considering other opportunities or necessities (such as redundancy situations), we will apply a rigorous, objective selection process using non-discriminatory criteria, as far as possible.

All job adverts and opportunity announcements must be:

- Discussed with and signed off by the managing director, one of whose responsibilities is to ensure that any advert is compliant with this policy;
- located and/or circulated so as to reach as wide and diverse a pool of interested candidates as possible; and
- worded so as to encourage, as far as possible and reasonable, applications from individuals of all characteristics – or, at the very least, so as not to discourage any individuals with protected characteristics from applying.

There may be circumstances where some indication of required skills (that do potentially discriminate) is justified and where self-deselection is inevitable; for example, where the job vacancy is for a window cleaner who works at height, wearing abseiling harnesses. The job advert might specify that interested candidates must be willing and capable of abseiling to be considered for the job.

If you are involved in interviewing for roles or any other part of our recruitment process, you must never ask an applicant about their health, attendance record, age or whether they have a disability before offering a role to them (except in very limited circumstances, which should be agreed with the managing

director).

You can ask someone if they have any particular needs or requirements with which you can assist if they are coming to meet you for an interview. In certain limited cases, it may also be permitted to make a role offer conditional on a successful medical examination.

During interviews or other interactions with candidates for a role, you must not ask anything that might imply a bias against any candidate with one or more protected characteristics. So, for example, asking a candidate if they are married or intend to have children (or any more children), or if their religion or religious beliefs permit them to work at weekends, are strictly no-go areas.

If you are ever in doubt about what you can or must not say, or if you believe that a particular job vacancy needs a medical examination as part of the recruitment or onboarding process, you must check the position with Unity's managing director.

3. Monitoring the policy and our personnel

During any recruitment and onboarding process, we may ask questions that include some protected characteristics to help us monitor our diversity and how we are succeeding in our commitment to promote equal opportunities. Including health or disability questions in equal opportunities monitoring exercises is acceptable but the data gathered must not be used for any employment-related decisions, such as whether to offer a role or opportunity to a particular candidate.

We may also record and analyse information about equal opportunities more generally within the workplace. We do this so that we can make sure this policy operates successfully. The data helps us to refine it, review the composition of our workforce, and to promote workplace equality.

When you join the Company, you give us consent to gather and process this data about you.

4. Handling breaches and enforcement

We take very seriously all allegations of breach and any breaches that we discover. All allegations and/or suspicions of breach will therefore be thoroughly investigated.

If you wish to complain or raise an allegation of breach (or potential breach) under the policy, you should contact your manager, the managing director or another director as soon as possible. If you want to take formal action, you will need to follow our grievance procedure and read our Harassment and Bullying Policy.

Anyone raising a concern in good faith about matters covered by this policy will have our full support and cooperation in getting to the bottom of what has happened and any appropriate action that needs to follow on from that examination. This will be the case regardless of our conclusions and including where we determine that the allegation was mistakenly made. There will never be any reprisals against those who genuinely have, or consider that they have, valid grounds to bring concerns about discrimination to our attention.

However, complaints made in bad faith, for whatever reason (including where this is an attempt to avoid or to deflect disciplinary action), will be treated as misconduct and may lead to a dismissal for gross misconduct.

We will take prompt disciplinary action against you if we discover that you have harassed or discriminated against anyone else in breach of this policy. If we conclude that your behaviour amounts to gross misconduct, we will be within our rights to dismiss you without notice and with no payment in lieu of that notice. If you are a volunteer or contractor, we reserve the right to terminate immediately and without notice our relationship and any agreement or contract with you, including termination of our

liability for payment, services or other obligations to you if in exchange for work or services not already rendered by you.

Use of our grievance and/or disciplinary procedures does not affect an employee's right to make a claim to an employment tribunal within three months of the alleged harassment or discrimination.

End of The Unity Centre equalities, diversity and inclusion policy 2021-2024