

Equality & Diversity Policy

Policy due for review May 2011

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1. DEFINITIONS

Equality

- ◆ as the process by which we strive to ensure that everything we do is fully inclusive and so meets the needs of and is fair to those who are disadvantaged by prejudice and indifference.
- ◆ as combating the injustice faced by some groups and individuals when, both directly and indirectly by organisations and society as a whole, prejudice is put into effect.

Diversity

Diversity results from differences in gender, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, age, physical or mental capabilities, marital status, sexual preference, social background, sexuality, organisation role and many other factors which cause people to have different perspectives on the same set of facts or issues.

Valuing diversity means valuing the qualities that different people bring to their jobs, to the resolution of problems and to the development of business opportunities — rather than judging people's ideas by the extent to which they conform to our existing values or personal preference.

Managing diversity means recognising that both our staff and the individuals and communities with whom we work are from differing cultural, ethnic, racial and gender backgrounds and have different religions or beliefs, nationalities, sexualities, ages, physical and mental abilities etc. By recognising those differences, The Rural Media Company can make the most of our potential. It is about managing people who are not like you, and who do not necessarily aspire to be like you. It is about having the management skill to allow their different perspectives and views to improve the quality of your decisions.

Positive Action

Working within the legislative framework, we will seek to implement equal opportunities through positive action programmes, which seek to actively prevent prejudice taking effect, recognise when it has in the past, and seek to rectify the injustices created.

Positive Discrimination

Positive discrimination usually means selecting someone to obtain a job or receive a service on the basis of categories such as their ethnic origin or gender rather than merit or other objective criteria. It is illegal in the UK and should never happen under any circumstances.

2 INTRODUCTION

Why equality and diversity are important for The Rural Media Company?

This document sets out the Equality & Diversity Policy of The Rural Media Company. It explains why equality and diversity are important to us, the basic principles we will follow and how we intend to monitor and achieve this.

The Equality and Diversity Policy covers both the work we do with individuals and communities, and the internal procedures that govern how we function as an organisation. Throughout this policy the term 'staff' applies to paid staff, students on placement, freelance workers, volunteers and the members of the Board of Trustees.

This Policy sets out how The Rural Media Company intends to meet its obligations under the following legislation:

- ◆ The Race Relations Act 1976
- ◆ The Race Relations Amendment Act 2000
- ◆ The Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- ◆ The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Act 1999
- ◆ The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- ◆ The Equal Pay Act 1970
- ◆ The Human Rights Act 1998
- ◆ The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003,
- ◆ The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003.
- ◆ The Age Discrimination Act 2006.
- ◆ The Equality Act 2006

The Rural Media Company provides practical support and aims to empower people in rural communities and marginalized groups by enabling them to have a voice through creative media. These groups and communities have the right to both appropriate access to our services and equitable treatment by our staff. Equality and diversity are not optional extras for The Rural Media Company; they are an integral part of our charitable objects, beliefs, and strategic objectives.

At the heart of what we do is recognition, and a commitment to combating, the oppression many communities face because of their race, ethnic origin, religion or belief, nationality, income, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. Many of our members represent some of the most disadvantaged and marginalised communities and for women, gay men and lesbians, people on lower income, older people and people

with disabilities, these equal opportunities and diversity issues are also particularly acute.

The Rural Media Company's Disciplinary & Grievance procedures and Harassment policy set out how we will deal with issues of this kind found within our staff handbook.

3 PRINCIPLES

The Rural Media Company will uphold equality and diversity:

- (a) in employment, by developing policies which ensure that no job applicant, employee, volunteer or trainee is unfairly discriminated against because they are a refugee or asylum seeker, or on the basis of their gender, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, age, physical or mental capabilities, marital status, sexual preference, social background, sexuality, or organisation role
- (b) in service delivery, by providing appropriate, sensitive and impartial services and being accessible to all
- (c) by fostering a co-operative working environment which is free from harassment or victimisation and which promotes good relations among staff to create the conditions for the full development of their potential;
- (d) by employing and providing opportunities for disadvantaged groups and so developing a multi-cultural organisation which reflects the diversity of our clients and society;
- (e) by promoting the values contained in the Policy in our relationships with other organisations.

In implementing these principles, The Rural Media Company will ensure that it meets all the necessary legal requirements and strives to set standards of good practice that others will follow.

4 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

Gender

The Rural Media Company maintains a proud tradition of promoting gender equality. It will continue to work to ensure fair representation of women and men in its staff and service users. We will ensure that women are fully represented in all parts of the organization at all levels. We will ensure our policies and procedures address these issues and where appropriate take positive action. We will ensure that we do not apply any direct or indirect discrimination to our clients or staff on

the basis of gender and marriage. To tackle unequal pay between men and women, The Rural Media Company has a transparent and non-discriminatory pay system.

Sexual Orientation

The Rural Media Company is committed to, and will build on its success in, creating a safe working environment for all its staff and service users with due regard to their sexual orientation. We want The Rural Media Company to be a place where people who are lesbian, gay, bisexuals or transgender among our staff and clients feel it is safe and comfortable to be open about their sexuality. We will challenge negative views and if necessary, provide training so that there is a better understanding of the issue amongst our staff.

People with disabilities

The Rural Media Company will increase awareness in the organisation about the needs of staff, clients and visitors with disabilities. We will work to ensure our practices do not restrict use of our services or the contribution people with disabilities can make to our work. We will make regular assessments of the accessibility of our sites and will actively seek opportunities to improve access to our premises and services for people who have physical disabilities. Where we cannot provide physical access, we will ensure that we make the service accessible through outreach, and will ensure that we operate non-discriminatory practices in service delivery.

We also recognize that disabilities may not always be visible and equally respect the wider needs of this group including individuals with mental health or debilitating conditions, including HIV and AIDS.

Race and Ethnicity

The Rural Media Company employs and serves people from diverse racial and ethnic groups and is proud of and will continue to maintain this tradition.

We will continue to implement positive action initiatives to assist staff to access and enhance their career development opportunities, both within and outside The Rural Media Company.

Religion and Belief

The Rural Media Company is committed to, and will build on its success in creating a safe working environment for all its staff and service users with due regard to their religions or beliefs. We want The Rural Media Company to be a place where all staff and clients who adhere to different religions or beliefs feel it is safe and comfortable to be open about their religion or belief. We will challenge negative views and practices and if necessary, provide training so that there is a better understanding of the issue amongst our staff.

Age

The Rural Media Company will continue to employ and serve people of all age groups and will ensure its policies do not adversely affect staff or services users because of their age. We will ensure that we do not unfairly discriminate in the employment of staff or the provision of services on grounds of age, both old and young.

Service Delivery

The Rural media Company works continually to improve service delivery to clients from diverse backgrounds with the view to support their diverse needs.

As far as resources allow, The Rural Media Company will aim to provide services in the client's first language using interpreters and sub-titles or translation for productions.

The Rural Media Company also promotes details of community, social groups and specialist services to meet needs of communities with whom we work.

Work-life balance

The Rural Media Company recognizes the need for staff to achieve a satisfactory balance between home and work, and will promote flexible working practices in line with HR policies and where resources allow. Our family friendly policies will acknowledge the diversity of staff home situations and strive to provide support for all staff.

Language

The Rural Media Company staff must be sensitive to the needs of those whose first language is not English.

Recruitment

As part of the implementation of this policy, we will review our recruitment procedures on a regular basis.

All employees and members of The Rural media Company who are involved in the recruitment and selection of staff should be familiar with the main principles of the legislation and fundamental to compliance is the adoption of procedures and techniques, including questioning techniques, which serve to eradicate unlawful direct and indirect discrimination.

The main principles of The Rural Media Company's recruitment procedure are:

- Job descriptions are clearly and concisely written and free from illegal bias.
- Person specifications only detail criteria relevant to the performance of the job.
- Advertisements are free from unlawful discrimination in both words and pictures and state that The Rural Media Company's aims to be an equal opportunities employer.
- Agencies which may be involved in the recruitment process, e.g. Temporary Staff Agencies and Recruitment Consultants, are informed of and given a copy of this policy.
- Members of The Rural Media who are involved in the recruitment of staff will be informed and given a copy of this policy.
- At all times during the recruitment process applicants should not be asked inappropriate or illegal questions.
- We will ensure open and honest discussion of the equality and diversity issues involved in recruitment and create a process by which notes of each interview and decision made will be taken, and which should include the questions asked of each candidate.

Positive action

We will establish robust plans of positive action to address gaps in our equal opportunities performance where monitoring reveals such gaps exist. Within the legislative framework we will target recruitment on groups that are under-represented amongst the staff of The Rural Media Company or where membership of a particular group is a genuine occupational qualification for the post.

We will ensure that staff development programmes address the needs of staff that may not have had the opportunities to develop the skills they now need to further their careers.

5. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

The responsibilities for implementation of the Equality and Diversity Policy are allocated as follows:

- (a) The CEO has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and is accountable for it to the Board of Trustees.
- (b) The Company Administrator has responsibility for developing and reviewing this policy and the procedures associated with it.

- (c) The Personnel Sub-group shall periodically review the development and monitoring of the Equality & Diversity Policy.
- (d) Line managers are responsible for ensuring the Equality & Diversity Policy is implemented in their part of the organisation; for ensuring staff understand the policy and their roles within it; and for providing reports and monitoring information.
- (e) Every member of staff has an individual responsibility to ensure this policy is actively implemented. This should be reflected in the development of individual work programmes which take account of the needs of all potential users of services. It should also be reflected in individual's performance and conduct.

In order to implement this policy we shall:

- Provide equality training and guidance as appropriate, including training on induction and management courses and ensure that those involved in assessing candidates for recruitment or promotion will be trained in non-discriminatory selection techniques
- Communicate the policy to staff, job applicants and relevant others (such as volunteers or students)
- Incorporate equal opportunities notices into general communications practices (e.g., newsletters, website ,job advertisements)
- Obtain commitments from other persons or organizations such as freelancers or agencies that they too will comply with the policy in their dealings with our organization
- Ensure that adequate resources are available to fulfil the objectives of the policy.

6 Monitoring and review

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

The effectiveness of our equal opportunities policy will be reviewed regularly 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 in so far as it is relevant.

7 **Complaints**

Employees who believe they have suffered any form of discrimination, harassment or victimization are entitled to raise the matter through the agreed procedures specified in our anti-bullying and harassment policy, grievance policy and complaints policy documents. Copies of these are available from the Company Administrator and were supplied with your staff handbook. All complaints of discrimination will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially.

In addition to our external procedures, employees have the right to pursue complaints of discrimination to an industrial tribunal or the Fair Employment Tribunal under anti-discrimination legislation as listed in the introduction section.

However employees wishing to make a complaint to a tribunal are normally required to raise their complaint under our internal grievance procedures first.

We will ensure open and honest discussion of the equality and diversity issues involved and create an environment where all staff members feel encouraged to air their views; learn from each other's experience and treat different perspectives and values with respect.