



This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- **PQ 005a Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy**
- **PQ 005b Acacia Anti Racism Strategy**

1. Purpose

This policy sets out Acacia's approach to equality and diversity. It outlines our commitment and our expectations for practise within the organization. We are committed to promoting equality and diversity, and promoting a culture that actively values difference and recognises that people from different backgrounds and experiences bring valuable insights to the workplace and enhance the way we work.

Acacia aims to be an inclusive organisation, committed to providing equal opportunities throughout employment including in the recruitment, training and development of employees, pro-actively tackling and eliminating discrimination in the workplace and in the services, we provide.

2. Scope

The rights and obligations set out in this policy apply equally to all Trustee's, volunteers and employees, whether part time or full time on a substantive or fixed-term contract, and also to contractors and others employed under a contract of service.

You have personal responsibility for the application of this policy. As part of your induction, you are expected to read and familiarise yourself with this policy, ensure that this policy is properly observed and fully complied with.

This document is of particular relevance to directors, line managers and other employees concerned with recruitment, training, promotion procedures and employment decisions which affect others.

3. Introduction

At Acacia, we consider that equality means breaking down barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunities and access for all groups both in employment, and to goods and services.

We consider diversity to mean celebrating difference and valuing everyone. Each person is an individual with visible and non-visible differences and by respecting this everyone can feel valued for their contributions which is beneficial not only for the individual but for Acacia too.

We acknowledge that equality and diversity are not inter-changeable but inter-dependent. There can be no equality of opportunity if difference is not valued and harnessed.

4. Policy

1 Statement of Commitment

1.1 Every employee is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity, equality and respect for all. Acacia will not tolerate any acts of unlawful or unfair discrimination (including harassment) committed against an employee, volunteer, contractor, job applicant or visitor because of a protected characteristic:

- sex;
- gender/gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race (including ethnic origin, colour, nationality and national origin);
- disability;
- sexual orientation;
- religion and or belief; and
- age.



2 Safe Environment

- 2.1 All employees will be encouraged to develop their skills and fulfil their potential and to take advantage of training, development and progression opportunities in Acacia. Selection for employment, promotion, training, or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability.
- 2.2 No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated. If you believe that you may have suffered discrimination because of any of the above protected characteristics or anything else, you should consider the appropriateness and feasibility of attempted informal resolution by discussion in the first instance with your line manager or another colleague in a relevant position of seniority. Alternatively, you may decide to raise the matter through Acacia's Disciplinary and Grievance Policy (EM003) using our incident reporting process. For types of discrimination see section 7 of this policy.
- 2.3 Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy should be reported using Acacia's incident reporting process and will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the appropriate procedure. Acacia will ensure that individuals who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably by Acacia as a result. However, false allegations of a breach of this policy which are found to have been made in bad faith will be dealt with under Acacia's Disciplinary and Grievance Policy.

A person found to have breached this policy may be subject to disciplinary action under the above policy

3 Anti Discriminatory Practice in Service delivery

- 3.1 Acacia Family Support aims to be responsive to the needs of the widely diverse communities in which we operate. The support services delivered by Acacia Family Support are available to all, including those of differing faiths or none. Acacia Family Support is committed to providing equal opportunities for all service users irrespective of their gender, nationality, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, class, age, religious beliefs, marital status or domestic circumstances.

4 Equal opportunities in Recruitment

- 4.1 Acacia Family Support will strive to ensure that every employee is treated fairly in employment matters. We are a Christian organisation and in light of our Christian purpose and ethos, there is a genuine occupational requirement (GOR) for Acacia's Trustee's and Executive staff team to be practicing Christians. This is reflected as appropriate in the Job Descriptions and Person Specifications for each post and is constantly under review. This requirement does not apply to other staff or voluntary positions within the organisation.
- 4.2 Selection for employment and volunteering is on the basis of aptitude and ability. As standard practice Acacia will capture applicants' diversity demographics as part of its recruitment processes to promote the elimination of unlawful discrimination. All application forms are pseudo anonymised prior to shortlisting to ensure unbiased selection.
- 4.3 During recruitment procedures those responsible for recruitment must:
- Specify only recruitment criteria that are relevant to the job, reflect genuine business needs and are proportionate. More than one person should be involved in shortlisting of applicants.
 - Review job advertisements carefully to ensure that stereotyping is avoided, and particular groups are not unjustifiably discouraged from applying.
 - Ensure that vacancies are advertised to a diverse audience avoiding informal recruitment methods that exclude fair competition.
 - Not ask applicants about health or disability before a job offer is made.
 - Keep a written record of interview scoring and interview notes to support reasons for relevant choices of successful candidates.



- Shortlist 'blindly' – using FQ080. Admin will assign a random code to application forms and remove the front page containing name and details before shortlisting.
- Positive discrimination - if a person who has declared a disability on their job application form for a job at Acacia has met the minimum essential shortlisting criteria, they will be offered an interview even if they are not identified as one of the top candidates in shortlisting.

5 Implementing the policy

5.1 Acacia Family Support is committed to active promotion of equality of opportunity and will ensure that action is taken at all levels within the organisation to identify and develop systems and practices that are anti-discriminatory. To this end monitoring and evaluation will be undertaken to ensure that our policy directly affects our practice.

5.2 *To implement this policy we will:*

- 5.2.1 Ensure all staff, volunteers and Board members understand it;
- 5.2.2 Provide appropriate training during induction and further regular staff ongoing training.
- 5.2.3 Ensure equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice is demonstrated in all our policies and practice.
- 5.2.4 Ensure that its publicity and promotional materials promote positive, anti-discriminatory messages.
- 5.2.5 Each time a post that has had a genuine occupational requirement (GOR) attached to it is advertised again, the need for the GOR is reviewed at this stage.

6 Responsibility

- 6.1 The Directors have overall responsibility for ensuring implementation of this policy.
- 6.2 Each Locality Manager has responsibility for ensuring successful implementation of the policy within their department.
- 6.3 Every employee/volunteer has a personal responsibility to ensure their behaviour supports the principles of this policy.
- 6.4 Everyone should challenge any and all forms of discrimination.

7 Forms of Discrimination

7.1 *We recognise that discrimination can take different forms:*

7.1.1 Direct Discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs where one person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic set out in this policy. By way of example, refusing to promote a pregnant employee on the basis that she is shortly due to go on maternity leave would be direct discrimination on the protected characteristic of the employee's sex.

Other types of direct discrimination are:

Associative discrimination - this is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic. For example, an employee is discriminated against because his/her son is disabled.



Perceptive discrimination - this is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. For example, where co-workers believe the individual is gay. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic.

7.1.2 Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination occurs when an unjustifiable requirement or condition is applied, which appears to be the same for all, but which has a disproportionate, adverse effect on one group of people. This is discrimination even though there was no intention to discriminate. For example, a requirement for UK based qualifications could disadvantage applicants who have obtained their qualifications outside of the UK; this could amount to indirect discrimination on the grounds of race.

7.1.3 Victimisation

Victimisation is where an employee is treated less favourably than others because they have asserted legal rights against Acacia or assisted a colleague in doing so. For example, victimisation may occur where an employee has raised a genuine grievance against Acacia and is demoted as a result.

7.1.4. Harassment

Harassment is “unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.” It is important to remember that it is not the intention of the harasser but how the recipient perceives their behaviour, which determines whether harassment has occurred.

8 Grievances and Discipline

- 8.1 You should follow the Disciplinary and Grievance Policy to challenge discriminatory practice. You will not be penalised for raising such a grievance. However, if your grievance is found to be untrue and malicious you may find yourself subject to disciplinary action.
- 8.2 If you are found guilty of discriminatory practice you may face disciplinary action.

9 Monitoring

- 9.1 We will regularly check our progress by:
 - 9.1.1 Monitoring statistics on employees, applicants for jobs, training and development, grievances, disciplinary procedures, reasons for leaving, and complaints;
 - 9.1.2 Using the data collected to examine the success of this policy and plan for the future;
 - 9.1.3 Consulting with staff on this policy.

10 Review of Policy

- 10.1 We will review this policy every three years. If there are any changes to legislation within this period, that affect this policy, we will update it accordingly.