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# Equal Opportunities

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August 2022

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This Policy should be read with reference to the LYM  
Equality & Diversity Code of Practice August 2022.

## 1. Introduction:

Lincolnshire Youth Mission wants to get the best from everyone, whoever they are or whatever their background. We are therefore very firmly committed to a policy of providing equal opportunities and fair treatment to all, irrespective of their:

- Race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- Sex or sexual orientation
- Marital status
- Religion
- Disability
- Residential locations
- Responsibilities for dependents
- Age
- Offending background (*See Ex-offender Policy/Guidance*)

## 2. Foundation for Policy:

As we tell you later, we have legal obligations in this area, and face legal action if we don't comply. Giving equal opportunities to everyone is not just right in law – it is also good sense if we are to make the most of all the skills and talents of our staff.

This means that:

- No-one must be discriminated against, either directly or indirectly, for any reason
- No-one must suffer any form of harassment from their colleagues

These principles also apply to volunteers and the young people who access our projects and anyone else with whom we deal. We will ensure that we:

- Treat everyone equally, fairly and as individuals
- Recognise and have a positive attitude to diversity, including religious belief, and customs

## 3. Disability:

Where we are dealing with people with disabilities, we ask employees and volunteers to:

- Be aware of any special needs and where appropriate discuss them with their Line Manager
- Be aware of the various sources of financial assistance, equipment and advice available from outside organisations to people with disabilities
- Take all reasonable steps to ensure that they can go about their work or living safely and effectively

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- Ensure that they can meet the needs of staff and visitors with disabilities when they are designing evacuation procedures (for example any special equipment needed) – and also make sure, where relevant, that there are people trained in the lifting and carrying techniques needed in an emergency.

#### **4. Monitoring:**

We monitor to see if our equal opportunity's policy is working. To do this we record details of the sex, marital status, ethnic origin, disability of our staff. We also record similar details for job applicants. This information is treated in strict confidence.

#### **5. Guidance:**

##### ***Discrimination***

Discrimination can arise directly or indirectly.

Direct discrimination is when a person is treated less favourably than another person is, or would be, treated because of their race, sex or marital status.

Indirect discrimination can happen when a rule is applied to everyone but in doing so applies unfairly to a particular group or groups of people.

This can arise in many ways. For example you may be discriminating indirectly:

- Against ethnic minority people if you have a rule forbidding people to wear anything on their head at a public enquiry point (which would stop the wearing of turban's etc)
- Against women if access to a particular job is unjustifiably restricted to staff who work full time.

Such rules are lawful only if they are justifiable. If a rule that appears to discriminate indirectly is justifiable, complex issues are involved. If the question arises you should seek the advice of your Line Manager.

##### ***Racial Harassment***

Racial harassment is also racial discrimination (because it involves treating a person less favourably on ground of race or ethnic origin). It exists in many forms.

Verbal abuse is an obvious example but racial attitudes can be conveyed in more subtle ways – for example by telling racist or anti-Semitic jokes. The joker may well insist the jokes were not meant personally and no-one likes being accused of lacking a sense of humour but such comments are often hurtful. The remarks may not have been specifically aimed at someone from an ethnic minority; or the remarks may not have been intended to be hurtful. They may still amount to harassment if they are seen by the recipient as racist in intent.

It is often assumed that discrimination lies mainly in acts committed by individuals. However, procedures may have failed and continue to fail to take account of the needs of people from ethnic minority groups. If only a small proportion of a proportion of particular racial group is able to comply with such practices then there may be indirect discrimination.

## ***Sex Discrimination***

It is unlawful, under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and contrary to our policy to discriminate against directly or indirectly on the grounds of sex or marital status:

- In the recruitment of staff
- In the treatment of existing staff
- In providing services or facilities to the public

Under the Act, the committee can be held legally responsible for the action and work of its employees while carrying out their duties, and again, if you break the law, you could also face legal action.

Sex discrimination arises when an individual's sex is the determining factor in reaching decisions affecting their treatment. The golden rule is always to consider whether an action that has been taken would have been different had the officer's sex or marital status been different.

It is particularly important to avoid making stereotyped or unwarranted assumptions. For example, not all women are motherly, nor are they less able to deal with an aggressive situation.

Generally, it is men who sexually harass women, but there have been instances where the roles have been reversed. These guidelines apply equally to men and women.

## ***Sexual Orientation***

The Sex Discrimination Act does not automatically protect lesbians and gay men from discrimination or harassment (although this may amount to less favourable treatment on grounds of gender). We will not tolerate discrimination or harassment on the grounds of someone's sexual orientation. Such action is contrary to our equal opportunity's policy. A complaint of discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation is treated as seriously as a complaint of discrimination on any other grounds.

An individual's sexual orientation is a private matter. Jokes about gay men or lesbians, or the use of offensive terms, for instance, are not acceptable.

## ***Religious beliefs or political opinion***

The Fair Employment Act (Northern Ireland) 1976 and 1989 make it unlawful for an employer to discriminate on the ground of religious belief or political opinion when recruiting staff, or in the treatment of existing staff.

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Board of Directors

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Under the Act, the Board can be held legally responsible for the actions or words of its employees while carrying out their duties, and if you break the law, you could face legal action as well. Whilst discrimination and harassment on these grounds are only illegal in Northern Ireland, our equal opportunity's policy extends this concept to all staff whatever their religion or political opinion.

## ***Disability***

Although the Association is not bound by the Disabled Persons' (Employment) Acts 1944 and 1958, we can employ at least 3% registered disabled people.

Complaints of discrimination might arise from imposing unnecessary job requirements so that a person with disability cannot do it, or from excluding a disabled person from consideration for a post because of disability.

In fact a wide range of special work aids are available, which can enable people with disabilities to carry out duties that it had wrongly been assumed were 'beyond' them.