



DIOCESE OF EAST ANGLIA

## **Diocesan policy on EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Diocese of East Anglia is committed to providing equal opportunities to all its existing and potential members of staff and in all of its day to day activities; this includes all people employed in our parishes. It also has the right and duty to safeguard and uphold its Catholic ethos and identity. Our first obligation is to the values of the Gospel and the teachings of the Catholic Church. We are also required to comply with discrimination legislation. Throughout this policy, 'the Diocese' should be understood as including all the parishes of the Diocese.
- 1.2 There will be instances when a particular role for the Diocese or a parish carries with it a 'genuine occupational requirement' that the post-holder be a Catholic. Current U.K. legislation makes explicit provision for this. Other roles may require the post-holder to have knowledge of the Catholic Church. In many cases it will be appropriate to require that job applicants should be broadly in sympathy with the vision, mission and values of the Catholic Church.
- 1.3 Subject to the above, it is the Diocese's policy to treat job applicants and existing employees in the same way, regardless of their religion, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, age, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, political beliefs, social background or disabilities.
- 1.4 Every applicant and employee has a right to his or her private and family life, and the Diocese respects that right. At the same time, however, the Diocese has expectations of its employees. They are expected to be conscientious and loyal at all times to the aims and objectives of the Diocese, having regard for its Catholic ethos, and not to do anything detrimental or prejudicial to its values and interests that would bring the Diocese into disrepute. These expectations will be discussed with potential members of staff, referred to in any contract of employment, and applied in a consistent and non-discriminatory way.

### **2. Policy and Procedures**

- 2.1 The Diocese's equal opportunities policy applies at all times and should influence the way employees and the Diocese treat individuals, whether they be fellow employees or members of the public. The policy impacts on all aspects of employment including vacancy advertising, recruitment, career development and training, terms of employment and the way the Diocese and employees go about the day to day activities of the Diocese.

In particular:

- 2.1.1 Wherever possible, all vacancies will be advertised simultaneously both internally and externally and will include a short statement on equal opportunity.
- 2.1.2 Wherever possible, more than one person will be involved in the selection, interview and recruitment process and all involved will be in receipt of updated training in equal opportunities.

- 2.1.3 Reasons for selection and rejection of applicants for vacancies will be recorded.
- 2.1.4 The Diocese believes in the development of its employees and special training will be provided where appropriate to meet the needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.
- 2.1.5 Wherever possible, efforts will be made to identify and remove unnecessary/unjustifiable barriers and provide appropriate facilities and conditions of service to meet the special needs of disadvantaged and or underrepresented groups.
- 2.1.6 Wherever possible, the Diocese will seek to provide flexible working arrangements to meet the circumstances of all of its employees.
- 2.2 The Diocese expects each employee to enter into the spirit of the policy and to ensure that a positive equal opportunities climate exists by treating others on their merits and by disassociating themselves from any form of direct or indirect discrimination, victimisation, or sexual, racial or any other type of harassment including harassment based on an employee's religious beliefs, age or disability.
- 2.2.1 **Direct discrimination** arises where a person is treated less favourably because of assumptions about the group to which they belong. For example "I won't employ women with children because, if their children are ill, they take time off work".
- 2.2.2 **Indirect discrimination** occurs where a condition is applied which is more difficult for certain groups to meet. For example, if an employer required for no good reason that applicants for a clerical job had to be wine connoisseurs, that requirement may be indirectly discriminatory against Muslims who are forbidden to drink alcohol.
- 2.2.3 **Harassment** is unwanted behaviour by one employee to another which demeans, humiliates and undermines the victim. Harassment takes many forms from banter and/or innuendo to actual physical contact or violence. Employees may not always realise that their behaviour constitutes harassment and employees must therefore always recognise that what is acceptable to them may not be acceptable to another employee. Examples of harassment include insensitive jokes and pranks, bullying or other forms of intimidation or humiliation, deliberate exclusion from conversations, lewd or racially offensive comments about appearance, speculation about an individual's private life and sexual activities, threatened or actual sexual contact, or racial abuse.
- 2.3 To ensure that the policy is operating effectively (and for no other purpose), the Diocese maintains records of existing employees' and job applicants' racial origins, gender and disability. Records will be monitored and analysed and the Diocese's procedures will be regularly reviewed and, when necessary, amended in order to continue to form the basis for appropriate action to eliminate unlawful direct and indirect discrimination and harassment, and to promote equality of opportunity.
- 2.4 The Diocese regards direct or indirect discrimination, victimisation and harassment on the grounds of sex, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, age, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, political beliefs, social background or disability as a serious matter. Employees who display such behaviour will be subject to the Diocese's disciplinary procedure. These acts are likely to result in disciplinary action which may constitute gross misconduct and result in summary dismissal in the absence of mitigating circumstances.
- 2.5 Should any employee of the Diocese feel that he or she is being treated unfairly, he or she should raise a grievance through the Diocese's grievance procedure. If the individual feels it is inappropriate to approach his or her immediate supervisor, he or she may then raise the matter with the Vicar General.

### Source

Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales: *Diversity and Equality Guidelines* (2005)

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