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| Equality and Diversity Policy | |
| Reference: GN06 | Effective date: 1 June 2012 |
| Page no: 1 of 4 | Approved: 6 June 2016 |
| Last revised 4 Jan 2022 | Next revision due: Jan 2024 |

Scope of Policy

This policy and the principles of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity apply to all employees and volunteers. This includes job advertisements, recruitment and selection, training and development, opportunities for promotion, conditions of service, pay and benefits, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures and termination. It also applies to how staff and volunteers deal with clients and suppliers of the Farm and anyone else dealt with in the course of business.

The Equality Act 2010 sets out ways in which it is unlawful to treat someone, including direct or indirect discrimination, harassment, victimisation and failing to make a reasonable adjustment for a disabled person.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

Purpose of Policy

The policy aims to create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all employees and volunteers are recognised and valued and to ensure compliance with our legal obligations under the Equalities Act 2010. Diversity is about recognising that everyone is different, whilst respecting and valuing those differences and realising the business benefits of having a diverse workforce. All staff and volunteers have a duty to act in accordance with this policy, to treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and not to discriminate against or harass other people regardless of their status.

Discrimination against staff or volunteers on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation (protected characteristics) is neither legal nor acceptable. We will take appropriate steps to accommodate the requirements of different religions, cultures, and domestic responsibilities. We are committed to ensuring that training, development and progression opportunities are available to all employees. Our employment policies and procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure fairness and good practice.

Any form of discrimination may be unlawful and breaches of WHCF's Equality and Diversity policy. Discrimination will be treated as a disciplinary offence and dealt with under the disciplinary procedures.

This policy should be read alongside the Dignity and Respect Policy GN29.

Responsibility for this policy

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with discrimination law. Day-to-day operational responsibility, including regular review of this policy, has been delegated to the Office Manager.

All managers must set an appropriate standard of behaviour, should lead by example and ensure that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote our aims and objectives with regard to equal opportunities. Managers will be given appropriate training on equal opportunities awareness and best practice for equal opportunities recruitment and selection. The Office Manager has overall responsibility for equal opportunities training.



| Equality and Diversity Policy | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Reference: GN06 | Effective date: 1 June 2012 |
| Page no: 2 of 4 | Approved: 6 June 2016 |
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If you are involved in management or recruitment, or if you have any questions about the content or application of this policy, you should contact the Office Manager to request training or further information.

All employees and volunteers must contribute to an environment that embraces diversity, ensuring their behaviour and actions do not amount to discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation in any way. Employees or volunteers who believe they are victims of harassment may report any behaviour that is or may be regarded as such to their manager without the need to make a formal complaint. Employees who believe they are victims of harassment are encouraged to use the grievance procedure (see policy GN08) as part of this policy.

This policy will be read by all employees and volunteers as part of the induction process and it forms part of the staff handbook.

Forms of discrimination

Discrimination by or against an employee or volunteer is generally prohibited unless there is a specific legal exemption. Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

- ◆ Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics set out above. For example, rejecting an applicant on the grounds of their race because they would not "fit in" would be direct discrimination.
- ◆ Indirect discrimination occurs where someone is disadvantaged by an unjustified provision, criterion or practice that also puts other people with the same protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage. For example, a requirement to work full time puts women at a particular disadvantage because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement will need to be objectively justified.
- ◆ Harassment or bullying related to any of the protected characteristics is prohibited. Harassment is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Harassment and bullying is dealt with further in our Respect and Personal Dignity Policy (GN29).
- ◆ Victimisation is the less favourable treatment of someone compared to their peers because they, in good faith, have complained (whether formally or otherwise) that someone has been bullying or harassing them or someone else, or supported someone to make a complaint or given evidence in relation to a complaint.

Areas of potential discrimination

Recruitment, selection and promotion

We aim to ensure that no job or volunteering applicant suffers discrimination because of any of the protected characteristics above. Our recruitment procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities. Job selection criteria are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are relevant to and necessary for the job. Short listing of applicants should be done by more than one person wherever possible.



| Equality and Diversity Policy | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Reference: GN06 | Effective date: 1 June 2012 |
| Page no: 3 of 4 | Approved: 6 June 2016 |
| Last revised 4 Jan 2022 | Next revision due: Jan 2024 |

Job advertisements should avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage groups with a particular protected characteristic from applying. We take steps to ensure that our vacancies are advertised to a diverse labour market.

Applicants should not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made. There are limited exceptions which should only be used with the Office Manager's approval. For example:

- ◆ Questions necessary to establish if an applicant can perform an intrinsic part of the job (subject to any reasonable adjustments).
- ◆ Questions to establish if an applicant is fit to attend an assessment or any reasonable adjustments that may be needed at interview or assessment.
- ◆ Equal opportunities monitoring (which will not form part of the decision-making process).

Applicants should not be asked about past or current pregnancy or future intentions related to pregnancy or about matters concerning age, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or gender reassignment without the approval of the Office Manager (who should first consider whether such matters are relevant and may lawfully be taken into account).

We are required by law to ensure that all employees are entitled to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status should not be made based on appearance or apparent nationality. All prospective employees, regardless of nationality, must be able to produce original documents (such as a passport) before employment starts, to satisfy current immigration legislation. The list of acceptable documents is available from the Office Manager or the UK Border Agency.

These principles apply to internal promotion as well as external recruitment.

Monitoring

To ensure that this policy is operating effectively, and to identify groups that may be underrepresented or disadvantaged in our organisation, during recruitment we monitor the applicants' ethnic origin, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion and age as part of the recruitment procedure. Provision of this information is voluntary and it will not adversely affect an individual's chances of recruitment or any other decision related to their employment. The information is removed from applications before short-listing, and kept in an anonymous format solely for the purposes stated in this policy. Analysing this data helps us take reasonable steps to avoid discrimination and improve equality and diversity.

We also monitor equalities information for volunteers (including trustees), members and some groups of service users (those where registration is required). We do not monitor general visitors to the organisation.

Please refer to the Recruitment Policy (GN18) for further information.

Staff training and promotion and conditions of service

Staff training needs will be identified through regular staff appraisals. All staff will be given appropriate access to training to enable them to progress within the organisation and all promotion decisions will be made on the basis of merit.

Our conditions of service, benefits and facilities are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are available to all staff who should have access to them and that there are no unlawful obstacles to accessing them.



| Equality and Diversity Policy | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Reference: GN06 | Effective date: 1 June 2012 |
| Page no: 4 of 4 | Approved: 6 June 2016 |
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Termination of employment

We will ensure that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory. We will also ensure that disciplinary procedures and penalties are applied without discrimination, whether they result in disciplinary warnings, dismissal or other disciplinary action.

Disability discrimination

If you are disabled or become disabled, we encourage you to tell us about your condition so that we can support you as appropriate.

If you experience difficulties at work because of your disability, you may wish to contact your line manager or the Office Manager to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. Your line manager or the Office Manager may wish to consult with you and your medical adviser(s) about possible adjustments. The organisation has a duty to make reasonable adjustments to the workplace to overcome barriers experienced by disabled people. If we consider a particular adjustment would not be reasonable we will explain our reasons and try to find an alternative solution where possible.

We will monitor the physical features of our premises to consider whether they place disabled workers, job applicants or service users at a substantial disadvantage compared to other staff. Where reasonable, we will take steps to improve access for disabled staff and service users.

Fixed-term employees and agency workers

We monitor our use of fixed-term employees and agency workers, and their conditions of service, to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits, training, promotion and permanent employment opportunities. We will, where relevant, monitor their progress to ensure that they are accessing permanent vacancies.

Part-time work

We monitor the conditions of service of part-time employees and their progression to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits and training and promotion opportunities. We will ensure requests to alter working hours are dealt with appropriately under our Flexible Working Policy (GN07).

Breaches of this policy

If you believe that you may have been discriminated against or harassed you are encouraged to raise the matter through our Grievance Procedure (GN08). If you are uncertain or need advice on how to proceed you should speak to the Office Manager.

Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. Staff who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False allegations which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure (GN04).

Any member of staff who is found to have committed an act of discrimination or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. We take a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.