



EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY

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Policy Statement

Procedures

Hackberry is committed to encouraging diversity and eliminating discrimination in both its role as an employer and as a provider of services. Hackberry aims to create a culture that respects, promotes dignity, equality and diversity, and that encourages individuals to develop and maximise their true potential. We are committed wherever practicable to achieving and maintaining a workforce that broadly reflects the local community in which we operate.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide equality and fairness for all in our employment and in the provision of services and not to discriminate on the grounds of gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, colour, nationality, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, religion or age. Hackberry opposes all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination.

All employees and volunteers, whether part-time, full-time or temporary, will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, training, volunteering or any other benefit will be on the basis of skills and ability.

Principles

Hackberry's commitment to Equality and Diversity is:

- To create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all our employees and volunteers are recognised and valued.
- To create a working environment that promotes dignity and respect for all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.
- To ensure training, development and progression opportunities are available to all.
- To promote equality in the workplace, which it believes is good management practice and makes sound business sense.
- To regularly review all employment and volunteering practices and procedures to ensure that no job applicants, staff, and or volunteers are treated less favourably than others.
- To regularly review services to ensure they are accessible and appropriate to all groups within society.
- To treat breaches of the equality policy seriously and take disciplinary action when required.
- To provide information and training to all employees and volunteers so that they are fully aware of the issues relating to Equality and Diversity and their responsibilities relating to it.
- Develop Equality Action plan, to ensure our Equality and Diversity policy is fully implemented.
- To ensure the policy is fully supported by the Executive Committee.
- To monitor and review the policy annually.

Positive action

Hackberry will act positively in using the Equality and Diversity Policy making public the commitment to provide equal opportunities to all present and future employees and volunteers.

Hackberry encourages all employees to apply for suitable opportunities and to seek training for promotion.

The Equality and Diversity Policy forms part of the Staff Handbook and Contract of Employment. Training in Equality and Diversity is provided as part of the Induction Programme.

Any form of discrimination by an employee, trustee or volunteer is treated very seriously and where appropriate will be dealt with using the Disciplinary Procedure.

Positive Discrimination

Positive discrimination is illegal and the recruitment of 'quotas' of particular groups is also illegal. Discrimination in selection to achieve or secure a balance of persons of different racial groups is also not allowed under the Race Relations Act 1976.

There is an exception, however, which may be appropriate for certain posts in Hackberry, i.e. When a genuine occupational qualification (GOQ) is necessary or desirable for a Particular group or sex. Both the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 allow these exceptions.

Job descriptions and person specifications

Job descriptions and Person Specifications are prepared for all posts. The job description indicates the responsibilities and tasks to be undertaken by the job holder. The Person Specification describes the qualifications, skills and abilities required. A list of preferred criteria may also be prepared. Care will be taken to ensure that neither the description or specification, discriminate on the grounds quoted in the Policy Statement.

Advertising

All candidates will be asked about their eligibility to work.

Hackberry will use a range of advertising methods in order to attract the applicants. Vacancies for new and existing jobs will normally be advertised internally and externally. All our advertising will:

- Contain the statement 'Hackberry is an 'Equal Opportunities Employer'.
- Ensure that we do not exclude, discriminate against, or discourage any particular group from applying nor make it difficult for anyone from such a group to apply.
- Refer to the job description and person specification for information.
- Give clear instructions about obtaining the application pack.

Applications and short listing

All applicants will complete an application form which contains only information essential and relevant to the appointment. Different formats will be made available.

Applications will be short listed by at least 2 people. Short listing will be performed on the basis of objective criteria and the extent to which candidates have shown, in the application form that they meet the required Person Specification and can carry out tasks and responsibilities required of the post-holder. Formal qualifications and standards of literacy and numeracy will only be taken into account when they are recognised as necessary for a particular job.

Short listed candidates will be invited to an interview. Staff responsible for short-listing, interviewing and selection of candidates will be:

- Clearly informed of selection criteria and the need for their consistent application;
- Guidance on generalised assumptions about people from groups quoted in the Policy Statement can have on selection decisions;
- Be aware of possible misunderstandings that can occur between persons from different cultural backgrounds

Interviewing

Interviews to be carried out by a minimum of 2 people, the names and gender of interviewees will be made available in advance.

All candidates will be asked about their eligibility to work.

The questions asked will gather objective evidence in support of the job description and person specification. The same questions will be asked of all candidates applying for the job.

Disabled candidates will be asked if they need support during the interview process or adjustments should they be offered the position.

Notes will be written and evidence gathered against the job description and person specification.

Selection

DBS Policy, candidates will be scored against the job description and person specification. The highest scoring applicants will be offered the position.

Offers will be made to successful candidates, subject to satisfactory references and DBS check (where required).

All unsuccessful candidates will be informed of the result of their application and offered brief feedback.

For all positions in Hackberry, we will require enhanced disclosures for all employees and volunteers. This requirement will be clearly stated in the application pack.

Ex-Offenders

Hackberry will not discriminate against ex-offenders with unspent convictions, unless required to do so because of the nature of the post. All applications will be considered on an individual basis.

Induction and training

All employees and volunteers are required to follow an appropriate induction process to ensure they are equipped to do the job.

All employees and volunteers will receive training on the Equality and Diversity policy, procedures and action plan as part of their induction.

Recruitment Monitoring

Applicants will be asked to complete an anonymous monitoring form as part of the application pack (to be returned in a separate envelope).

The 2001 Census categories will be used to monitor ethnicity of staff (as recommended by the Commission for Racial Equality). An additional category for Gypsy and Travellers will be included.

The monitoring form will monitor age, race, ethnic origin, religion, gender, marital status, disability.

Flexible working

Hackberry will offer a range of flexible working arrangements and will work together to identify solutions that suit both the individual and the organisation if required.

Promotion

All vacancies will be advertised internally and externally, where appropriate.

Training

All employees and volunteers have access to a wide range of training opportunities which are regularly circulated.

Training opportunities will be discussed during supervision sessions and selection for training will be made on the basis of both the needs of the business set out in the Business Plan and the personal development of the individual.

Staff with recruitment and selection responsibilities will be given guidance in the implementation of the Equality and Diversity Policy to ensure that they understand their position in law and under the Organisation's policy.

Induction training will include an explanation of the Equal Opportunities Policy and a requirement to undertake formal training within the probationary period of employment

Terms and conditions

Annual Leave and Religious Holidays

Hackberry will not ask about an employee's religion and will not discriminate against anyone wishing to celebrate their festivals. Employees are required to use part of their annual holiday entitlement to cover time off for these and must follow normal holiday booking procedure.

People with disabilities

Hackberry will make genuine efforts to recruit people with disabilities and take reasonable steps to make the workplace and individual jobs accessible to people with disabilities.

Hackberry will regularly review its facilities for disabled employees and volunteers and try to overcome any problems faced wherever practicable and within reasonable resources available.

Hackberry will ensure that people have maximum access to employment opportunities and to meetings and events, regardless of any disability.

Special needs and people with disabilities or caring responsibilities this will be taken into account whenever practicable and methods sought to help them overcome disabilities in taking up training opportunities. Hackberry will consider all requests for flexible working constructively and creatively, taking account of the balancing the needs of the organisation with the needs of the individual employee.

Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures

Hackberry will take seriously any complaints of discrimination and will not victimise people who make such complaints.

Staff will be made aware as part of the induction process of their responsibilities in relation to Equality and Diversity and that discriminatory behaviour will be fully investigated and dealt with using the Disciplinary Procedure.

Bullying and Harassment

Hackberry upholds the right of all employees and volunteers to be treated with respect and dignity and to work in an atmosphere free of bullying and harassment.

All employees and volunteers are responsible for ensuring that their own behaviour is sensitive to others. Ensuring that they do not condone or support the bullying or harassing behaviour of others.

All complaints of bullying and harassment will be treated seriously and should be raised using the Grievance Procedure. All complaints will be investigated.

Monitoring

Monitoring the workforce

Employees and volunteers will be asked to fill out a monitoring form on appointment. The monitoring forms to be reviewed annually.

Recruitment monitoring – see above

Service Provision

Hackberry will endeavour to ensure that its services to and for the voluntary sector are sensitive and appropriate to respond to the needs of all groups, whenever practicable, i.e. taking account of the needs of minority groups.

Hackberry will take care to avoid unintentionally discriminatory passages appearing in published, printed or spoken material.

Hackberry will continue to take a leading role in combating any form of discrimination.

Hackberry will work with others to ensure that the diversity of the population in within the unit is recognised and celebrated.

Responsibility

It is the Director's responsibility to ensure the implementation of the Equality and Diversity Policy. Appropriate funds will be sought to implement approved aspects of the Policy which require special and additional resources.

All employees and volunteers have the individual responsibility to:

- Follow procedures introduced to ensure equal opportunity and non-discrimination.
- To draw the attention of management to suspected or alleged discriminatory practices.
- To refrain from harassing or intimidating other employees, and or volunteers, clients or visitors of Hackberry on any of the grounds cited in the policy statement.

This policy was written by S Trevethan (Director)

Policy updated 02/09/2026

Signed by S Trevethan/R Childs

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