

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy for Oxford Circuit

INTRODUCTION

The Oxford Circuit is fully committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity and elimination of unlawful and unfair discrimination, valuing and embracing diversity and ensuring a holistic and inclusive approach in all fields of its activity.

The Oxford Circuit adheres to The Equality Act 2010 which recognises the following specific protected characteristics: sex, gender reassignment, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), disability, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage & civil partnership and pregnancy & maternity. It will not discriminate because of any other irrelevant factors and will build a culture that values meritocracy, openness, fairness and transparency.

Equality, diversity and inclusion is central to the mission of the Methodist Church.

SCOPE

In accordance with the Oxford Circuit's commitment to issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion all its lay employees and ministers, as well as volunteers, secondees, consultants, suppliers, contractors and agency workers, whether permanent or temporary, have a duty to act in accordance with this Policy, creating an environment free from discrimination. The policy applies to all processes relating to employment and training and to any dealings with customers and clients.

AIM

The aim of this policy is to provide a framework of equality, diversity and inclusion in the Oxford Circuit's values:

- To ensure that the implications of a policy for EDI in our circuit churches are reflected in our planning for, preparation of and leading of worship and preaching, paying particular attention to language, accessible font style and size, sound reproduction as well as physical access and the valuing of cultural diversity thus demonstrating that all our welcome in our worship.
- To ensure equality, diversity and inclusion are fully reflected in its employment practices and procedures.
- To ensure that it is compliant with the statutory employment duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- To ensure employment policies and procedures are monitored and reviewed so that they do not operate against its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- To ensure it attracts and retains a diverse workforce through appropriate recruitment and selection methods. A potential exception to this is where a Genuine Occupational Requirement (GOR) is identified in relation to a specific role.

– Under the Equality Act 2010 an employer may exercise the right to exercise legal exemptions under the ‘occupational requirement’ (GOR) in relation to any of the protected characteristics. Under this an employer must simply show that the requirement to discriminate is a ‘proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim’. For example, in the light of the Methodist Church’s Christian purpose and ethos it reserves the right to exercise legal exemption where it is declared that a Christian faith is integral to the individual in a specific work role and consequently requires membership of the Methodist Church or another recognised church.

DEFINITIONS

1. Discrimination:

- (a) **‘Direct Discrimination’** is where a person is treated less favourably than another not on the merits of the case but on grounds of a protected characteristic.
- (b) **‘Discrimination by association’** occurs where a person is directly discriminated against by association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.
- (c) **‘Discrimination by perception’** is where a person is directly discriminated against based on a perception that the person has a particular protected characteristic even if the person does not actually possess that protected characteristic.
- (d) **‘Indirect Discrimination’** occurs when a provision, practice or a criterion that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic. Although equally applicable to all possible applicants, this may nevertheless be discriminatory because:
 - (i) The number of persons of the same personal status who can comply with the requirement is considerably smaller than the number who cannot; and
 - (ii) The requirement cannot be shown to be justifiable.

2. **‘Harassment’** is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 that has the purpose of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.

Alternatively, the conduct may amount to harassment if it is reasonably considered by the target of the conduct to have the effect of violating their dignity or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. This applies even if this effect was not intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

3. **'Victimisation'** occurs when an individual has suffered a detriment because they have done one of the "protected acts" set out below, or it is believed that they have or may have done one of these acts.

The protected acts, which must not be done in bad faith, are:

- bringing proceedings under the Equality Act 2010;
- giving evidence or information in connection with proceedings under the Act;
- doing any other thing for the purposes of or in connection with the Act; or
- making allegations that another person has contravened the Act.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All lay employees and ordained ministers are responsible for promoting equality, diversity and inclusion and conducting themselves in accordance with this policy. Particular responsibility lies with the Line Manager and senior officers within the employing body. All staff should understand that they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, customers, service providers and members of the community.

The Chair of District/Circuit Superintendent/senior officers within the employing body will:

- Ensure that its commitment is communicated to all employees and ministers fairly and responsibly including potential employees and ministers, users of its services, and all those working for, or on behalf of, or providing a service to the District/Circuit/Church including consultants, volunteers, interns, agency workers and those on work experience placements.
- Lead by example, encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion internally and externally.
- Be responsible for creating a climate where the differences that individuals bring are valued.
- Embed equality, diversity and inclusion in decision making processes.

Line Managers / Supervisors will:

- Foster good relations between all employees and ministers, service users/providers.
- Ensure that their direct reports attend equality, diversity and inclusion workshops periodically.
- Be responsible for the selection, management and promotion of employees and ministers and be given information and / or training to enable them to avoid the risk of discrimination.

All employees and ministers will:

- Ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion is taken into account in undertaking their work to serve the District/Circuit/Church.
- Be aware of their responsibilities and report inappropriate behaviour/s and raise any incident/s that potentially breach this Policy with their line manager.
- Familiarise themselves with this Policy, ensuring that their practices are consistent with its contents.
- Undertake equality, diversity & inclusion training.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

The principles of equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded within the Oxford Circuit's recruitment and selection procedures. Shortlisting, interviewing and selection will always be carried out without regard to sex, transgender status, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status, colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins, religion or belief, age, pregnancy or maternity leave.

BREACHES OF THIS POLICY

If any employee or minister believes that he/she has been subject to discrimination under this Policy, then he/she must raise the matter with his/her line manager or supervisor or Chair/ Superintendent/Minister.

Allegations regarding potential breaches of this Policy will be treated in the strictest confidence and investigated in accordance with the Grievance procedure. Employees or ministers 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 the Disciplinary procedure.

Any employee who is found to have committed an act of discrimination will be subject to disciplinary action. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in disciplinary action up to and including summary dismissal. The Oxford Circuit takes a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.

For ordained ministers serving within the Oxford Circuit the Complaints and Discipline process as set out in Part 11 of Standing Orders applies to all ministers.

This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to reflect changes in the law, demographics and internal organisational requirements.