



# Model Equal Opportunities Policy

Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

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# Model Equal Opportunities policy

This model policy has been developed for use by employers. It can be used by organisations in all sectors but employers are encouraged to amend and apply the policy in a way that is appropriate to the size and structure of their organisation. It may be particularly relevant for small and medium sized organisations to omit or amend some of the practical steps around implementation. Larger organisations may wish to include more detail in some sections.

An equal opportunities policy is designed to ensure that, as a minimum, an organisation complies with its equality obligations under the various pieces of anti-discrimination legislation. An organisation may however extend the scope of its equal opportunities policy to cover groups and categories that enjoy different levels of statutory protection from discrimination.

Some organisations may wish to adapt this equal opportunities policy to apply more generally to their business, for example, to extend equality of opportunity to customers or users/beneficiaries of their services. The same basic principles apply but organisations must take care to ensure that the wording of their policy is clear and accurate and that they understand what they are committing to.

## Key elements

Key elements in any equal opportunities policy include the following:

- A statement of intent, including aim and objective of the policy
- Who the policy applies to (scope)
- Outline of specific commitments/actions which will be undertaken
- How the policy will be implemented and who is responsible
- Monitoring and review
- How complaints will be dealt with.

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## Model Equal Opportunities policy (suggested wording only)

# 1 Statement of policy

The aim of this policy is to communicate the commitment of the chief executive, Board of Directors and senior management team [delete or amend titles as necessary] to the promotion of equality of opportunity in ..... [insert name organisation].

It is our policy to provide employment equality to all, irrespective of:

- Gender, including gender reassignment
- Marital or civil partnership status
- Having or not having dependants
- Religious belief or political opinion
- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, being an Irish Traveller)
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Age.

We are opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. All job applicants, employees and others who work for us will be treated fairly and will not be discriminated against on any of the above grounds. Decisions about recruitment and selection, promotion, training or any other benefit will be made objectively and without unlawful discrimination.

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We recognise that the provision of equal opportunities in the workplace is not only good management practice, it also makes sound business sense. Our equal opportunities policy will help all those who work for us to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be utilised fully to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.

## 2 To whom does the policy apply? (Scope)

Employers may wish to state simply that the EO policy applies to all those who work for (or apply to work for) the organisation, or they may wish to list various groups or categories, for example:

Job applicants and potential applicants  
Employees  
Contract workers  
Agency workers  
Trainee workers and students on work experience or placements  
Volunteer workers  
Former employees.

## 3 Equality commitments

We are committed to:

- Promoting equality of opportunity for all persons
- Promoting a good and harmonious working environment in which all persons are treated with respect
- Preventing occurrences of unlawful direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Fulfilling all our legal obligations under the equality legislation and associated codes of practice

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- Complying with our own equal opportunities policy and associated policies
  - Taking lawful affirmative or positive action, where appropriate
  - Regarding all breaches of equal opportunities policy as misconduct which could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

This policy is fully supported by senior management and has been agreed with ..... [insert name of trade union(s) or workplace representatives, if relevant].

## 4 Implementation

The chief executive/managing director [specify job title] has specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy. Each director, manager and supervisor [delete if not relevant] also has responsibilities and we expect all our employees to abide by the policy and help create the equality environment which is its objective.

In order to implement this policy we shall:

- Communicate the policy to employees, job applicants and relevant others (such as contract or agency workers)
- Incorporate specific and appropriate duties in respect of implementing the equal opportunities policy into job descriptions and work objectives of all staff
- Provide equality training and guidance as appropriate, including training on induction and management courses.
- Ensure that those who are involved in assessing candidates for recruitment or promotion will be trained in non-discriminatory selection techniques
- Incorporate equal opportunities notices into general communications practices (eg, staff newsletters, intranet)

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- Obtain commitments from other persons or organisations such as subcontractors or agencies that they too will comply with the policy in their dealings with our organisation and our workforce
  - Ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfil the objectives of the policy.

## 5 Monitoring and review

We will establish appropriate information and monitoring systems to assist the effective implementation of our equal opportunities policy.

The effectiveness of our equal opportunities policy will be reviewed regularly [at least annually] [in consultation with the recognised trade union(s) if appropriate] and action taken as necessary. For example, where monitoring identifies an under-representation of a particular group or groups, we shall develop an action plan to address the imbalance.

## 6 Complaints

Employees who believe that they have suffered any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation are entitled to raise the matter through the agreed procedures<sup>1</sup> [specify]. A copy of these procedures is available from ..... [specify job title]. All complaints of discrimination will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially.

In addition to our internal procedures, employees have the right to pursue complaints of discrimination to an industrial tribunal or the Fair Employment Tribunal under the following anti-discrimination legislation:

- Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976, as amended
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended

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<sup>1</sup> Insert here, for example, Grievance Procedures

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- Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, as amended
  - Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003
  - Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, as amended
  - Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006
  - Equal Pay Act (Northern Ireland) 1970, as amended.

However, employees wishing to make a complaint to a tribunal will normally be required to raise their complaint under our internal grievance procedures first<sup>2</sup>.

Every effort will be made to ensure that employees who make complaints will not be victimised. Any complaint of victimisation will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially. Victimisation will result in disciplinary action and may warrant dismissal.

Date: .....

Signature: ..... Chief executive

Signature: ..... (trade union or workplace representative)

## Appendices

Further information, for example, other policies, grievance procedures, information about relevant law, etc, or contact details may be added in appendices at the employer's discretion.

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<sup>2</sup> For further information on the statutory disciplinary, dismissal and grievance procedures, see [www.lra.org.uk](http://www.lra.org.uk) or advisory publications of the Department for Employment and Learning at [www.delni.gov.uk](http://www.delni.gov.uk)

## Further information

The Equality Commission can provide advice and guidance on promoting equality of opportunity in the workplace and further information on a range of equality issues. Our information and advice to employers, service providers and individuals is free and confidential. We also provide training for employers and service providers.

**For further information please contact us:**

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