



EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

1 Our policy statement

The Odyssey Collaborative Trust (The Trust) is committed to promoting equal opportunities, valuing diversity and tackling social exclusion in everything it does. Our aim is equality for everyone who works in and visits our schools and we will shape our services and employment practices accordingly. We recognise that we must have a workforce that is as diverse as the community we live in, so that we can provide the most effective services.

2 Introducing diversity

- 2.1 This policy has an additional approach to equalities, emphasises our commitment to valuing diversity in the workplace and in the community. Our objective is to create a workplace culture that respects and values each other's differences, not merely tolerates them.
- 2.1 We believe this new policy will bring about fairer employment practices and make our services more accessible to everyone who uses them. Equality for Trust employees, job applicants and the services we provide for our residents is an integral part of our equality policy. Valuing diversity is a strategy for combining the two.
- 2.3 A diverse workforce adds value to any organisation, making it more responsive and flexible and making it a place where people want to work. By looking more closely at the kind of people we employ and their levels of skills and understanding, we hope to improve our ability to meet the needs and aspirations of the communities we serve.

2.4 We expect this policy to lead to a workforce that is diverse in a number of different ways, with:

- employees throughout The Trust from a variety of racial, cultural and religious backgrounds
- women and men, including disabled people and minority ethnic people, well-represented at all levels
- career opportunities for younger and older people
- encouragement and practical support for disabled people
- a culture in which a worker's sexuality is irrelevant to their career development.

3 Our commitment to achieving equality and valuing diversity

3.1 We believe:

- in a fair society that gives everyone an equal chance to learn, work and live free from discrimination, harassment, bullying and prejudice
- that the diversity of our community is an asset to our city
- in fighting discrimination.

3.2 The Trust is committed, under this policy, to do its best to prevent its employees, and the people it serves, from unfair discrimination because of:

- age
- disability, including people living with HIV/AIDS
- ethnic or national origins, race or colour
- marital or civil partnership status
- religious or political beliefs
- responsibilities for children or dependants
- gender and gender identity

- sexuality
- trade union activities
- unrelated criminal convictions, where this is possible
- any other unjustified grounds.

3.3 The policy sets out our commitment to opposing all forms of discrimination.

3.4 The policy applies to every employee and the services we provide.

3.5 We will:

- use our resources to help those who need additional help to overcome barriers
- try to be a fair and equal employer at all times
- work towards helping every resident to have a good quality of life.

3.6 The Equality and Diversity Policy underpins all our other policies, service plans, procedures and systems.

3.7 We are committed to working through the Excellent Level of the Equality Framework for Local Government, having achieved Level 3 of the former Equality Standard and have developed a Corporate Equality and Diversity Plan, so that we can work on setting targets and monitoring arrangements to make our policy effective.

3.8 We will work with other organisations to try to meet the needs of all equality groups.

4 Our commitment to providing services

We aim to:

- provide appropriate, accessible and effective services and facilities to all sections of the community, without prejudice or bias

- provide clear information about our services in a variety of formats such as large print, taped information, in Braille, on computer disk, in appropriate community languages
- provide interpreters in British Sign language and other community languages when communicating with service users or them with us
- work in partnership with others to promote equalities and diversity
- do our best to include as many sections of the community as possible when we consult about services
- encourage and support people to participate in community life
- do all we can to review and monitor our services to make sure they do not discriminate unfairly, and identify where we can improve
- make sure that we provide services that comply with relevant legislation and statutory codes of practice
- continue developing good practice policies and procedures over and above that required by legislation
- work with others to provide an environment free from harassment and violence
- act promptly if we receive any complaints about the way we provide services.

5 Our commitment to job applicants and employees

- 5.1 We are committed to providing equal opportunities in employment and demonstrating that we value the diversity of our workforce.
- 5.2 The aim of the policy is to do our best not to unfairly discriminate against any job applicant or employee and, when recruiting, only to consider factors which are relevant to someone's ability to perform the job well.
- 5.3 We aim to create a workforce that is as diverse as the community we serve.
- 5.4 We will do our best to treat all employees and job applicants fairly in relation to all our employment policies and procedures and to meet any reasonable and appropriate additional needs they may have.
- 5.5 We will value and respect the identities and cultures of our employees.
- 5.6 We will do everything we can to work towards a workplace that is free from discrimination, bullying and harassment and will act promptly on any complaints of discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation.
- 5.7 We will provide a safe working environment.
- 5.8 We will make the workplace, and information about work, as accessible as we can for all our employees.
- 5.9 We will give our employees clear information about job selection and training and encourage all employees to reach their full potential.
- 5.10 We will make sure that we work according to the relevant employment legislation and statutory codes of practice.
- 5.11 We will continue to develop good practice employment policies and procedures over and above those required by legislation.

5.12 We will apply this Equality and Diversity Policy through The Trust's recruitment and selection process, training programmes, grievance procedures and all other employment policies.

5.13 We will do all we can to give employees and job applicants access to complaint procedures if they feel unfairly treated.

6 Responsibility for implementing the policy

Responsibility

6.1 The Chief Executive Officer has lead responsibility for implementing and monitoring this policy, but **all employees** have a responsibility to work from it in all areas of their work.

6.2 Each chief officer, and **all** employees with supervisory responsibility, have departmental and local responsibility for implementing, monitoring and promoting this policy.

6.3 The main responsibility for achieving change lies with chief officers and will involve **all** employees participating.

6.5 All employees must make sure they **do not**:

- discriminate against anyone
- persuade or pressure another employee to discriminate
- harass, bully or abuse other employees or the public for any reason
- condone harassment.

If an employee does not follow these and other requirements of the Equality and Diversity Policy, we will usually deal with it under the Disciplinary Procedure

Implementing the policy

6.6 We will do our best to make our Equality and Diversity Policy fully effective by:

- actively promoting it
- working through our Equality and Diversity Plan
- regularly monitoring and reviewing all our job selection procedures and criteria and change them if they result in unfair discrimination
- making sure that all employees and job applicants know about this policy
- taking appropriate action, using agreed procedures, if any employee breaches this policy
- providing training and guidance, particularly for human resources staff and line managers, to make sure that they understand this policy and their legal responsibilities
- monitoring recruitment and employment statistics to identify under-representation
- providing positive action training programmes, when we can legally do so, for under-represented groups to redress current imbalances, such as, through recruitment, career development and training.

7 Target groups and key areas

7.1 We recognise that anyone, at any time of life, can be discriminated against or treated unfairly in one way or another. There are some groups of people who may face this more than others. Some people even face multiple discrimination and harassment, such as minority ethnic women and disabled women. We are committed to tackling all types of discrimination and unfair treatment for everyone, but target these specific areas...

Age discrimination

7.2 We are committed to tackling age discrimination, which can affect both young and older people, particularly when they apply for jobs.

7.3 We will consult with young people and older people, so that we can do our best to provide services which meet their diverse needs. When we do consult, we will consider younger and older people's views separately from those of families and carers, and provide advocates where necessary.

Disabled people

7.4 We recognise that disabled people experience discrimination and prejudice in our society. This happens in all areas of their lives, and specifically when trying to access education, training, job opportunities and mainstream services. This includes people who are living with HIV/AIDS.

7.5 The Trust is committed to doing all it can to provide disabled people with equal and inclusive access to employment opportunities and to our services.

7.6 The Trust has adopted the **social model** of disability, accepted by national and international representatives of organisations of disabled people. This means we accept that disability is not caused by someone's particular impairment, but by the way in which society fails to meet disabled people's needs. Because of this, it is important that we use the term 'disabled people' rather than 'people with disabilities'.

7.7 Examples of barriers showing how society discriminates against disabled people include:

- **social**, such as stereotyping, media representation, attitudes, ignorance, fear, or direct prejudice
- **practical**, such as lack of access to buildings, pedestrian environments, public transport, information and communication
- **organisational**, such as legislation, organisational priorities, policies, procedures, systems and economic factors.

7.8 In contrast, the **medical model** of disability, or the traditional way of looking at disabled people, sees disabled people as 'lacking' in some way and needing to be either 'looked after' or helped to 'fit in' wherever possible. The medical model puts the responsibility on disabled people to conform to a society that is neither built nor organised to include their needs.

7.9 We believe it is important to adopt the social model of disability because it means any barriers **can** be changed, so removing disability.

7.10 Consequently, we need to have different ways to make sure that disabled people have access to our jobs and to our services. We will do all we can to consult with and involve disabled people and consider their rights at all times. We will also work collectively with other local employers and service providers to improve understanding about the needs and potential of disabled people.

7.11 We will adapt the recruitment and selection process so it is more accessible to disabled people. This means we will make reasonable adjustments, such as producing recruitment literature in appropriate formats and modifying testing and assessment processes.

7.12 We will do our best to make sure interviews are fully accessible, including providing communicators, if required, and appropriately supporting new employees.

7.13 We will continue a programme of disability equality training for line managers and those involved in recruitment to help them meet the needs and rights of disabled people.

- 7.14 We aim to do our best to give any newly disabled employees appropriate help, so that they can stay in their job. If, after investigating a range of reasonable adjustments, this is still not possible, we will try to find them another job that will let them meet their potential.
- 7.15 We are committed to employing more disabled people and making sure they are fairly represented across all pay grades and departments. We will encourage disabled people to apply for jobs with us using our disabled people's Job Seekers Register and making sure local disabled people's organisations receive our vacancy information.
- 7.16 We will continue to develop action for implementing the Disability Discrimination Act through our Equality and Diversity Plan, so we can make sure that disabled people can access and use our services as easily as non-disabled people.
- 7.17 We accept that British Sign Language is a language in its own right and supported Derby's Deaf community in their campaign to make it recognised officially.
- 7.18 We recognise that the disability laws and policies still need to be improved. We will work with organisations of disabled people and the Local Government Association Group to improve disabled people's rights.

Minority ethnic communities

- 7.19 We recognise that some people face discrimination because of their colour, race, ethnic origin, and nationality, including citizenship.
- 7.20 We are committed to challenging all forms of racial discrimination. We will develop policies, procedures and practices to make sure minority ethnic communities have fair and equal inclusive access to our services and job opportunities.
- 7.21 As we have adopted the Equality Framework for Local Government we have integrated our Race Equality Scheme, Gender Equality Scheme and Disability Equality Scheme into our Equality and Diversity Plan.
- 7.22 We are committed to employing more minority ethnic people and making sure they are fairly represented across all pay grades and

Trust departments. We will encourage minority ethnic people to apply for jobs with us using our Minority Ethnic Job Seekers Register and by making sure local minority ethnic community organisations receive our vacancy sheets.

7.23 We have adopted the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report's definition of institutional racism, which is:

'the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people'

7.24 We have also adopted the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report's definition of a racist incident which is:

'a racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person'.

7.25 We will work with minority ethnic communities, the Local Government Association Group and other agencies to tackle racial harassment and discrimination and to improve minority ethnic people's rights.

Religious beliefs

7.26 The Trust recognises that individuals have a right to their own religious and cultural beliefs and practices. We will do our best to prevent any form of discrimination, both in employment and service delivery.

7.27 We will do our best to meet the religious and cultural needs of our employees by providing prayer facilities for those employees who wish to observe prayer times. We will be sensitive to requests from employees wanting time off to participate in religious and cultural events. The Trust will also welcome different kinds of dress that an employee wishes to wear because of their cultural and religious requirements. However, sometimes this may not be possible because of health and safety reasons, such as building site safety.

7.28 We will make sure that our services are able to meet the religious and cultural needs of the people who use them. We will also make sure that people who deliver services are sensitive to the needs of people's faiths and do not deliver services in an offensive way.

7.29 We respect the fact that everyone has the right to practise their religious beliefs and we will do everything we can to consider specific religious needs.

Lesbians, gay men and people who are bi-sexual

7.30 We recognise that many lesbians, gay men and people who are bi-sexual may be unfairly discriminated against because of their sexuality and that this may mean they do not get equal access to services and job opportunities.

7.31 We will make sure that our policies, procedures and practices do not unfairly discriminate against lesbians, gay men and people who are bi-sexual. We will support lesbian, gay and bi-sexual employees so that they can be open about their sexuality.

7.32 We are committed to improving the quality of life in the city for all lesbians, gay men and people who are bi-sexual. We will work with lesbian, gay and bi-sexual communities, Stonewall and the Local Government Association Group to improve the rights of people discriminated against because of their sexuality.

Women

7.32 We acknowledge that women often experience discrimination because of their gender, responsibilities for children and other dependents and their marital or civil partnership status. This means they may not get equal access to services and job opportunities.

7.33 We are committed to improving the quality of life for all women in the city and will develop policies, procedures and systems that benefit women employees, service users and visitors.

7.34 We are committed to making sure that women are fairly represented across all pay grades and departments. We will encourage women to apply for senior grades, particularly in areas where they are under-represented.

7.35 We will promote work life balance and family friendly employment policies so that the needs of employees who have childcare and dependent care responsibilities are tackled. Although this also applies to men, it has a much bigger impact on women employees.

7.36 We will do our best to support women taking maternity leave or time off to care for children or other dependents. In particular, we will do

all we can to enable women employees returning to work after having a baby to continue breastfeeding. Where we can, we will try to provide private and clean places for breastfeeding women employees to express their milk.

7.37 We recognise that many women face domestic violence and we will do all we can to support any of our employees who experience this abuse. We will also be supportive, understanding and approachable to any service users who tell us they are experiencing domestic violence.

7.38 We will consider women's experiences and views, because we are committed to doing our best to make our services accessible to women.

Trans people

7.39 People who change their gender identity – trans people – face particular difficulties. This is not only because of the medical treatment and emotional trauma they go through, but also because of other people's prejudice, discrimination and insensitivity.

7.40 One of the most difficult times for trans people is 'coming out' at work. So, we will do our best to make sure that the transition at work from one gender to the other is as trouble-free as possible. We will do this by being flexible with sick leave arrangements for time off work for medical or surgical procedures concerned with gender reassignment. We will not breach confidentiality and will only disclose details to those few people who 'need to know'. When the employee is ready, we will help with an action plan for informing colleagues, and where necessary, service users about their new gender. We will offer counselling and to both the individual and their colleagues to deal with the situation in a constructive way. We will make sure that we update references to the employee in their previous gender on personnel and other records.

7.41 At the official point of gender transition, we accept that trans people must be able to use toilets and changing rooms appropriate to their new gender identity. We will **not** make trans people use separate facilities, such as disabled people's unisex toilets or changing rooms unless they want to. This would be unfair and would deny the individual their human rights. This applies to employee facilities and also to our services.

7.42 We recognise that many trans people face harassment and discrimination in their lives and we will tackle this using our Grievance Procedures. We will work with the Local Government Association Group, and agencies such as Press for Change and the Gender Trust to make sure we get our policies and procedures right.

Community Safety

7.43 We are committed to making Derby a safer place to work, live and visit and a place where people can move about freely without fear of crime or harassment.

7.44 We will work with the Community Safety Partnership to make sure that key areas of harassment and discrimination have high priorities in the Community Safety Strategy. In particular, this includes racial harassment and violence, attacks on older people, domestic violence, bullying, women's personal safety, disabled people's personal safety, and harassment against lesbians, gay men and people who are bi-sexual.