

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY FOR CAQM

Equality and Diversity Policy

Our Quaker beliefs

As Quakers, we believe that everyone is equal, regardless of wealth, status or power. We value the diversity of all people and we work towards being inclusive in our language and actions.

This policy

This policy explains how Cumbria Area Quaker Meeting (CAQM) will work towards equality in practice. All employees, Trustees, volunteers and other workers such as self-employed contractors, consultants and agency/casual workers, as well as those who manage and supervise them, are covered by this policy.

Our equal opportunities commitment and aims

We will not tolerate discrimination or harassment and are fully committed to promoting equal opportunities within our practices in the Area Meeting.

We will never victimise anyone who makes a legitimate complaint if they, or somebody else, is being harassed or discriminated against.

Protected characteristics

There are a number of 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010. The protected characteristics are:

- age
- race (which includes colour and ethnic/ national origin)
- disability
- religion or belief
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy or maternity
- sex
- sexual orientation
- marital or civil partner status.

Although not covered by the law, we will also not discriminate unfairly in respect of other characteristics that are irrelevant (to a job or volunteer position) such as wealth, status or power.

How we define discrimination

The following list is a general description of the types of acts that may both breach this policy and may also be unlawful. Sometimes actions can be intentional, and sometimes unintentional and we include examples of both types in this list:

- when somebody is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic than somebody else has been - or would have been - in identical circumstances, then this is direct discrimination. Rejecting a job applicant because of their race or gender would, for example, amount to direct discrimination.
- when a group of people with one of the protected characteristics is put at a disadvantage by a provision, practice or criteria applied to all staff, this is indirect discrimination (unless it is objectively justified in the circumstances).
- when a hostile, humiliating, degrading or similarly offensive environment is created in relation to a protected characteristic, this is harassment. We deal in detail with harassment under our separate policy on harassment and bullying.
- when a worker has complained about harassment or discrimination, or supported a colleague in their complaint, it is victimisation if they are then treated less favourably.

Other aspects of equality legislation

There are other actions which are illegal under the equal opportunities legislation, and these are collectively labelled other acts. Examples include:

- instructing another person - or applying pressure on them - to discriminate
- knowingly assisting somebody else when they carry out a discriminatory act
- discriminating against somebody believed to have a protected characteristic, whether or not they actually do, or because they associate with a third party who does.

There are some employment practices which, although they may appear to breach the aims of this policy, are in fact justifiable on objective and operational grounds. These are called lawful practices. If someone is not sure whether some aspect of workplace behaviour they have experienced or witnessed is discriminatory or a lawful practice, they should ask their supervisor for clarification.

Recruiting a Quaker

We are aware that it is unlawful to discriminate against any job applicant on the grounds of their religion or belief. We welcome job applications from all, regardless of their religious belief or no belief. We welcome applicants who, regardless of their backgrounds, are willing to work within our Quaker values and testimonies.

We are aware that the law allows, in limited circumstances, for a paid post to be restricted to Quaker applicants. This is where being a Quaker is reasonably considered to be an 'occupational requirement' for the post. The BYM Recording Clerk is one such post. We do not anticipate making use of the 'occupational requirement' provision at our Area Meeting.

We are also aware that for voluntary positions, the law allows us to specify a Quaker for volunteering activities, for example as a form of Quaker service as a volunteer warden. We may specify Quaker only applications for a voluntary position where it is appropriate and proportionate to do so, in all the circumstances.

How we carry out our responsibilities and duties

Both those managing or supervising employees, volunteers and other workers, and these workers themselves, are essential for ensuring the success of this policy and each has their own duties and responsibilities. We all have a legal responsibility to comply, and any of us may be found personally liable for unlawful discrimination if we breach the terms of the policy.

Overall responsibility for the effective implementation and operation of the policy lies with the Trustees.

Everyone managing or supervising others is expected to act in full accordance with this policy, lead by example, and attain and maintain appropriate standards of behaviour.

The ethos and standards covered by this policy can only be achieved and maintained if all staff, volunteers and other workers also co-operate fully, and it is important for them to understand that they also have a legal responsibility to comply. If they breach this policy, they may also make the Area Meeting liable for their actions. We accordingly expect them to take personal responsibility for adhering to the policy's aims and commitments and for drawing any breaches to our attention.

The behaviours we expect from everyone are:

- Celebrating and respecting individuality and difference
- Listening to the views of others
- Showing sensitivity and respect for others' feelings and cultures
- Considering issues from a range of perspectives
- Having equal respect for all.

How we enforce this policy and handle breaches

We investigate any complaint or allegation raised regarding a potential breach of this policy, and if someone believes they have been harassed or discriminated against they should contact us as soon as possible. Employees who wish to take formal action will

need to follow our grievance procedure and read our policy on harassment and bullying. We will still take seriously any complaint from someone who is not an employee and investigate it. Complaints should be directed to the Trustees.

Employees will face disciplinary action if we find they have harassed or discriminated against anyone else in breach of this policy. Sometimes this type of behaviour may amount to gross misconduct, in which case they will be dismissed without notice and with no payment in lieu of notice.

Those who are not employees but are volunteers or workers may have their services terminated.

Occasionally, people make complaints knowing them not to be true. They might do this to avoid or deflect disciplinary action, for example. We view any complaint made in bad faith as an act of misconduct and this will normally lead to disciplinary action for employees. In exceptional cases, bad faith complaints can lead to summary dismissal for gross misconduct.

Contact Information

For any questions or clarifications regarding our Equality & Diversity Policy, please contact:

- **Name:** Clerk to the Trustees
- **Email:** am.trustees@cumberlandquakers.org.uk

November 2024