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## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY**

### **1. POLICY STATEMENT**

- 1.1 This document outlines the Equal Opportunities Policy for the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust (the "Trust") and is consistent with the principles outlined in part 5 of Agenda for Change NHS terms and conditions of service handbook. The Trust is committed to promoting positive measures that eliminate all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination on the grounds of age, marital status, disability, race, nationality, gender, religion, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, ethnic or national origin, beliefs, domestic circumstances, social and employment status, political affiliation or trade union membership, HIV status or any other condition not justified by law or relevant to the requirements of the post.
- 1.2 By committing to a policy encouraging equality of opportunity and diversity, the Trust values differences between members of the community and within its existing workforce, and actively seeks to benefit from their differing skills, knowledge, and experiences in order to provide an exemplary healthcare service.
- 1.3 The Trust will therefore take every possible step to ensure that individuals are treated equally and fairly, with dignity and mutual respect, and that decisions in recruitment, selection, training, promotion and career management are based solely on objective and job-related criteria.

### **2. SCOPE**

- 2.1 This policy applies to all Trust employees, workers, contractors, temporary and bank workers, applicants, service users, and any other persons connected with the businesses of the Trust.

### **3. ACCESS TO THE PROCEDURE**

- 3.1 All employees are entitled to access to this policy which is located in the Human Resources Policies and Procedures Folders and/or on the Trust's Intranet. Copies are also available from the Human Resources Department and any employee can seek guidance from line management, their trade union representative or the Human Resources Department.

### **4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 4.1 The Board of Directors has overall responsibility for Equal Opportunities within the Trust. The Chief Executive is responsible for overseeing the policy.
- 4.2 Human Resources Department is responsible for keeping the provisions within this policy in line with employment legislation and best practice people management principles.
- 4.3 Managers, HR staff and trade union representatives are responsible for providing advice and guidance to employees on the application of this policy and procedure.
- 4.4 All staff are personally responsible for the practical application of this policy, and must support the Trust in creating and maintaining an environment that promotes equality of opportunity and diversity in practice. It is therefore the duty of all staff to co-operate with the measures introduced by the Trust to ensure equal opportunities and non-discrimination. They must therefore report incidents of discrimination, abuse, victimisation or pressure to discriminate to their line manager.
- 4.5 There should be no victimisation of any persons lodging a complaint upon the grounds of discriminatory behaviour. All complaints will be taken seriously and where appropriate, will be dealt with through the relevant Trust procedures.
- 4.6 Management and trade union representatives are responsible for bringing any mutually beneficial improvements to this policy to the attention of the Trust.

## **5. IDENTIFYING AND DEFINING DISCRIMINATION**

- 5.1 Breaches to the Trust's commitment to equality and diversity can take many forms. The Trust will endeavour to ensure that no employee, or prospective employee, is discriminated against, either directly or indirectly.
- 5.2 **Direct Discrimination** - treating a person less favourably than you would treat others in the same or similar circumstances.
- 5.3 **Indirect Discrimination** - applying a condition or requirement which, whether intentionally or not, adversely affects one group considerably more than another.
- 5.4 The Trust has a genuine commitment to equality and diversity, and any actions or behaviours which are perceived as violating or breaching this will not be tolerated whether these are connected to factors identified within statute, or any other characteristics not objectively related to the requirements of the post as referred to in section 1.1.

## **6. EMPLOYMENT LEGISLATION**

- 6.1 The Trust has a legal obligation to ensure that it does not discriminate unlawfully. However, the Trust seeks to create a harmonious environment that goes beyond that described within, for example, the following statutory legislation:
  - Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (and Exceptions Order 1975)

- Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999
- Race Relations Act 1976 (and Amendment Regulations, 2000)
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulations 2005
- Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- Employment Equality (Age Discrimination) Regulations 2006
- Equal Pay Act 1970

## **7. IMPLEMENTING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY IN PRACTICE**

### **7.1 Recruitment and Selection:**

- 7.1.1 To promote equality and diversity the Trust will advertise all vacancies in suitable media in order to attract and encourage individuals from all sections of the community and existing workforce to apply.
- 7.1.2 Where applicants have a disability, as defined under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, they will be guaranteed an interview subject to meeting the essential criteria for the job.
- 7.1.3 All vacancies will have an accompanying job description and person specification available. The Human Resources Department will be responsible for ensuring that all criteria included within such documents are objective and wholly required of the postholder.
- 7.1.4 Short-listing and interview panels must comprise a minimum of two individuals who should be trained in undertaking fair and objective recruitment. Selection criteria agreed in the person specification will form the basis of appointment decisions and adequate notes will be made at each stage of the decision-making process.
- 7.1.5 All shortlisted applicants should be asked if they require any particular arrangements to be made in the selection process to enable ease of participation.
- 7.1.6 All applicants will be entitled to request feedback regarding their interview performance from a member of the appropriate panel. In order to facilitate this request applicants must contact the Human Resources Department who will arrange a convenient time and date. This will usually take the form of a telephone call.
- 7.1.7 A written record of all selection process decisions will be kept for a minimum of one year.
- 7.1.8 The Human Resources Department will engage equal opportunities monitoring of all applicants to the Trust concerning gender, ethnic origin, religion and beliefs, and perceived disabilities. This information will not form part of the selection process. The information will remain in the Human Resources Department, and shall only be used for the specific purpose of equality and diversity monitoring to detect where possible patterns of discrimination are occurring, and identify where remedial action is necessary.

7.1.9 In circumstances where there is a 'Genuine Occupational Requirement' it may be necessary for the Trust to legally and justifiably discriminate concerning specific criteria; such situations are likely to be exceptionally rare, and will require prior authorisation from the Human Resources Department.

**7.2 Education, Training, and Development:**

7.2.1 All staff will have equal access to education, further education, training, and development opportunities.

7.2.2 All Directors, senior managers and the Human Resources Department will be made aware of equal opportunities principles and are responsible for communicating such working practices to colleagues and staff. Specifically, they will be responsible for ensuring their area of responsibility is compliant with equality legislation and ensuring that any behaviour contravening such regulations is identified and dealt with appropriately.

7.2.3 The Trust will ensure that all training courses and selection for training courses are conducted in accordance with this Equal Opportunities Policy, and that its principles are incorporated into any such induction or development programmes.

**7.3 Publicity:**

7.3.1 The Trust will endeavor to portray positive and diverse images of their staff in all literature, publicity material and public documents, and actively seek to illustrate their successes with regard to equal opportunities' practices.

**8. MONITORING**

8.1 The Staff Partnership Forum will ensure that agreed monitoring processes are in place.

**9. POLICY REVIEW**

9.1 This policy will be reviewed annually or more frequently if significant changes to its effective operation are necessary.