



Equalities, Diversity and Challenging Discrimination Policy

Current Policies & Processes

April 2023



Policy name:	Equalities, Diversity and Challenging Discrimination Policy
Policy number:	AT15
Replaces:	ATCIO Equalities, Diversity and Challenging Discrimination Policy Nov 2019
Adoption date:	April 2023
Next Review date:	April 2024

1. Equalities, diversity and challenging discrimination policy

This policy aims to outline Action Together's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity and equal treatment for staff, workers, trustees, and people accessing its services in terms of employment and access to services; and to provide guidance on anti-discriminatory practice.

2. Statement of intent

Action Together believes that all people have value and a right to contribute to society. It celebrates the diversity of the communities of Oldham, Rochdale and Tameside that we serve, and values the contributions made by all.

Action Together acknowledges that many people are disadvantaged because of the way our society is organised and recognises the need to take positive steps to redress this.

Action Together is actively opposed to all forms of direct and indirect discrimination. The aims of this policy are:

- *to ensure that no individual is treated less favorably than another and;*
- *to combat any direct or indirect discrimination in employment and recruitment, management of the organisation or its service delivery, on the grounds of:*
 - *age*
 - *gender*
 - *race, colour, nationality or ethnic origin*
 - *culture*
 - *religious, faith or philosophical belief*
 - *disability*
 - *long term illness*
 - *HIV status*
 - *marital status*
 - *parental status*
 - *sexual orientation*
 - *gender reassignment*
 - *responsibility for dependants*



- *ex-offender status as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974*
- *lack of formal qualifications where such qualifications are not directly relevant to a post*

The organisation is committed to a working environment in which the contribution and needs of everyone are fully valued and recognised. We will support our staff, workers, Trustees and contractors in not tolerating any inappropriate, violent or abusive behaviour from colleagues, other organisations or customers.

Action Together will ensure that this statement will be applied and monitored across all aspects of its work, and this policy aims to clarify how Action Together will put this into practice and will treat everyone in an open and equal way.

3. Relevant legislation

Action Together recognises and welcomes its responsibilities under relevant equality legislation.

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that we and our staff do not unlawfully discriminate under:

- *the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974;*
- *the Employment Rights Act 1996;*
- *the Human Rights Act 1998;*
- *the Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000;*
- *the Fixed-Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002;*
- *the Civil Partnership Act 2004;*
- *the Work and Families Act 2006;*
- *the Equality Act 2010; and*
- *any other relevant legislation in force from time to time relating to discrimination in employment and the provision of goods, facilities or services.*

4. Related policies

Action Together recognises the centrality of equal opportunity to organisational effectiveness. Action Together aims to have in place a range of policies and procedures, which should be viewed concurrently to this policy. All Action Together policies are intended to reinforce the basic precepts of equal opportunities.

The following documents, amongst others may be relevant:



- *Contract of Employment*
- *Complaints Policy*
- *Disciplinary Procedure*
- *Grievance Procedure*
- *Bullying and harassment policy*
- *Staff learning and development policy*
- *Recruitment and Selection Policies*
- *Health and Safety Policy*
- *Flexible working Policies*
- *Leave Policies*
- *Grading and Regrading Policy*
- *Data Protection policy*

5. Responsibilities

This policy applies to everyone connected with Action Together including trustees, employees at every level, volunteers, trainees, job placements, service users/members, and contractors/sub-contractors.

The Board of Trustees of Action Together recognises and accepts its ultimate authority for implementation of this policy.

Responsibility for the day-to-day implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this Policy rests with the Chief Executive and Management Team of Action Together, answering to the Board.

All employees have a personal responsibility to accept, adhere to and promote this Policy at all times. Specifically, staff are expected to co-operate with measures taken to implement this Policy, report any suspected acts of discrimination, and take particular care to ensure that enquiries from groups and individuals facing disadvantage are dealt with in a way which those groups find helpful, relevant, and appropriate.

6. Positive action

Action Together is committed to positive action to achieve a Board of Trustees, staff/volunteer group, membership and range of services representative of the communities it seeks to serve. Action Together will investigate any circumstances in which it appears that equal opportunities have not been offered, and action will be taken to redress the effects of any policy or procedure, which has been found to limit the provision of equal opportunities. Any positive action taken by Action Together will be with regard to the relevant legislation.



7. Service provision

Action Together will regularly examine the potential barriers for groups in accessing Action Together services, with the aim of addressing these where possible, in order to make services more accessible to those who may be subject to discrimination on the grounds outlined in the statement of intent.

Action Together aims to work pro-actively with voluntary and community groups in Oldham, Rochdale and Tameside to support them in working in ways that promote equal opportunities.

The organisation's complaints procedure is available on request to any group or individual who feels they have not been dealt with in a fair and non-discriminatory manner.

Action Together will aim to keep up-to-date information about equal opportunities including legislation, good practice models and where to go for additional help. This information will be made available to staff, volunteers, Board members, service users and others who request it. Where appropriate, such information will be included in the Action Together newsletter.

Action Together will make its information available in alternative formats such as easy read, audio, in large print or in other languages, where appropriate and feasible.

In planning meetings and events, Action Together will take into account the physical access needs of those attending. It will strive to only use buildings that are accessible to those using wheelchairs, and to arrange for addition of the provision of additional support (for example, hearing loops or interpretation services) where appropriate and feasible.

8. Recruitment

Action Together aims to ensure that no applicant (internal or external) receives less favourable treatment than another on the grounds stated in the Statement of Intent.

Action Together will ask for, and record, the details of applicants' gender, race, sexuality and disability on an equal opportunities monitoring form.

A short report will be presented to the Board annually, detailing anonymous profiles of applicants including race, gender, disability and sexuality, and how this reflects the profile of the communities it seeks to serve.



All posts will have a job description and a person specification.

Notwithstanding the section on Service Provision Action Together will ensure that information about vacancies is distributed as widely as possible. Action Together will consider the most appropriate media in which to advertise / promote the vacancy, based on the role description and person specification and an assessment of where suitable applicants are most likely to seek information on vacancies.

Internal recruitment

To increase development opportunities for all employees and to help continuity of employment / service, there are certain circumstances where the organisation may, in the first instance, advertise and attempt to fill vacant or new roles internally:

- *where it believes that there are potentially interested and suitably experienced applicants already within the organisation, but on lower grades*
- *where there are employees occupying posts at risk of redundancy, who meet the minimum criteria for the post.*

Where roles are advertised internally, this may also include staff from other organisations where Action Together has a formal partnership or strategic alliance.

Internal applicants will be subject to an objective selection process as outlined above. If, after an internal process has been completed, the role is not filled it will be advertised externally.

Some funders require all new posts to be externally advertised and it may not be possible to only advertise internally under these circumstances.

Selection

Action Together will ensure that in all selection procedures only factors relevant to the requirements of the post are taken into account, and that the spirit of the policy statement is adhered to.

Recruitment criteria will be clear and will relate to the skills, abilities and experiences needed to successfully carry out the duties of the post.

An objective points system will be used during short listing based on the requirements of the person specification, to assess all applicants and candidates for the post(s) concerned against the person specification.



Action Together will use selection procedures that maintain the confidentiality of the applicant; only relevant information for short-listing will be seen by the recruitment panel. Information such as race, age and gender will be excluded from this process, unless of relevance to the post.

Within the recruitment process, any tasks required of applicant (interviews, presentation, aptitude tests etc) will be designed to help applicants demonstrate how they meet the needs of the role, as described in the person specification.

Potential barriers for candidates in accessing job opportunities with Action Together will be regularly reviewed by the board, and action taken to address them where possible.

If requested, feedback will be given to candidates regarding their application, orally after the short-listing stage or after interview. The complaints procedure is available to those who feel they have not been treated equally and fairly.

9. Employment

Terms & conditions

Action Together will seek to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment for all individuals, and will not discriminate in the setting or provision of its terms and conditions of employment including facilities, pay and benefits on any of the grounds listed at the beginning of this Policy.

Where compatible with the effective functioning of the organisation, Action Together will endeavour to meet all reasonable requests from staff to vary their working hours.

Should a member of staff become disabled during their employment by Action Together, provision will be made wherever possible for that staff member to continue their normal duties through provision of equipment/aids, or changed working patterns, or redeployment if available.

Leave entitlement

Action Together recognises that leave entitlement and the way that this is organised may be of particular concern to certain groups of employees (for example: staff who may need time off for religious observance, or extended leave to visit family/friends abroad; disabled staff who may need time off for extra medical treatment; staff who are parents or who have other dependants may need time off relating to school holidays, etc). It will therefore endeavour to ensure that all leave requests received are dealt with both appropriately under the relevant policy/procedure, and in accordance with the spirit of this policy.



Bullying and harassment

Action Together recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of its employees and volunteers and to promote a working environment free from harassment and bullying.

Action Together views this issue with the utmost seriousness. The Action Together harassment policy is designed to support any individual who feels that they are being harassed or bullied by anyone associated with Action Together without fear of reprisal.

Staff development

All employees will receive diversity and equalities training, in order to develop skills in putting equal opportunities into practice in all areas of work.

Action Together will aim to be open and fair when considering training requests from staff and volunteers, and the process for considering requests is detailed in its learning policy.

Grievance, disciplinary and disputes procedures

Internal grievances and complaints regarding discrimination or failure to challenge discriminatory practice by or against staff will be thoroughly investigated. The process will adhere to Action Together's Grievance or Disciplinary Policy, as appropriate.

Complaints against board members regarding discrimination or failure to challenge discriminatory practice will also be regarded as a serious matter and will be taken to the Action Together Chair for action in line with the board code of conduct.

All participants attending any network meeting facilitated by Action Together are expected to abide to the network code of conduct, this policy and act in a manner that supports equal opportunities for all.

Data collection

Action Together complies with the requirement of the Data Protection Act. Any data, either qualitative and or quantitative, required in order to monitor the requirements or the impact of the Equality Act 2010, will be collected where it is reasonable, proportionate and practical to do so. Any such requirements will be notified to Action Together's service users, staff and volunteers as appropriate.