

1. Inclusion Statement

At GRCC / Independence Trust, we are committed to enabling a workplace where diversity is not only acknowledged but is celebrated. GRCC / Independence Trust firmly believes that the success and strength of the organisation are rooted in the unique backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences of our employees. Within GRCC / Independence Trust inclusion is at the heart of our culture, and it is a fundamental principle that guides our actions, decisions, and interactions.

GRCC / Independence Trust is committed to creating an inclusive environment that:

Respects Diversity: We value the diversity of our workforce, including differences in age, race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, physical ability, and all other characteristics

2. Aims of this Policy

GRCC / Independence Trust is committed to the principle of equal opportunity in employment, recognising and valuing people's differences and assisting them to use their talents to reach their full potential. The terms equality, inclusion and diversity are at the heart of this policy:

'Equality' means ensuring everyone has the same opportunities to fulfil their potential free from discrimination.

'Inclusion' means ensuring everyone feels comfortable to be themselves at work and feels the worth of their contribution.

'Diversity' means the celebration of everyone's individual differences.

We value the variety of different views, outlooks and approaches that a diverse workforce brings. This assists us to provide improved services and increase our understanding of our service users / clients.

We will do all we can to ensure GRCC / Independence Trust recruits, trains and promotes people based on qualifications, experience and abilities for all roles within the organisation and that our services are appropriate and equally accessible to all people of Gloucestershire who may need our help. We will do all we can to ensure no one will receive less favourable treatment or be disadvantaged by requirements or conditions which cannot be shown to be justifiable.

This policy is designed to ensure that GRCC / Independence Trust complies with our obligations under equality legislation and demonstrates our commitment to treating people equally and fairly. While specific responsibility for eliminating discrimination and providing equality of opportunity lies with management, individuals at all levels have a responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect. The personal commitment of every employee to

this policy and application of its principles is essential to eliminate discrimination and provide equality throughout GRCC / Independence Trust.

GRCC / Independence Trust is unreservedly opposed to any form of discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage / civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin and caste), religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation (defined as Protected Characteristics).

Using fair and objective practices, the organisation aims to ensure that:

- All employees and potential employees are treated fairly and with respect at all stages of their employment, including recruitment, selection, training, development, promotion, pay, redundancy, and dismissal.
- All employees, volunteers, Trustees and service users / clients are free from harassment and bullying of any description, or any other form of unwanted behaviour. Such behaviour may come from other employees or by people (third parties) who are not employees of GRCC / Independence Trust, such as customers or clients.
- All employees, volunteers, Trustees, and service users have an equal chance to contribute and to achieve their potential, irrespective of any defining feature.
- All employees, volunteers, Trustees, and service users are free from discrimination because they associate with another person who possesses a Protected Characteristic or because others perceive that they have a particular Protected Characteristic, even if they do not.

3. Scope of the policy

The policy applies to:

- Job applicants
- Employees
- Agency temps
- Students on work experience or placements
- Volunteers, including Trustees
- Service users

Note: for employees, the policy applies to all stages of employment including recruitment and selection, probationary period, training, career development, promotion, pay, and redundancy.

4. Definitions:

The object of this section is to define and outline the forms of discrimination for the purposes of this Policy.

Direct discrimination

This is when an employee, applicant or service user is treated less favourably than someone else because of a Protected Characteristic, and there is no genuine occupational requirement for doing so. The Protected Characteristics, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, are:

- race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin and caste)
- religion or belief
- disability
- sex
- sexual orientation
- pregnancy or maternity
- gender reassignment
- marriage / civil partnership
- age

In accordance with our overarching equal treatment ethos, we will also ensure that no-one is treated less favourably on account of their trade union membership, membership of professional bodies, or non-membership, or on the basis of being a part-time worker or fixed term employee.

Indirect discrimination

This is where there is a working condition, practice or rule that disadvantages one group of people more than another. In other words, it is more difficult for people from one group to comply with the requirement. Even if it is done accidentally indirect discrimination is unlawful. Indirect discrimination is only allowed if it is necessary for the way the business works, and there is no other way of achieving it.

Discrimination arising from disability

This is where a disabled person is treated unfavourably because of something connected to their disability where it cannot be objectively justified. This only applies where the organisation knew or could reasonably be expected to know that the person was disabled.

Associative discrimination

This is where someone is treated worse than someone else because they are associated with someone with a Protected Characteristic.

Perceptive discrimination

This is where someone is treated worse than someone else because there has been an incorrect assumption that they have a Protected Characteristic. This applies even if the person does not possess the characteristic.

Third party harassment

This is where an employee is harassed by a third party who is not an employee e.g. volunteers or service users. The organisations become liable if it has happened on at least two occasions, GRCC and Independence Trust are aware that it took place and has not taken steps to prevent it happening again.

5. Responsibilities

GRCC / Independence Trust's Board of Trustees is responsible for legal compliance in relation to all GRCC / Independence Trust policies. The Board will consider the implications of equal opportunities before reaching any policy decision and in the preparation of any policy documents. The Board delegates day-to-day management to the Senior Leadership Team which has responsibility for:

- Not discriminating against employees and applicants in the course of employment
- Not discriminating against volunteers and applicants in the course of volunteer experience
- Not discriminating against service users or potential service users in the course of service delivery and planning
- Not inducing or attempting to induce others to practice unlawful discrimination
- Bringing to the attention of employees and volunteers the consequences of discrimination of any kind

Employees and volunteers (including Trustees) of GRCC / Independence Trust have a duty to act within this policy, ensure it is followed and to report any suspected discriminatory acts or practices. They will promote equality of opportunity and good relations between all groups.

Responsibility for promoting awareness of this policy and monitoring that it is being followed rests with the Senior Leadership Team.

Breaches of the Equality and Diversity Policy

Breaches of this policy by employees may be dealt with through disciplinary procedures.

For volunteers, including Trustees, breaches of the Equality and Diversity Policy may jeopardise your position as a volunteer with GRCC / Independence Trust.

Employees, volunteers and Trustees are also personally liable under equality legislation for any act of unlawful discrimination.

6. Equality and diversity in practice

In carrying out the policy, GRCC / Independence Trust will:

- Use selection criteria that do not unlawfully discriminate in recruitment and promotion procedures

- Require entry to employment / volunteering or progression within GRCC / Independence Trust to be based on merit
- Not discriminate in opportunities for recruitment, training, promotion or transfer of employees or volunteers
- Not unlawfully discriminate in relation to provision of services to users and clients
- Ensure that every individual is assessed according to their personal capability to carry out a given job / role
- Ensure that all employees / volunteers are given equal treatment with regard to similar terms and conditions of employment, provided they do the same or broadly similar work, or work of equal value
- Ensure equal opportunities and non-discrimination in the operation of grievance and disciplinary procedures
- Ensure that all relevant requirements of the Equality Act in relation to disability are met and adhered to. This will include making reasonable adjustments to ensure access to employment and volunteering tasks plus access to GRCC / Independence Trust services by users and clients
- Ensure that any amendments to any legislation relating to discrimination are met and adhered to
- Ensure that the lawful reasons for processing Special Category Information (linked to protected characteristics) are clear to people whose personal data GRCC / Independence Trust processes.

This policy is reflected in other GRCC / Independence Trust policies as listed on the title page of this policy.

Implementation of the policy

All employees, Trustees and volunteers will be involved in creating an equality environment and one that values diversity. This will be done through effective communications, work with partners and service users, plus effective monitoring of the policy.

7. Communications

Communication of the policy to job applicants and employees / volunteers is through:

- Making available a copy of the policy to prospective applicants, employees, volunteers and service users
- Ensuring all new starters have the opportunity to discuss the policy with line managers / colleagues
- Making use of team meetings to discuss the policy and defining areas where practice could be improved
- Providing non-discrimination selection training for managers who are recruiting
- Providing Equality and Diversity training and guidance to employees and volunteers (including trustees)

- Including reference to abiding by the policy in employee and volunteer handbook/ agreements.

8. Working with partners

In selecting and working with our partners we will consider their commitment to Equality and Diversity by:

- Asking to see their policy
- Asking what they do in practice, including monitoring the policy
- Formal partnership agreements which include reference to Equality and Diversity requirements and expectations

9. Users of our service

We will make services accessible by:

- Considering formats for promotional material
- Appropriate use of language / formats / fonts / size / colours
- Considering whether information should be available in alternative formats, e.g. Easy Read / other languages
- Considering locations where the organisation's services are promoted / advertised
- Considering accessibility of locations from which the service is provided
- Considering the diverse make up of our employees / volunteers in relation to our service users
- Considering the impact of proposed new services on the user group

Promoting diversity

In addition to complying with The Equality Act 2010, GRCC / Independence Trust is committed to tackling prejudice and to promoting understanding between people who share a Protected Characteristic and others. We aim to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their Protected Characteristics, to meet the needs of those people with Protected Characteristics, and to encourage them to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is low.

10. Monitoring the policy

This policy will be monitored to judge to what extent it is working and identify areas for improvement.

Monitoring will relate to employees / volunteers / Trustees and to service users and will be monitored through individual projects and annually by the Senior Leadership Team. Methods used may include capturing:

- Diversity data for applicants and service users for specific projects

- Information of location of service users
- Information on how service users heard of / accessed our services
- Information on which aspects of our services are used by people
- Requests from service users to work with GRCC / Independence Trust employees with specific characteristics and the action taken in response to such a request¹
- Data in relation to baseline information – e.g., population statistics, other organisations' work
- Equality impact assessments for specific projects and activities, as appropriate

Reporting discrimination / potential discrimination

Employees who feel that they have suffered any form of discrimination should raise the issue through their line manager. If the complaint relates to the employee's line manager, they should raise the issue with a more senior member of management or, if not possible, another member of management at the same level. If necessary, the grievance procedure as set out in the Staff Handbook can be followed.

Volunteers who feel that they have suffered any form of discrimination should raise the issue through the member of staff to whom they report, or a member of the relevant Senior Leadership Team. If necessary, the Comments and Complaints Policy and / or the Whistleblowing Policy can be followed.

Service users who feel that they have suffered any form of discrimination should raise the issue through the Comments and Complaints Policy.

If an employee / volunteer / service user / Trustee witnesses behaviour that they find offensive in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, even if it is not directed at them, they should use this procedure as above.

11. Review of the policy

This policy will be reviewed annually by the GRCC / Independence Trust Senior Leadership Team to ensure that it remains up to date and reflects the needs and practices of the organisations.

The policy may also be reviewed if legislation changes or if monitoring information suggests that policy or practices should be altered.

¹ An example of such a request would be a female client asking for a female GRCC / Independence Trust employee / volunteer to help with a medical condition