

Equal Opportunities Policy

Policy statement

The Springfield Project is an equal opportunity employer committed to treating all employees and job applicants equally. We will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, transfer, training opportunities, pay and benefits, other terms of employment, discipline, redundancy, and dismissal.

We take all reasonable steps to employ and promote employees based on their abilities and qualifications without regard to age, disability, gender and gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, or sexual orientation. In this policy, these are known as the "protected characteristics". We appoint, train, develop, and promote based on merit and ability alone.

This policy applies to all employees, consultants, officers, contractors, agency and casual workers of the Springfield Project.

Our Equal Opportunities Commitment and Aims

We will not tolerate discrimination or harassment and are fully committed to promoting equal opportunities in employment. Our staff and anyone applying for a job with the Springfield Project will receive fair and equal treatment.

This policy is underpinned by the following commitments and aims:

- A working environment free from all forms of unlawful discrimination, including victimisation and harassment
- A workplace capable of allowing everyone to achieve their greatest potential, and where individuals are willing to give their best
- An organisation-wide understanding of the message promoted by this policy
- A commitment to ensuring all staff understand their rights and responsibilities under this policy
- A policy of ensuring employment opportunities are open to all qualified candidates, so that we recruit from the largest possible pool of available talent
- A commitment to recruiting based on ability to do the job, that also reflects the multicultural composition of our local community
- A commitment to amending this policy if we think it has become outdated, or circumstances suggest to us that it needs updating
- A commitment to protecting staff, wherever possible, from being victimised or treated less fairly if they make or support a complaint in good faith under this policy

Scope of Policy

This policy covers, but is not limited to:

- Pay and conditions of employment
- Training and continuing professional development
- Recruitment
- Promotion

- Appraisals
- Grievances and disciplinary matters
- Ending employment
- Giving references
- How visitors are treated
- How clients and suppliers are treated
- How any other business contacts and associates are treated

You should read this policy in conjunction with our other policies, including on harassment and bullying, and our grievance procedure.

How We Define Discrimination

The following list gives you a general description of the types of acts that may both breach this policy and be unlawful:

Direct Discrimination

This occurs when somebody is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic than somebody else has been - or would have been - in identical circumstances.

Example: Rejecting a job applicant because of their beliefs or refusing to promote someone because they are pregnant.

Indirect Discrimination

This occurs when a group of people with one of the protected characteristics is put at a disadvantage by a provision, criterion, or practice (PCP) applied to all staff unless the treatment is justified for a good business reason.

Examples: Refusing a request to work part-time without a good business reason (which indirectly discriminates against women, who are more likely to have childcare responsibilities); insisting all staff work Saturdays without a good business reason (which indirectly discriminates against some Jewish employees who may not be able to work on Saturdays).

Associative Discrimination

This is where somebody is treated less favourably because of the personal characteristics of somebody else.

Example: Treating an employee less favourably because their parents are Jehovah's Witnesses.

Perceived Discrimination

This occurs where someone is treated less favourably because someone wrongly believes they have a particular protected characteristic.

Example: Treating an employee less favourably because someone thinks they are lesbian, when in fact they are not.

Harassment

This is when a hostile, humiliating, degrading, intimidating or similarly offensive environment is created in relation to a protected characteristic. We also consider it harassment for a worker to be subjected to uninvited conduct related to a protected characteristic that—as an intended or unintended consequence—violates their dignity.

Examples: Name calling, lewd comments, excluding colleagues, making insensitive jokes, and displaying pornographic material. We deal with this in detail under our separate policy on Harassment and Bullying.

Victimisation

This happens when a worker has complained about harassment or discrimination, or has supported a colleague in their complaint, and is then treated less favourably as a result.

Examples: An employee who is 'sent to Coventry' because they spoke up on behalf of one of their colleagues in a harassment investigation, or an employee who is dismissed under a pretext because they have complained of discrimination.

Responsibilities and Duties

Both management and staff 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—management and staff—may be 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 management, specifically with the board of directors. Everyone working at managerial level is expected to act in full accordance with this policy, lead by example, and attain and maintain appropriate standards of behaviour within the teams they manage.

All employees have a duty to co-operate with The Springfield Project to ensure that this policy is effective to ensure equal opportunities and to prevent discrimination. You are expected to take personal responsibility for adhering to the policy's aims and commitments and for drawing any breaches to our attention.

We will act under The Springfield Project's disciplinary procedure against any employee who we find has committed an act of improper or unlawful discrimination. We will treat serious breaches of the equal opportunities policy as potential gross misconduct, which could make the employee liable to summary dismissal. Employees should also bear in mind that the courts can hold them personally liable for any act of unlawful discrimination.

We encourage all staff to take part in promoting equal opportunities across the Springfield Project. Please contact your manager if you have any ideas about how we could do this better, or you would like to be more involved in achieving this policy's aims.

Recruitment, Promotion and Selection

We carry out all recruitment, promotion and other types of selection procedures—such as for redundancy exercises—on the basis of merit using non-discriminatory and, as far as possible, objective criteria.

Advertisements for vacancies must not include wording that may discourage some groups of people from applying, or stereotype in any way, and they must be placed where they can reach as wide and diverse a pool of potential candidates as possible.

When advertising job vacancies, to attract applications from all sections of the community, The Springfield Project will, as far as reasonably practical:

- Not confine advertisements to those areas or publications which would exclude or disproportionately reduce the numbers of applicants with a protected characteristic
- Avoid setting any unnecessary provisions or criteria which would exclude a higher proportion of people with a protected characteristic

Where promotion or transfer fills vacancies, we will publish to all eligible employees in such a way that they do not restrict applications from employees with a protected characteristic. However, where, having regard to the nature and context of the work, having a protected characteristic is an occupational requirement and that occupational requirement is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, The Springfield Project will apply that requirement to the job role and will specify that in the advertisement.

Health and Disability Questions in Recruitment

Nobody applying for employment with the Springfield Project must be asked about their health or whether they have a disability before a job offer is made, except in very limited situations. It may, for example, be justifiable to ask whether the applicant needs any disability-related measures put in place for the interview, or to check that they are capable of carrying out a key part of the job. It is acceptable to make some job offers dependent on a medical examination.

It is unlawful to ask job applicants anything that might suggest an intention to discriminate on the grounds of a protected characteristic.

Including health or disability questions in equal opportunities monitoring exercises is fine, but the data gathered must not be used for selecting someone for a role or other employment-related decisions.

Selection Methods

We will carry out a consistent recruitment process for all jobs at all levels. The appointment of new staff will be based on the job requirements and the individual's suitability and ability to do, or to train for, the job in question. We will limit person specifications and job descriptions to those requirements that are necessary for the effective performance of the job. We will assess candidates for employment, promotion or transfer objectively against the requirements for the job.

With disabled job applicants, The Springfield Project will have regard to its duty to make reasonable adjustments to work provisions, criteria, or practices or to physical features of work premises or to provide auxiliary aids or services to ensure that the disabled person is not placed at a substantial (i.e., more than minor or trivial) disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled.

Selection Tests and Interviews

In any tests we use, we will limit to questions relating to the job and/or career requirements. The tests will measure the individual's actual or inherent ability to do or to train for the work or career. We will review the tests we use from time to time to ensure that they remain relevant and free from any unjustifiable bias, either in content or in scoring mechanism.

We process all applications in the same way. We will inform those responsible for short-listing, interviewing, and selecting candidates of the criteria and of the need for their consistent application.

Wherever possible, at least two interviewers will interview all applicants. All questions put to the applicants will relate to the requirements of the job.

Training, Transfer and Promotion

The Springfield Project will take such measures as may be necessary to ensure the proper training, supervision, and instruction for all managers to familiarise them with The Springfield Project's policy on equal opportunities, and to help them identify discriminatory acts or practices and ensure that they promote equal opportunity within the departments for which they are responsible.

The Springfield Project will also give training to all employees to help them understand their rights and responsibilities under The Springfield Project's equal opportunities and dignity at work policies and what they can do to create a work environment that is free from discrimination, bullying and harassment.

We will instruct all persons responsible for selecting new employees, employees for training or employees for transfer or promotion to other jobs not to discriminate because of one or more of the protected characteristics.

Where a promotional system is in operation, we will examine the assessment criteria to ensure that they are not discriminatory. We will check the promotional system from time to time to assess how it is working in practice.

Terms of Employment, Benefits, Facilities and Services

The Springfield Project will review all terms of employment, benefits, facilities, and services from time to time to ensure that there is no unlawful direct or indirect discrimination because of one or more of the protected characteristics.

Equal Pay and Equality of Terms

The Springfield Project is committed to equal pay and equality of terms in employment. It believes its male and female employees should receive equal pay where they are carrying out like work, work rated as equivalent or work of equal value. To achieve this, The Springfield Project will endeavour to support a pay system that is transparent, free from bias and based on objective criteria.

Enforcement and Handling Breaches

We will investigate any complaint or allegation you raise regarding a potential breach of this policy, and if you believe you have been harassed or discriminated against you should contact your manager as soon as possible. If you want to take formal action, you will need to follow our grievance procedure and read our policy on harassment and bullying.

The Springfield Project will deal with all allegations of discrimination seriously, confidentially, and speedily. The Springfield Project will not ignore or treat lightly grievances or complaints about unlawful discrimination from employees.

You will face disciplinary action if we find you 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 you will be dismissed without notice and with no payment in lieu of notice.

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. In exceptional cases, bad faith complaints can lead to summary dismissal for gross misconduct.

Even if The Springfield Project does not uphold a complaint, employees will not be penalised for raising a grievance, unless the complaint was both untrue and made in bad faith.

Monitoring and Review

We may record and analyse information about equal opportunities within the workplace, and we will comply with our Data Protection Policy when processing this information. We use the information to make sure this policy is operating properly and refine it, to review the composition of the workforce, and to promote workplace equality.

The Springfield Project will regularly check the effects of recruitment decisions and personnel practices and procedures to assess whether we are achieving equality of opportunity. This will also involve considering any possible indirectly discriminatory effects of its standard working practices. If we need to make changes, The Springfield Project will implement them. The Springfield Project will also make reasonable adjustments to its standard working practices to overcome any substantial disadvantages to colleagues with disabilities.