



# **Equal Opportunities Policy**

June 2017 - May 2018



## CONTEXT & OVERVIEW

Policy Prepared by:	Mr Gareth Gilvary
Approved by Board on:	15/05/2017
Policy became operational:	01/06/2017
Next review date:	01/05/2018

## STATEMENT OF POLICY

1. IGNITION Belfast CIC ("IGNITION") recognises that we live in a society where discrimination still operates to the disadvantage of many groups in society.
2. IGNITION believes that all persons should have equal rights to recognition of their human dignity, and to have equal opportunities to be educated, to work, receive services and to participate in society.
3. IGNITION is committed to the promotion of equal opportunities within the organisation, and affiliated organisations, through the way we manage the organisation and provide services to the community. In order to express this commitment, we develop, promote and maintain policies that will be conducive to the principles of fairness and equality in the workplace.
4. The objective of this policy is that no person should suffer or experience less favourable treatment, discrimination or lack of opportunities on the grounds of gender, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religious or philosophical beliefs, health status, HIV status, age, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, political beliefs or trade union membership, class, responsibility for dependents, physical attributes, ex-offender status as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, lack of formal qualifications where such qualifications are not formally required, or any other grounds which cannot be shown to be justifiable within the context of this policy.
5. This policy will influence and affect every aspect of activities carried out at IGNITION i.e. promotional work, educational services, casework and other functions linked to the organisation, as determined by the Board of Directors.
6. In the provision of services and the employment of staff, IGNITION is committed to promoting equal opportunities for everyone. Throughout its activities, IGNITION will treat all people equally whether they are:
  - Seeking or using our services.
  - Applying for a job or already employed by us.
  - Trainee workers and students on work experience or placements.
  - Volunteers.



## HOW THIS POLICY IS IMPLEMENTED, AND WHO IS RESPONSIBLE

The Board of Directors have specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy. Each Director also has responsibilities and we expect all our employees to abide by the policy and help create the equality environment which is its objective.

In order to implement this policy we shall:

- Communicate the policy to employees, job applicants, volunteers and relevant others.
- Incorporate specific and appropriate duties in respect of implementing the equal opportunities policy into job descriptions and work objectives of all staff.
- Ensure that those who are involved in assessing candidates for recruitment or promotion will be trained in nondiscriminatory selection techniques.
- Incorporate equal opportunity notices into general communications practices.
- Ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfil the objectives of the policy.

## Conduct and General Standards of Behaviour:

All staff and volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and considerate manner at all times. IGNITION will not tolerate behaviour such as:

- making threats
- physical violence
- shouting
- swearing at others
- persistent rudeness
- isolating, ignoring or refusing to work with certain people
- telling offensive jokes or name calling
- displaying offensive material such as pornography or sexist / racist cartoons, or the distribution of such material via email / text message or any other format.
- any other forms of harassment or victimisation.

The items on the above list of unacceptable behaviours are considered to be disciplinary offences within the organisation and can lead to disciplinary action being taken. The Board of Directors do, however, encourage staff to resolve misunderstandings and problems informally wherever possible, depending on the circumstances. However, whether dealt with informally or formally, it is important for staff who may have caused offence to understand that it is no defence to say that they did not intend to do so, or to blame individuals for being over sensitive. It is the impact of the behaviour, rather than the intent, that counts, and that should shape the solution found both to the immediate problem and to preventing further similar problems in the future.

## Complaints of Discrimination:

IGNITION will treat seriously all complaints of unlawful discrimination on any forbidden grounds made by employees, trustees, clients or other third parties and will take action where appropriate.

All complaints will be investigated in accordance with the organisation's grievance, complaints or disciplinary procedure, as appropriate and the complainant will be informed of the outcome in line with these procedures.

We will also monitor the number and outcomes of complaints of discrimination made by staff, volunteers, clients and other third parties.



## LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

### Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998

We are registered with the Equality Commission for the purposes of the Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998. As such we are obliged to monitor the community background and sex of our job applicants and workforce. We are also obliged to review the composition of our workforce and our employment policies and practices every three years and, where appropriate, to consider taking affirmative action to promote fair participation between members of the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities. We are committed to complying with these duties and will [have] set up suitable arrangements to ensure that we do so.

## RECRUITMENT & SELECTION

1. The recruitment and selection process is crucially important to any equal opportunities policy. We will endeavour through appropriate training to ensure that employees, making selection and recruitment decisions will not discriminate, whether consciously or unconsciously, in making these decisions.
2. Promotion and advancement will be made on merit and all decisions relating to this will be made within the overall framework and principles of this policy.
3. Job descriptions, where used, will be revised to ensure that they are in line with our equal opportunities policy. Job requirements will be reflected accurately in any personnel specifications.
4. We will adopt a consistent, non-discriminatory approach to the advertising of vacancies.
5. All applicants who apply for jobs with us will receive fair treatment and will be considered solely on their ability to do their job.
6. Short-listing and interviewing will be carried out by more than one person where possible.
7. Interview questions will be related to the requirements of the job and will not be of a discriminatory nature.
8. Selection decisions will not be influenced by any perceived prejudices of other staff.

## MONITORING

1. We will maintain and review the employment records of all employees in order to monitor the progress of this policy. Monitoring may involve:-
  - The collection and classification of information regarding the race in terms of ethnic/national origin and sex of all applications and current employees;
  - The examination by ethnic/national origin and sex of the distribution of employees and the success rate of the applicants; and
  - Recording recruitment, training and promotional records of all employees, the decisions reached and the reason for those decisions.
2. The results of any monitoring procedure will be reviewed at regular intervals to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of this policy. Consideration will be given, if necessary, to adjusting this policy to afford greater equality of opportunities to all applicants and staff.

### **This Policy has been reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors of IGNITION Belfast CIC.**

This policy is applicable to all revenues within the IGNITION Belfast CIC group of organisations.

This policy will be implemented, and reviewed once more in a period of 12 months time.



# **Recruitment and Selection Policy**

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## STATEMENT OF POLICY

We are an equal opportunities employer, which means that we are committed to providing equality of opportunity in employment to all persons.

When recruiting new employees or when affording our current employees with opportunities for promotion, it means that we will-

- follow the good practice recommendations of the codes of practice and other guidance issued by the Equality Commission;
- not discriminate unlawfully against any person.
- select the best person for the job in terms of qualifications and abilities.

To achieve these aims, we have set up this recruitment and selection procedure. No position in the company may be filled unless this procedure has been followed.

The Board of Directors have the main responsibility for implementing this policy and procedure.

## THE PROCEDURE

### General Principles

We are an equal opportunities employer, which means that we are committed to providing equality of opportunity in employment to all persons.

- These procedures must be applied fairly and consistently to all job applicants.
- Assistance must be given, where needed, to job applicants who are disabled.
- All recruitment must be planned in advance and opened up to competition.
- We do not accept casual or speculative requests for employment.
- All persons who wish to work for us must complete an application form in response to an advertised job vacancy.
- All applicants must then be assessed against relevant selection criteria to determine who the best person for the job is.



## Helping job applicants who are disabled

Disability Discrimination Act 1995: The general rule of good practice is that our procedures and practices must be applied fairly and consistently to all job applicants. But, it is especially important that those of our staff who are involved in recruitment are also aware that they may be required to make reasonable adjustments to some or all of those procedures and practices if that is needed to remove any disadvantages which they cause for any disabled job applicants.

This is a legal duty and failure to comply with it is unlawful disability discrimination. The adjustments need only be made for the disabled persons who require them and it may result in those disabled persons being treated more favourably than other persons; if so, that is lawful and permissible.

## Open a recruitment file

At the start of a recruitment exercise for a particular job, a Recruitment File for that particular exercise must be created. Each file should have a unique reference number. This file will be used to store copies of the documents associated with the recruitment exercise. As the exercise progresses, this will include copies of-

- the job description and personnel specification
- the job advertisement
- the application forms that are received
- shortlisting and interview assessment sheets and notes
- letters to applicants

## Open a monitoring file

After the Recruitment File is opened, a separate Monitoring File must also be opened. The Monitoring File will have the same reference number as the main Recruitment File. This file must be used to store copies of the equal opportunities monitoring documents associated with the recruitment exercise, such as-

- equal opportunities questionnaires returned by the applicants
- the Applicant Register
- the Recruitment Summary Record

## Job descriptions

A job description must be drawn up for every post. This is a document that sets out the essential duties of the job, including the job title. These should remain gender neutral.

## Personnel specifications

A personnel specification must be drawn up for every post. This is a document that sets out the selection criteria which will be used to assess job applicants to determine which one is the best person for the job

## Advertising the job vacancy

All job vacancies must be advertised to welcome applications from as many eligible candidates as possible. The following statement must be added to all advertisements: **“We are an equal opportunities employer”**.



## Application process and forms

All persons who wish to work for us must complete our standard application form for the job in question in response to an advertised job vacancy.

All persons who request an application form will be sent an application pack that includes the following information:

- the application form for the post,
- the job description and personnel specification for the post,
- the closing date and the company's contact details for applicant enquiries,
- an equal opportunities monitoring form

We will normally aim to keep open our application period for each recruitment exercise for an interval of around 2 weeks.

## Disabled applicants

We will not normally accept curricula vitae (CVs), but we may accept them in exceptional circumstances as a reasonable adjustment for any disabled candidate who needs it. We are also prepared to make our standard application forms available in other formats if that too would help any disabled candidates to apply.

## Equal Opportunities Monitoring

For the purposes of Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998, we must monitor the community background and sex of our job applicants and employees. All persons who request a job application form will be sent our separate equal opportunities monitoring form as well.

All information contained in the applicants' monitoring forms will be treated with confidence and must not be read or considered by those members of our staff who sit on the shortlisting or interview panels for the posts in question.

## The Selection Process

After the application stage closes, our selection process consists of the following stages -

- Pre-shortlisting
- Shortlisting
- Interviews
- Testing/Simulation
- Call Back Interview (*if applicable*)
- Pre-employment checks & AccessNI (*if applicable*)

## Pre-shortlisting

The equal opportunities monitoring questionnaires returned by the applicants will be separated from their main application forms and will be placed in the Monitoring File. The original application forms will be kept in the main Recruitment File for the exercise.

The application forms submitted by the applicants will be checked to see if any disabled applicant has indicated that he/she has any special requirements or are requesting any reasonable adjustments during the selection process. If any such requirements or adjustments are needed, then this will be noted at an early stage so that sufficient time is available to plan and make the appropriate arrangements. Where practicable, applicants will be contacted to obtain further information.

A Selection Panel for the exercise will be set up to carry-out shortlisting and interviews. Where practicable, the same panel will carry-out both. The Selection Panel will consist of at least two members and, where practicable, they will be persons of different sex and community background. No one may sit on a Selection Panel unless he or she has received appropriate training about fair, non-discriminatory recruitment methods.



## **Shortlisting**

Shortlisting is an initial assessment of the applicants based solely on the information contained in their application forms. The purpose is to decide which applicants meet the essential and/or desirable job criteria so that they may be given more in-depth consideration at the next stage of the process.

The criteria to be applied are those that are set out in the personnel specification for the job in question. The essential criteria must be applied always. The Selection Panel will decide whether any of the desirable criteria will also be applied.

The shortlisting decisions must be fair and consistent.

## **Academic qualifications**

In cases of doubt and before making a final shortlisting decision, the Selection Panel will make enquiries from an appropriate authority to check the values and equivalences of academic and other qualifications, especially those that were gained overseas.

## **Marking sheet**

The Selection Panel must record their assessment of each applicant on the shortlisting record sheet that has been prepared for the exercise.

The completed sheet should be signed by all members of the panel and added to and kept in the main Recruitment File.

## **Rejection letters**

Applicants who are rejected at the shortlisting stage will be informed about this in writing as soon as possible afterwards.

All information contained in the applicants' monitoring forms will be treated with confidence and must not be read or consider

## **Testing/Simulation**

Testing is a method of assessing applicants that we may use occasionally. We will only use tests from reputable providers and which are proven to be capable of providing reliable assessments of the applicants' abilities to perform the duties of the job. The tests will be used to assess the applicants against only the essential and/or desirable criteria set out in the personnel specification for the job in question.

In line with other commitments made previously in this procedure, appropriate reasonable adjustments to the testing procedures will be made for those disabled applicants who may need them.

The test records will be added to and kept in the main Recruitment File.

## **Rejection letters**

Applicants who are rejected at this stage will be informed about this in writing as soon as possible afterwards.

## **Interviews**

Interviews are the main method by which we will assess the remaining applicants who have passed the shortlisting and/or testing stages. The Selection Panel's primary aim is to select the best person for the job.



## **Prior to the interview**

The applicants will be sent written invitations to attend. In line with other commitments made previously in this procedure, appropriate reasonable adjustments to the interview arrangements will be planned and made for those disabled applicants who may need them.

The Selection Panel will meet before the date of the interviews to decide how they will carry-out the interview and to draw up the questions they intend to ask. The panel may decide:

- whether to ask applicants to deliver a presentation, and if so
- whether they should prepare it in advance of the day or on the day
- whether questions used in previous recruitment exercises for the same post are satisfactory and will be used again, or
- whether to amend the questions or ask new ones

The questions should only be job-related and designed to assess the applicants against the essential and/or desirable criteria set out in the personnel specification for the job in question.

The questions should not seek to obtain the following kinds of personal information about the applicants:

- religious or similar philosophical belief or political opinion
- ethnicity, nationality or national origins
- age or date-of-birth
- sexual orientation
- health or disability
- marital status or family status or whether the applicant has children or plans to have children

The panel will decide how they will score and weight the answers and questions and prepare a standardised interview assessment sheet against which the applicants will be marked.

## **During the interview**

All applicants should be asked the same pre-set questions.

All applicants should be treated fairly during the interview and the marks awarded to them should be fair and consistent.

Each panel member will complete a separate interview assessment sheet for each and every applicant.

## **After the interview - selection decision**

After every applicant has been interviewed, the panel will discuss their views and assessments and jointly draw up a list of the applicants in merit order. The vacant post, or posts, will be offered to the most meritorious applicant, or applicants, in accordance with that merit order.

The panel may also decide that other applicants on the merit list will be offered positions on a reserve list to fill any vacancies that may arise for the same position within the following 12 months. Again, this will be done in accordance with the merit order.

## **After the interview - administrative matters**

All of the Interview Assessment sheets will be transferred to the main Recruitment File for storage. The successful applicants will be sent conditional offers of employment, subject to any satisfactory pre-employment checks that are required.

The “reserve list” applicants, if any, will be informed in writing of that decision. If a “reserve list” applicant is later offered a position, that too will be a conditional offer, subject to any satisfactory pre-employment checks that are required.

The unsuccessful applicants will be informed in writing of that decision.



## Pre-employment Checks

### Right to work in the UK

We are not allowed under immigration law to employ any person who is not legally entitled to work in the UK. To ensure that we comply with that law and at the same time avoid unlawful racial discrimination against migrant workers, we will check that all persons, including local persons, who we intend to employ are entitled to work here and entitled to do the work in question.

These checks will not be used for shortlisting or interviewing purposes. The checks will only be made in respect of persons to whom we have made a conditional offer of employment.

### Health checks and examinations

We will not seek health information on our application forms and such information will never be used by us for shortlisting or interview purposes.

When we do seek such information it will be obtained from an appropriate medical expert.

We will only seek such information in respect of persons to whom we have made a conditional offer of employment.

We will only seek such information where the particular needs of the job require us to know it.

We will not single out disabled persons to provide such information.

In the case of disabled applicants, we will consider what reasonable adjustments, if any, may be required to the working arrangements or workplace, and we will make our final selection decision following an assessment of how the applicant would perform in the job if these reasonable adjustments were actually made.

### References

We will not seek a reference from an applicant's current employer unless the applicant has given his or her consent to that.

We will accept references from other persons who know the applicant in a non-occupational capacity.

However, all references should be job-related. Therefore, we will provide referees with copies of the job description and personnel specification for the relevant posts and ask them specifically for their views on an applicant's abilities to do the job in question.

### Criminal Records

Some of our job roles involve working with young people and children, and in some other cases, vulnerable adults. As such, we may be required to seek an AccessNI check on our applicants. It is important that you refer to our AccessNI policy for information on the process we apply to checking our candidates for criminal records. Please note this does not apply to all of our job roles, and any application form we issue will clearly indicate whether or not we intend to AccessNI check a candidate for the purposes of working in regulated activity.

Additional to our AccessNI policy, we adapt the following-

We will only seek such information in respect of persons to whom we have made a conditional offer of employment.

We will treat the information with the utmost sensitivity and confidentiality.

We will not withdraw a conditional offer of employment merely because a person has a criminal record. We will keep an open mind and will make a final decision following a risk assessment, taking account of the following matters-

- the nature of the job and the nature of any potential risks to our business, customers, clients and other employees
- the applicant's skills, qualifications and abilities
- how relevant the criminal conviction(s) is to the job in question
- the seriousness of the offence(s)
- the frequency of the offending
- how long ago the offence(s) occurred
- the circumstances surrounding the offence(s)
- whether the applicant's circumstances have changed since the offence(s)
- any representations made by the applicant or his/her referees



## **Confirmation of Offer**

After the pre-employment checks have been completed and are deemed to be satisfactory, the successful applicant will be notified in writing that the offer of employment is confirmed.

The confirmation letter will specify the following details:

- job title
- duration of post (permanent or temporary)
- duration of probationary period (if any)
- proposed or agreed start date
- outline of main terms and conditions
- details of how to accept the offer

## **Record keeping**

The documents in the main Recruitment File should be kept for at least 12 months following the date of the interviews. The documents in the Monitoring File should be kept for at least 3 years following the closing date for applications.