

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Purpose	To ensure that ITF provides equal opportunities in all aspects of employment and service provision and prevents discrimination
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1. POLICY STATEMENT

This policy sets out International Tree Foundation's approach to promoting Equal Opportunities with the primary aim of providing equality for all, preventing any form of discrimination and fostering good relations between people of different groups.

ITF is committed to creating an inclusive working environment to maximise the potential of all staff by providing equal opportunities in all aspects of employment and avoiding unlawful discrimination at work.

ITF's aim is to ensure that all staff are treated with dignity and respect will not tolerate discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation of employees or third parties who do work on ITF's behalf. ITF has a separate anti-harassment and bullying policy, which deals with these issues.

ITF will take account of and embed equality and diversity through all of our programmes which seek to improve livelihoods, environmental education and human well-being. ITF has a diversity statement which can be found on SharePoint.

2. TO WHOM DOES THE POLICY APPLY?

The policy applies to all ITF Trustees, staff, volunteers, contractors, consultants and any other third parties who carry out work on ITF's behalf.

3. PRINCIPLES

The key principles of this equal opportunities policy are to:

- provide equality for all
- promote an inclusive culture
- respect and value differences of everyone
- prevent discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- promote and foster good relations across the workforce and with partners

This means being aware of the impact of our behaviour and thinking about the impact of employment policies and our programmes in the UK and overseas on people from the protected groups listed below.

4. THE LAW

It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of a 'protected characteristic'.

Protected characteristics:

The Equality Act 2010 defines these protected characteristics as being:

- age
- disability
- gender (or sex)
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race (which includes colour, nationality, caste and ethnic or national origins)
- sexual orientation
- religion or belief
- marriage and civil partnership.

Discrimination after employment may also be unlawful, e.g. refusing to give a reference for a reason related to one of the protected characteristics.

It is also unlawful to discriminate against or harass a member of the public or service user in the provision of services or goods or to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to using services caused by disability.

The duty to make reasonable adjustments includes the removal, adaptation or alteration of physical features, if the physical features make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of services. In addition, service providers have an obligation to think ahead and address any barriers that may impede disabled people from accessing a service.

Types of unlawful discrimination:

- **Direct discrimination** is where a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic. However, discrimination may be lawful if there is an occupational requirement which is core to a job role and a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- **Occupational Requirement** - in limited circumstances, employers can directly discriminate against an individual for a reason related to any of the protected characteristics where there is an occupational requirement. The occupational requirement must be crucial to the post and be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- **Indirect discrimination** means putting in place, a rule or policy or way of doing things that has a worse impact on someone with a protected characteristic than someone without one, when this cannot be objectively justified.

- **Harassment** is where there is unwanted behaviour related to a protected characteristic (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity) which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or which creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It does not matter whether or not this effect was intended by the person responsible for the conduct.
- **Associative discrimination** is where the individual treated less favourably does not have a protected characteristic but is discriminated against because of their association with someone who does, e.g. the parent of a disabled child.
- **Perceptive discrimination** is where the individual discriminated against or harassed does not have a protected characteristic but they are perceived to have a protected characteristic.
- **Third-party harassment** occurs where an employee is harassed by third parties such as service users, due to a protected characteristic.
- **Victimisation** is treating someone unfavourably because they have taken some form of action relating to the Equality Act, i.e. because they have supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because they are suspected of doing so. However, an employee is not protected from victimisation if they acted maliciously or made or supported an untrue complaint.
- **Failure to make reasonable adjustments** is where a rule or policy or way of doing things has a worse impact on someone with a protected characteristic compared with someone who does not have that protected characteristic and the employer has failed to make reasonable adjustments to enable the disabled person to overcome the disadvantage.

5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN EMPLOYMENT

We will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, flexible working arrangements, discipline and selection for redundancy. Job descriptions will avoid any unnecessary requirements (those unrelated to effective performance) that may otherwise have deterred applicants. We will base decisions on objective criteria. We will consider making reasonable adjustments in recruitment as well as in day-to-day employment.

6. SERVICE USERS, SUPPLIERS AND OTHERS

ITF will not discriminate unlawfully against service users using or seeking to use the services we provide. If a staff member is bullied or harassed by a service user, supplier, contractor, visitor or others, or if they witness someone else being bullied or harassed, they are asked to report this to their manager who will take appropriate action.

7. TRAINING

ITF will provide information and guidance to those involved in recruitment or other decision making where equal opportunities issues are likely to arise to help them understand their responsibilities and to avoid the risk of discrimination.

8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Organisational responsibility:

Equal opportunities and diversity is central to our work as an international organisation and each of us have a responsibility for taking action. Leadership on equality and diversity will be provided by the Board of Trustees and the Chief Executive.

Individual responsibility:

All staff are responsible for supporting the organisation to meet its commitment and avoid unlawful discrimination.

Line managers should appreciate their responsibility both to set a good example, and to deal promptly and fairly with complaints of discrimination or harassment. They must give full consideration to complaints of conduct which is either deliberately, or likely to be taken as discriminatory, harassing or offensive.

If an individual employee believes that they have been discriminated against they should report this to their line manager or the Chief Executive under the grievance procedure. If the complaint involves bullying or harassment, the grievance procedure is modified as set out in the dignity at work policy. ITF takes any complaint seriously and an employee will not be penalised for raising a grievance, even if the grievance is not upheld, unless the complaint is both untrue and made in bad faith.

If an employee witnesses what they believe to be discrimination they should report this to their line manager or the Chief Executive as soon as possible.

Employees can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, the organisation for any act of unlawful discrimination. Employees who commit serious acts of harassment may be guilty of a criminal offence. Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against employees or customers are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure. Discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal without notice.

9. MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy will be monitored periodically to judge its effectiveness and will be updated in accordance with changes in the law. The Chief Executive will report to the Board of Trustees on any actions or activities undertaken to improve equality of opportunity.

Any information provided by job applicants and employees for monitoring purposes will be used only for these purposes and will be dealt with in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.