

Acumen Community Enterprise Development Trust

Equal Opportunities Policy

About this document

This document contains information about Acumen Trust's policy on Equal Opportunities in the context of employment and service delivery. It should be used in conjunction with training for all staff members, volunteers and clients. It should also inform clients about Acumen Trust's policy.

This policy document aims to help all employees to: -

- be aware of Equal Opportunities issues.
- be aware of and put into practice Acumen Trust's policy on Equal Opportunities and the law related to Equal Opportunities.
- avoid unlawful and improper discrimination.
- raise awareness of Acumen Trust's policy with Clients
- contribute towards promoting Equal Opportunities.
- make sure anti-oppressive practices are carried out.

Statement of policy

- Acumen Trust is committed to anti-oppressive practice.
- Acumen Trust is committed to providing equality of opportunity to all employees and service users.
- Acumen Trust will not tolerate any kind of discrimination or harassment to clients or staff.

This policy applies to all aspects of Acumen Trust's work and it is the responsibility of every individual connected to and acting on behalf of the Acumen Trust (whether s/he is full or part-time, a volunteer, a client or a seconded employee), to adhere to it.

Additionally, we aim to ensure that: -

- No person is treated more or less favourably than any other on any improper grounds of:
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Disability
 - Race
 - Language
 - Colour
 - Ethnic or national origin
 - Sexual orientation

- Religious belief
 - Or any other improper ground.
- All employees and job applications are treated fairly and are not subject to unjustifiable requirements or conditions (see Recruitment and Selection Policy).
 - The composition of our workforce at all levels broadly reflects that of the communities which we serve.

Positive Action

One of the aims of the Equal Opportunities policy is that the composition of the workforce should broadly reflect that of the community, which it serves. The law allows positive action to be taken to help or encourage those in under-represented groups to apply for jobs or improve their chances of promotion. This means:

- removing or redressing any discriminatory or oppressive practices
- actively seeking to provide genuine equality of opportunity and enabling people from all groups to stand a fair chance of competing for jobs or promotion by merit.

The legal framework of Equal Opportunities

It is against the law to apply an unjustifiable condition or requirement that puts people of any group at a disadvantage compared to others.

The implementation of this policy is structured by the following legislation: -

- The Race Relations Act 1976 (and Race Relations amendment 2002, Appendix 1)
- The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (as amended).
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
- The Equal Pay Act 1970.
- Human Rights Act 2000 (European Convention on Human Rights)
- Protection from Harassment Act 1994.
- Employment Act 2002

THESE LAWS APPLY TO ACUMEN AS AN EMPLOYER AND TO EACH INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEE

Acumen has copies of the above Acts available for consultation.

Responsibilities of employees

It is essential for the successful operation of the Equal Opportunities Policy that all employees support it. All employees must therefore: -

- familiarise themselves with and contribute to the implementation of the Equal Opportunities Policy
- co-operate with measures designed to support or promote the Equal Opportunities Policy and take a pro-active approach to minimising oppressive practices, behaviour and attitudes.
- make sure as far as possible that other employees, clients or members of the public are not victimised, oppressed or discriminated against.
- inform a manager if they know or suspect that inequality or discrimination is occurring.
- follow all instructions given in accordance with the Law and Codes of Practice concerning Equal Opportunities.
- participate fully in any Equal Opportunities, Disability Awareness and any other additional anti discriminatory training provided for them by the company.

IT IS A CONDITION OF SERVICE THAT EMPLOYEES COMPLY WITH AND SUPPORT THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Failure to do so will be dealt with under the Code of Conduct and/or the Disciplinary Policy and Procedures, including possible warnings, compulsory transfer (without protection of salary) or dismissal.

FOR ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF MANAGERS SEE APPENDIX 3

Conditions of service

As a general policy the company will seek to apply common conditions of service to all employees. Different Conditions of Service will only occur when: -

- they reflect differences in operational requirements, or
- there is a need for positive action.

The conditions of service will be reviewed regularly to ensure that they do not disadvantage people and that they do encourage under-represented groups to apply for employment opportunities within Acumen Trust

Allegations of discrimination

Any allegations made by an employee directly related to their employment can be raised with any Manager within Acumen Trust. Allegations made will follow the Complaints procedure.

No internal investigation prejudices the right of a member of staff or a client to complain to the Equal Opportunities Commission or the Commission for Racial Equality or Disability Rights Commission.

APPENDIX 1

Race equality policy

The Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000, has placed a general duty on organisations to have due regard to:

- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity
- promote good relations between people of different racial groups

Commitment

As part of our Equal Opportunities Policy, Acumen Trust will ensure that no individual or group is treated less favourably than another on any improper grounds of racial discrimination. Acumen Trust will ensure that steps are taken to promote good relations between different racial groups and that there is equality of opportunity.

Acumen Trust will endeavour to build on the necessary resources to meet their responsibilities under the act. Any unlawful discriminatory behaviour by individuals or groups will dealt with under Acumen Trust Code of Conduct, and/or Disciplinary Policies and Procedures.

Monitoring, reviewing and evaluation

As part of our Quality Assurance Procedures, Acumen Trust will monitor, review and evaluate this policy, incorporating information collated on clients and employees, to include ethnicity information at the following stages: -

- Client's referral to service delivery ;
 - accessing provision;
 - achievement and attainment;
 - leaving service
 - during any complaints and representations proceedings.
- Job Applicants
 - at recruitment and selection for new positions;
 - Current employees
 - internal promotion
 - as part of training and development
 - on leaving the company

Where monitoring and evaluation highlight any possible inequalities, Acumen Trust will endeavour to identify the underlying causes and work to remove any unfairness or disadvantage.

It is the responsibility of Acumen Trust to ensure that organisations we work with have an appropriate level of commitment to the Race Relations Act.

APPENDIX 2

Definitions

1. **Direct Discrimination** occurs when a person is treated less favourably, on any of the grounds outlined in the policy statement above, than others are or would be treated in the same or similar circumstances. This may be as a result of a conscious decision, policy, or bias in a system or procedure.
2. **Indirect Discrimination** occurs where conditions or requirements, although applied equally, favour one group more than any other group, and cannot be justified.
3. **Victimisation** occurs when a person is given less favourable treatment than others in the same circumstances because it is suspected or known that s/he has brought proceedings under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Race Relations Act 1976 and 2002 and Human Rights Act 2000, or given evidence or information relating to such proceedings, or alleged that discrimination has occurred.

Anti Oppressive Practice means practice and procedures which use a proactive approach to challenging and combating inequality and discrimination against any group or individual on any ground.

APPENDIX 3

Additional responsibilities of managers

Employees with responsibility for managing staff have certain additional responsibilities that include: -

- Explaining to staff the aims of the Equal Opportunities Policy and the means of achievement.
- Making sure staff understand the policy and carry out their role.
- Assessment of employee's training needs and ensuring these are met in relation to Equal Opportunities as outlined in this policy.
- Applying employment practices, procedures and conditions of service fairly and consistently.
- Dealing with complaints fairly and speedily.
- Identifying and removing practices which may lead to discrimination or oppression.
- Taking immediate action to stop any unlawful discrimination at work, giving support to the person discriminated against and dealing appropriately with the responsible person.