

The Girls' Brigade in Scotland – Equal Opportunities Policy

Policy statement

It is The Girls' Brigade in Scotland's ("GBS") policy not to discriminate against its workers, members or volunteers on the basis of their gender, sexual orientation, marital or civil partner status, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability or age, pregnancy or trade union membership or the fact that they are a part-time worker or a fixed-term employee. Our members, volunteers, workers and applicants for employment shall not be disadvantaged by any policies or conditions of service which cannot be justified as necessary for operational purposes.

GBS shall, at all times, strive to work within legislative requirements as well as promoting best practice. They will seek to follow Codes of Practice issued by appropriate bodies.

This policy, and the measures we take to implement it, have been devised on the basis of advice from the relevant governmental and professional bodies. We are committed to a programme of action to make this policy effective and to bring it to the attention of all workers, members and volunteers. The principle of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity applies equally to the treatment of visitors, clients, customers and suppliers by members of our workforce, members and volunteers and also, in some circumstances, ex-employees. The following paragraphs deal with the specific categories of workers and areas of work which we have identified as potentially giving rise to equal opportunities issues and provides more specific guidance on the parameters of our policy and approach to equal opportunities.

This policy is for guidance only and shall be provided or be available to all workers, members or volunteers, but does not form part of any contract of employment and may be amended at the discretion of GBS.

1. TO WHOM DOES THIS POLICY APPLY?

- 1.1 This policy applies to GBS's employees, whether permanent, temporary, casual, part-time or on fixed-term contracts, to ex-employees, to job applicants and to individuals such as agency staff and consultants and volunteers who are not our employees, but who work at The Girls' Brigade in Scotland ("GBS") (collectively **workers**)
- 1.2 All workers have a duty to act in accordance with this policy, and therefore to treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and not to discriminate against or harass other members of staff, whether junior or senior to them. In some situations, GBS may be at risk of being held responsible for the acts of individual members of staff and will not therefore tolerate any discriminatory practices or behaviour.

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- 1.3 The policy statement in paragraph 1.2 applies equally to the treatment of our visitors, clients customers and suppliers by our workers and the treatment of our workers by these third parties.

2. PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

- 2.1 The National Director has overall responsibility for the effective operation of GBS's equal opportunities policy (**EOP**) and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework prohibiting discrimination. The National Director has delegated day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy and ensuring its maintenance and review to (*insert the name of Captain, Commissioner, etc.*) Those working at a management level have a specific responsibility to set an appropriate standard of behaviour, to lead by example and to ensure that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote the aims and objectives of GBS with regard to equal opportunities. To facilitate this process, managers will be given training on equal opportunities awareness and equal opportunities recruitment and selection best practice
- 2.2 All members of staff are responsible for the success of this policy and must ensure that they familiarise themselves with the policy and act in accordance with its aims and objectives. If you are involved in management or recruitment, or if you have any questions about the content or application of this policy, you should contact the National Director to request training or an information pack

3. SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF POLICY

- 3.1 GBS will not unlawfully discriminate on grounds of gender, sexual orientation, marital or civil partner status, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability or age, pregnancy, part-time or fixed-term status ("protected characteristics"). This policy applies to all aspects of the working relationship with workers and to the relationship between all workers.
- 3.2 This includes the advertising of jobs and recruitment and selection, to training and development, opportunities for promotion, to conditions of service, benefits and facilities and pay; to health and safety and to conduct at work, to grievance and disciplinary procedures and to termination of employment, including redundancy
- 3.3 GBS will take appropriate steps to accommodate the requirements of workers' religions, cultures, and domestic responsibilities.

4. FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

- 4.1 Discrimination by or against any worker is generally prohibited unless there is a specific legal exemption. Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally. Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics set out in paragraph 3.1. For example, rejecting an applicant of one race because it is considered they would not "fit in" on the grounds of their race would be direct discrimination.
- 4.2 Indirect discrimination occurs where an individual is disadvantaged by an unjustified provision, criterion or practice which puts them at a particular disadvantage because of their protected characteristics. For example, a minimum height requirement would be likely to eliminate proportionately more women than men. If this criteria cannot be objectively justified for a reason unconnected with sex, it would be indirectly discriminatory on the grounds of sex.
- 4.3 Harassment related to any of the protected characteristics is prohibited. Harassment is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.
- 4.4 Victimisation is also prohibited. This is less favourable treatment of someone who has complained or given information about discrimination or harassment, or supported someone else's complaint.

5. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

- 5.1 GBS aims to ensure that no job applicant receives less favourable treatment on any of the protected characteristics listed in paragraph 3.1. Recruitment procedures will be reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities and that sufficiently diverse sectors of the community are reached. Job selection criteria are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are justifiable on non-discriminatory grounds as being essential for the effective performance of the job.
- 5.2 We are required by law to ensure that all employees are entitled to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status should not be made based on appearance or apparent nationality. All prospective employees, regardless of nationality, must be able to produce original documents (such as a passport) before employment starts, to satisfy current immigration legislation. The list of acceptable documents is available from the UK Border Agency.

6. STAFF TRAINING AND PROMOTION AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

- 6.1 Staff training needs will be identified through regular staff appraisals. All workers will be given appropriate access to training to enable them to progress within the organisation. All promotion decisions will be made on the basis of merit.
- 6.2 Where appropriate, steps will be taken to identify and remove unnecessary or unjustifiable barriers and to provide appropriate facilities and conditions of service to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or under-represented groups.
- 6.3 Our conditions of service, benefits and facilities will be reviewed regularly to ensure that they are available to all workers who should have access to them and that there are no unlawful obstacles to accessing them. This includes pay, bonus criteria, policies and all benefits offered.

7. TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

- 7.1 We will monitor redundancy criteria and procedures to ensure that they are fair and objective and do not directly or indirectly discriminate against employees.
- 7.2 We will also ensure that disciplinary procedures are carried out fairly and uniformly , whether they result in the giving of disciplinary warnings, dismissal or other disciplinary action.

8. DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

- 8.1 If you are disabled, or become disabled in the course of your employment with us, you are encouraged to tell us about your condition. This is to enable us to support you as much as possible. You may also wish to advise the National Director of any reasonable adjustments to your working conditions or the duties of your job which you consider to be necessary, or which would assist you in the performance of your duties. The National Director may wish to consult with you and with your medical adviser(s) about possible reasonable adjustments. Careful consideration will be given to any such proposals and they will be accommodated where possible and proportionate to the needs of your job. Nevertheless, there may be circumstances where it will not be reasonable for us to accommodate the suggested adjustments and we will ensure that we provide you with information as to the basis of our decision not to make any adjustments.
- 8.2 GBS will monitor the physical features of its premises to consider whether they place disabled workers, job applicants or service users at a substantial disadvantage compared to other workers. Where possible and proportionate, GBS will take steps to improve access for disabled workers and service users.

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9. FIXED-TERM EMPLOYEES AND AGENCY AND TEMPORARY WORKERS

We will monitor our use of fixed-term employees and agency workers, and their conditions of service, to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits, training, promotion and permanent employment opportunities. We will, where relevant, monitor their progress within GBS to ensure that they are accessing permanent vacancies.

10. PART-TIME WORKERS

GBS will monitor the conditions of service of part-time employees and their progression within GBS to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits and training and promotion opportunities. We will also ensure requests to alter working hours are dealt with appropriately and lawfully.

11. COMPLAINTS

If you are an employee and believe that you may have been disadvantaged on any of the protected characteristics listed at paragraph 3.1, you are encouraged to raise the matter through GBS grievance procedure. Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. Workers who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False allegations of a breach in this policy which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure for employed staff and volunteers will be managed in accordance with our Managing Volunteers Policy.

12. BREACHES OF THE POLICY

- 12.1 If, after investigation, any worker is proven to have harassed any other worker on the grounds of sex, marital status, sexual orientation, religion or belief, race, disability or age or otherwise act in breach of this policy, you will be subject to disciplinary action. In serious cases, such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal (dismissed without notice). GBS will always take a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.
- 12.2 As this policy applies equally to GBS's workers' relations with visitors, clients, customers and suppliers, if, after investigation, you are proven to have discriminated against or harassed a client or supplier you will also be subject to disciplinary action which again could, if relevant, lead to summary dismissal.

- 12.3 In the case of any non employee such as a member or volunteer who believes there has been a breach of this policy a complaint should be made in writing to the National Director as soon as possible.
- 12.4 The National Director shall then consult with the appropriate Divisional Commissioner, Chaplain or the National Executive as may be deemed most appropriate to investigate and determine the complaint and any action required as a consequence.
- 12.5 Such investigation and determination should normally be completed within 28 days of the complaint being intimated unless there are clear reasons why this timetable cannot be complied with. If the complaint cannot be resolved in this way within 28 days or such longer period as may be required, the matter shall be referred to the National President to resolve with the National Director.

13. MONITORING AND REVISION OF POLICY

- 13.1 This policy is reviewed regularly by the Executive in consultation with the National Director. Recommendations for any amendments are reported to the Executive Committee

Policy last updated July 2013.
- 13.2 We will regularly monitor the effectiveness of this policy to ensure it is achieving the objectives stated in the EOP statement by monitoring the composition of job applicants and the benefits and career progression of its workers.
- 13.3 GBS is committed to providing relevant training for all staff on their responsibilities and duties under this policy.