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## **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION POLICY**

- 1 Open Country:
  - Recognises that England is a society diverse in race, culture and beliefs.
  - Believes that no person should suffer oppression or lack of opportunity based on race, gender, belief, sexuality, disability, age, class, or geographical location.
  - Believes that all people have equal rights to work towards social justice and to participate in decision-making processes and local action.
  - Believes that voluntary action is a means of combating disadvantage and contributes to the improvement of the quality of life for groups, communities and individuals and their empowerment.
  - Believes that it has a role in affirming and enabling all people to collectively play an active part in their community.
  
- 2 Open Country is committed to the principles of the Equality Act 2010. It will:
  - Seek to eliminate oppression and lack of opportunity within its work (including employment, volunteering, membership, governance and services).
  - Work towards a just and participatory society.
  - Challenge oppression and inequality.
  - Give priority to working with those whose full participation in society is limited by economic, political or social disadvantage.
  - Positively promote its core values in all areas of its work and structure.
  - Implement ways of working that ensure equality of opportunity, participation, co-operation, democratic involvement and accountability.
  - Fulfil all legislative requirements concerning equal opportunities.
  - Encourage members and others with whom Open Country works to adopt and practice a similar policy.

The Board of Trustees is responsible for implementing and monitoring this policy in conjunction with the advice and assistance of the widest possible constituency. The Board will approve a set of guidelines for action to aid the practical implementation of this policy. The Board will review this policy, the guidelines and their implementation annually.

# EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION POLICY GUIDELINES

These guidelines for action have been produced to aid the practical implementation of the Open Country's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy. The guidelines are intended to:

- Be a useful checklist
- Be specific enough to be useful, without being impossibly detailed
- Allow space for further developments of the policy in future

## **1 Membership**

Open Country aims to have a membership that fully reflects disabled people. To seek to ensure this we will:

- 1.1 encourage disabled people to join our membership.
- 1.2 actively encourage all voluntary organisations on our mailing list to become members.
- 1.3 annually monitor the composition of our membership and further encourage under-represented groups to become members.

## **2 Board of Directors/Trustees**

Open Country aims to have a Board membership that fully reflects the areas we are working in. To seek this to ensure this we will:

- 2.1 annually monitor the composition of the Board in advance of the annual process of nominations to the Board and if necessary encourage under-represented groups to make nominations to the Board.
- 2.2 include a copy of the policy with the papers inviting nominations for election or appointment to the Board.
- 2.3 where necessary co-opt individuals from under-represented groups on to the Board.
- 2.4 provide induction and support to all new Board members.
- 2.5 ensure that all Board members know that expenses are available and ensure that they are paid promptly.
- 2.6 at each meeting of the Board ensure that all Board members are responsible for ensuring that the conduct and decisions are in accordance with the spirit of our policy.

## **3 Services**

Open Country aims to provide services to many people in North and West Yorkshire and beyond, within the limits of our constitution and mission statement, particularly giving priority to working with those whose full participation in society is limited by economic, political or social disadvantage. Open Country is working towards creating a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere and will positively encourage and assist disadvantaged and under-represented groups to use its

services. We will, where appropriate:

- 3.1 consult with special interest groups to find out needs.
- 3.2 provide special sessions to encourage involvement by groups who do not usually use our services.
- 3.3 ensure when planning a new piece of work that we consider the need of under-represented groups.
- 3.4 monitor our services regularly in relation to equal opportunities.

#### **4 Access to all meetings and events**

Open Country aims to make its service provision as accessible as possible. At all times we will seek to create a friendly and welcoming atmosphere for all, taking into account, where appropriate:

- 4.1 people's dependent and child care responsibilities.
- 4.2 different religious and cultural needs.
- 4.3 different sexual orientations.
- 4.4 personal safety.
- 4.5 timings of meetings.
- 4.6 single sex provision.
- 4.7 dates of major religious festivals.
- 4.8 access to public transport.
- 4.9 physical access including toilets.
- 4.10 dietary requirements.
- 4.11 access to information in large print, on tape, on computer disk or in Braille.
- 4.12 access to signers and induction loops.

#### **5 Recruiting and employing staff**

Open Country recruits on the basis of the best candidate for the job, irrespective of race, gender, religion, sexuality, disability, age, class or geographical location. Open Country will follow all legal requirements when recruiting and employing staff and also undertakes to follow current good practice. We will:

- 5.1 ensure that all those involved in the recruitment and employment of staff are aware of the policy and have received a briefing on implementation.
- 5.2 advertise in a range of publications, media and locations as appropriate.
- 5.3 state that Open Country is seeking to be an equal opportunities employer.
- 5.4 consider all jobs for their suitability for job share/flexi-time/part-time/term-time working and, where this has been agreed, indicate this in adverts.
- 5.5 consider ways and means of employing disabled people.
- 5.6 use clear language and avoid jargon in all adverts, application forms, job descriptions and person specifications.
- 5.7 use a standard application form and ask only for information relevant to the post to be filled.
- 5.8 write and review job descriptions and person specifications to ensure that they are accurate and fair.
- 5.9 send to all applicants for the post: a job description; a person specification;

- 5.10 details of the main conditions of service; and standard application form and monitoring form; and the policy.
- 5.11 undertake short-listing only on the job description, person specification and an agreed scoring system.
- 5.12 ensure the interviewing panel agrees a structure and common set of questions for the interview.
- 5.13 ensure that questions asked are fair, non-discriminatory and in accordance with good practice.
- 5.14 consider the needs of any disabled candidate & if necessary, seek advice.
- 5.15 make a selection based only on the candidates' performance in relation to the job description and person specification.
- 5.16 offer all unsuccessful candidates feedback on why they were not selected.
- 5.17 consider sympathetically the needs of staff who have childcare or other caring responsibilities, who are pregnant or about to become parents, or who have medical needs.
- 5.18 take disciplinary action against staff/volunteers who use discriminatory behaviour.
- 5.19 make available a grievance procedure to any member of staff (or volunteer) who considers themselves to have been discriminated against and ensure that they are aware of how to implement it.

## 6 Implementing and monitoring

Open Country regards the implementation of its Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy as a continuing process. We will:

- 6.1 ensure that all staff, volunteers, and Board members have a copy of the policy and the guidelines.
- 6.2 provide training and guidance to ensure that all staff, Board members and volunteers understand their responsibilities under the policy and guidelines.
- 6.3 Publicise the policy and include it within the annual report and website.
- 6.4 On an ongoing basis, examine our procedures, service and work practices, to identify areas where improvements can be made.
- 6.5 Ensure the Board reviews the policy/ guidelines and their implementation.

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with our 'Training Policy'.

Policy prepared by:	David Shaftoe
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