



Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

Introduction

ECS is an equal opportunities organisation. We are committed to equality of opportunity and to providing services which are free from unfair and unlawful discrimination. We value people as individuals and recognise that our staff, volunteers, partners, clients, and others we meet, and support will come from diverse backgrounds and have the right to be treated with equal respect in an environment that is fair, inclusive, and free from discrimination and prejudice.

Equality, diversity, and Inclusion is therefore at the heart of ECS's operations, and the organisation is committed to being a responsible employer and service provider, actively working to break down stereotypes, to remove artificial barriers and to ensure equality of opportunity for all.

This policy is underpinned by The Equality Act 2010. The Act lists 9 "protected characteristics" as below:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion
- sex
- sexual orientation
- marriage and civil partnership status

ECS will meet and exceed the requirements of the Act and will ensure the organisation and its staff embrace other differences, for example, but not limited to social status in society, employment status, political beliefs, those with carer responsibilities.

This policy applies to all staff, including volunteers, interns, agency staff and temporary staff. Clients and visitors to ECS are covered by this policy as well as sub-contractors, partners, and suppliers.

This policy is not contractual but is a current statement of ECS's over-arching commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion in all policies and procedures affecting relationships and activities with staff and other stakeholders. ECS reserves the right to amend this policy, as necessary.

Definitions

Equality: is creating the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, or opportunities.

Diversity: is recognising that people are different, both in visible and nonvisible ways with individual personal needs, values, and beliefs. Diversity means valuing everyone as an individual and understanding that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach does not achieve fairness and equality of opportunity for everyone and therefore processes and approach need to be flexible and inclusive.

Inclusion: is about creating a workplace culture where everyone has a sense of belonging, feels respected for who they are and valued for their individual contribution.

Direct Discrimination: occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics set out above. An example might be rejecting an applicant because they are perceived to be close to retirement (age discrimination).



Indirect Discrimination: occurs when an unjustifiable job requirement, rule, policy, or condition is stipulated and applied equally to all staff members but has a disproportionately adverse effect on one particular group with a protected characteristic. Such a requirement would need to be objectively justified.

Roles and Responsibilities

Managers will lead by example, ensuring that their own behaviour is beyond reproach and that equality, diversity and inclusion is regularly discussed at 1-to-1s, team meetings and appraisals. Managers will ensure appropriate diversity training is provided to all staff as part of induction, ongoing and where specific further training needs are identified. Managers will encourage people to be themselves and support them to achieve their individual potential. Managers will take a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination and will proactively and robustly challenge any breach of this policy.

Responsibilities of staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers are expected to follow the examples set by management in terms of appropriate behaviour and to treat all people they encounter through their work with equal respect and without discrimination or prejudice. Staff and volunteers are expected to undertake diversity training as required and to actively challenge any discriminatory behaviour shown by their peers and to raise any concerns with management.

Recruitment & Selection

ECS has a fair and transparent Recruitment and Selection procedure which attracts, recruits, and retains the highest quality candidates and embeds the organisation's Diversity and Inclusion principles from the start of employment. Care will be taken to ensure that Job Descriptions/Role Profiles/Employee Specifications are written based upon essential and objectively justified criteria. Consideration will be given to where vacancies are advertised to ensure all parts of the community are reached. All candidates will receive fair consideration on the basis of individual merit and no candidate will be unfairly excluded. Candidate selection will be dependent upon a candidate's ability to do the job, based upon their experience, qualifications, past performance and/or potential for the job.

To identify groups that may be under-represented or disadvantaged, ECS will monitor applicants' ethnic group, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and age as part of the recruitment procedure. Provision of this information is voluntary, and it will not adversely affect an individual's chances of recruitment or any other decision related to their employment. The information will be removed from applications before short-listing and kept in an anonymous format solely for monitoring purposes and to help the organisation take appropriate steps to avoid discrimination and improve Diversity and Inclusion.

Equal Pay

We will ensure that all employees have the right to the same contractual pay and benefits for carrying out the same work, work rated as equivalent work, or work of equal value (except where TUPE applies).

Ex-Offenders

We will prevent discrimination against our employees regardless of their offending background (except where there is a known risk to children or vulnerable adults).

Training

All volunteers and staff will be trained on equality, diversity, and inclusion as part of their induction and will be required to undertake further training as appropriate.

Failure to comply with policy



Where individuals fail to comply with this policy, in the first instance this will be dealt with by management intervention. In more serious cases, Disciplinary procedures will be invoked for employees, or for volunteers, a review of their role will be taken in accordance with the volunteer code of conduct guidelines.

Audit and Review

A review of this policy will take place annually unless legal, contractual, specific business requirements, operational changes or events necessitate an earlier review.

