



**Country  
Trust**

Where children  
learn and grow

# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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## **POLICY STATEMENT**

At The Country Trust we value equality, diversity and inclusion. We create equal opportunities and develop good working relationships between different people. We make every effort to eliminate discrimination. Discrimination means treating someone unfairly because of who they are. The Equality Act 2010 protects you from discrimination at work. Our ultimate aim is that our workforce including employees, self-employed service providers and volunteers will be truly representative of all sections of society and each team member feels respected and able to give of their best.

### **Our core values**

At The Country Trust.

- We believe you grow by learning from others.
- We think that the quality of our connections with others has an important effect on who we can be and what we can do.
- We are active participants in a world which inspires and sustains us.

Aspirational values - values that we want to demonstrate more consistently in our work

- We aspire to be child-centred, no matter what our role is.
- We want everyone to know that their contribution is welcome and valued.

This policy sets out our approach to equal opportunities and the avoidance of discrimination at The Country Trust and covers treatment and conduct of all staff and volunteers.

It is the aim of the organisation to ensure that no member of the workforce or job applicant receives less favourable facilities or treatment (either directly or indirectly) in recruitment or employment on the grounds of the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity/paternity leave
- Disability
- Race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin)
- Religion and belief
- Sex and sexual orientation

The Country Trust will oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, request for flexible working and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities. All members of our workforce will be supported and encouraged to develop their full potential and their talents, as appropriate.

This policy and the associated arrangements shall operate in accordance with statutory requirements. In addition, full account will be taken of any guidance or Codes of Practice issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, any Government Departments, and any other statutory bodies.

## **OUR COMMITMENT**

- To encourage equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace so that our team better reflects the diversity of the children and the communities we work with. This is not only the right thing to do but will bring new connections, creativity and

momentum. Our workplace includes employees, self-employed service providers and volunteers.

- To create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all team members are recognised and valued.
- Every team member is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.
- Training, development and progression opportunities that we are able to offer are available to all.
- To take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by colleagues, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any other during the organisation's work activities.
- Breaches of our equality policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings.
- Further, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 - which is not limited to circumstances where harassment is related to a protected characteristic - is a criminal offence.
- Review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness and update them and the policy to take account of the changes in the law.
- The equality, diversity and inclusion policy is fully supported by senior management and The Board of Trustees.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF MANAGEMENT**

Responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation and operation of the arrangements will rest with the Chief Executive. Managers will ensure that they and their team members operate within this policy and arrangements, and that all reasonable and practical steps are taken to avoid discrimination. Each manager will ensure that:

- their workforce is aware of the policy and the arrangements, and the reasons for the policy.
- set a positive example by ensuring that their actions and behaviours promote EDI.
- stop inappropriate behaviour as soon as they become aware of it
- support and implement action that The Country Trust takes to improve diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunities.
- encourage employees to maximise their contribution to The Country Trust and support them to reach their full potential.
- provide appropriate learning opportunities to staff and volunteers to put the EDI policy into practice
- grievances concerning discrimination are dealt with properly, fairly and as quickly as possible.
- proper records are maintained.

## **RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION**

The Country Trust will ensure that recruitment practices fulfil the requirements of this policy.

Vacancies will generally be advertised to a diverse section of the market. Advertisements should avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage groups from applying. All posts will have a job description and person specification, which will contain essential and desirable skills, qualifications, and experience. All recruitment advertisements will carry the statement "We want our team to better reflect the amazing diversity of the children and the communities we work with and are excited about the connections, creativity and

inspiration that this will bring. Please talk to us about your application if you have questions about matching your experience to our job specification.”

Job applicants should not be asked questions which might suggest an intention to discriminate on the grounds of a Protected Characteristic, for example, applicants should not be asked whether they are pregnant or planning to have children.

The job application process has been integrated into the Country Trust’s database which enables applications to be submitted electronically and remain anonymised until the selection process has been completed. The selection process will normally be carried out by more than one person. The format of the interview will be agreed before it takes place and will remain constant for all interviews for the position. Every effort will be made to make provision for staff and volunteers with a disability through reasonable adaptations.

All staff and trustees involved in recruitment and selection will be aware of this policy and always adhere to it. All applicants for posts will be treated strictly on merit, against objective criteria that avoid discrimination. As an exception, posts targeted at specific groups of people will be exempted if justifiable and allowed by legislation.

All staff working directly with children will be subject to an enhanced DBS check. Any decisions made in relation to vetting checks will be held confidentially for six months.

It is a future ambition to collect information for monitoring and analysis purposes on the workforce: by gender, marital status, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion / beliefs. Information regarding the number of staff who declare themselves as disabled may also be maintained. The information collected for monitoring purposes will be treated as confidential and it will not be used for any other purpose. It will be held in accordance with data protection regulations.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF WORKFORCE**

The responsibility for ensuring that there is no unlawful discrimination rests with all team members and their attitudes are crucial to the successful operation of fair employment practices. Members of the workforce should:

- comply with the policy and arrangements.
- act in ways that respect and value the diversity of others
- Always set a positive example
- not discriminate in their day-to-day activities or induce others to do so.
- not victimise, harass, or intimidate other staff or groups who have, or are perceived to have one of the protected characteristics.
- ensure no individual is discriminated against or harassed because of their association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.
- challenge and report any behaviour towards a colleague or service user that could be interpreted as discriminatory
- inform their manager if they become aware of any discriminatory practice.
- All members of the workforce should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment/contract, against colleagues, customers, suppliers and the public.

## **THIRD PARTIES**

Third-party harassment occurs where a member Country Trust workforce is harassed, and the harassment is related to a protected characteristic, by third parties such as hosts, suppliers or beneficiaries. The Country Trust will not tolerate such actions against its

workforce, and the team member concerned should inform their manager/supervisor at once, that this has occurred. The Country Trust will fully investigate and take all reasonable steps to ensure such harassment does not happen again.

## **RELATED POLICIES AND ARRANGEMENTS**

All employment policies and arrangements have a bearing on equality of opportunity. The Country Trust's policies will be reviewed regularly, and any discriminatory elements removed.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

All communications internally and externally will be written, designed and communicated with accessibility in mind. Diverse imagery will be used where relevant to represent the diverse communities we serve.

## **RIGHTS OF DISABLED PEOPLE**

The Country Trust attaches particular importance to the needs of disabled people.

Under the terms of this policy, the Country Trust will:

- make reasonable adjustment to maintain the services of a member of the workforce who becomes disabled, for example, training, provision of special equipment, reduced working hours. (NB: managers are expected to seek advice on the availability of advice and guidance from external agencies to maintain disabled people in employment).
- include disabled people in training/development programmes.
- give full and proper consideration to disabled people who apply for jobs, having regard to making reasonable adjustments for their aptitudes and abilities to allow them to be able to do the job.

## **EQUALITY INFORMATION**

This policy will be emailed to new starters as part of the induction programme.

## **GRIEVANCES/DISCIPLINE**

Employees have a right to pursue a complaint concerning discrimination or victimisation via the Country Trust's Grievance policy and procedures.

Discrimination and victimisation will be treated as disciplinary offences, and they will be dealt with under the Country Trust's Disciplinary Procedure.

## **POLICY DATE**

This policy was agreed and disseminated on March 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022 and will be reviewed in March 2023, as this is an evolving policy and then every two years or when there are significant changes required.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees of The Country Trust



S Bell  
Chair /of the Trustees  
Date 4/8/22