Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
Aire and Calder Methodist Circuit

INTRODUCTION

The Strategy for Justice, Dignity, and Solidarity report to the Conference 2021 was adopted by Conference in 2021. The strategy aims to help the Methodist Church become fully inclusive and to assist the process of embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) throughout the Connexion.

The strategy aims:

- for the rich diversity of people within the Methodist Church to be recognised as a cause for thanksgiving, celebration and praise;
- to eradicate all discrimination and coercive control within the Methodist Church, and for all people to be treated justly and with dignity across the breadth of the Methodist Church

The purpose of this policy is to support the Aire and Calder Methodist Circuit in their commitment to the promotion of equality of opportunity and the elimination of unlawful and unfair discrimination. We value and embrace diversity and our intention is to ensure a holistic and inclusive approach in all fields of its activity.

The Aire and Calder Methodist Circuit adheres to The Equality Act 2010 which recognises the following specific protected characteristics: sex, gender reassignment, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), disability, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage & civil partnership and pregnancy & maternity. It does not discriminate because of any factors irrelevant to the requirements of the role and will reinforce our culture which values meritocracy, openness, fairness and transparency on an ongoing basis.

SCOPE

In accordance with this commitment the Aire and Calder Methodist Circuit's lay employees and ministers, as well as volunteers, secondees, consultants, suppliers, contractors and agency workers, whether permanent or temporary, have a duty to comply with this policy, in order to promote and maintain an environment free from discrimination. This policy applies to all processes relating to employment and training and to any dealings with customers and clients.

AIM

The purpose of this policy is:

- To ensure equality, diversity and inclusion are fully reflected in the employment practices and procedures of the Aire and Calder Methodist Circuit.
- To ensure that it is compliant with the statutory employment duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- To ensure employment policies and procedures are monitored and reviewed so that they do not contradict this policy.

- To ensure it attracts and retains a diverse workforce through appropriate recruitment and selection methods.

Please note that in cases where a Genuine Occupational Requirement (GOR) is identified in relation to a specific role, under the Equality Act 2010 an employer may be entitled to target candidates with specific protected characteristics.

In order to be able to defend a potential discrimination claim, an employer must however be able to demonstrate that the requirement is a 'proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim'. For example, in the light of the Methodist Church's purpose and ethos employers may have the right to exercise legal exemption for specific roles where it is considered that the Christian faith is integral to the core requirements of that role.

DEFINITIONS

1. **Discrimination:**
   (a) **'Direct Discrimination'** is where a person is treated less favourably than another not on the merits of the case but on grounds of a protected characteristic.

   (b) **'Discrimination by association'** occurs where a person is directly discriminated against by association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.

   (c) **'Discrimination by perception'** is when a person is directly discriminated against based on a perception that the person has a particular protected characteristic even if the person does not actually possess that protected characteristic.

   (d) '**Indirect Discrimination**' occurs when a provision, practice or a criterion that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic. Although equally applicable to all possible applicants, this may nevertheless be discriminatory because:

      (i) The number of persons of the same personal status who can comply with the requirement is considerably smaller than the number who cannot; and

      (ii) The requirement cannot be shown to be justifiable.

2. **'Harassment'** is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 that has the purpose of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.

   Alternatively, the conduct may amount to harassment if it is reasonably considered by the target of the conduct to have the effect of violating their dignity or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. This applies even if this effect was not intended by the person responsible for the conduct. .

3. **‘Victimisation’** occurs when an individual has suffered a detriment because they have done one of the "protected acts" set out below, or it is believed that they have or may have done one of these acts.

   The protected acts, which must not be done in bad faith, are:

   - bringing proceedings under the Equality Act 2010;
   - giving evidence or information in connection with proceedings under the Act;
   - doing any other thing for the purposes of or in connection with the Act; or
   - making allegations that another person has contravened the Act.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILIITES

All lay employees and ordained ministers are responsible for promoting equality, diversity and inclusion and conducting themselves in accordance with this policy. Particular responsibility lies with the Line Manager and senior officers within the employing body. All staff should understand that 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, against fellow employees, customers, service providers and members of the community.

The Circuit Superintendent within the employing body will:

- Ensure that its commitment is communicated to all employees and ministers fairly and responsibly including potential employees and ministers, users of its services, and all those working for, or on behalf of, or providing a service to the Aire and Calder Methodist Circuit including consultants, volunteers, interns, agency workers and those on work experience placements.
- Lead by example, encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion internally and externally.
- Be responsible for creating a climate where the differences that individuals bring are valued.
- Embed equality, diversity and inclusion in decision making processes.

Line Managers / Supervisors will:

- Foster good relations between all employees and ministers, service users/providers.
- Ensure that their direct reports attend equality, diversity and inclusion workshops periodically.
- Be responsible for the selection, management and promotion of employees and ministers and be given information and / or training to enable them to avoid the risk of discrimination.

All employees and ministers will:

- Ensure that equality, diversity, and inclusion is taken into account in undertaking their work to serve the Aire and Calder Methodist Circuit.
- Be aware of their responsibilities and report inappropriate behaviour/s and raise any incident/s that potentially breach this Policy with their line manager.
- Familiarise themselves with this Policy, ensuring that their practices are consistent with its contents.
- Undertake equality, diversity & inclusion training.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

The principles of equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded within the Aire and Calder Methodist Circuit's recruitment and selection procedures. Shortlisting, interviewing and selection will always be carried out without regard to sex, transgender status, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status, colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins, religion or belief, age, pregnancy or maternity leave.

Best practice calls for at least 2/3 of the panel members to be trained in Recruitment and Selection and Unconscious Bias. The Chair of the Recruitment Panel will ensure that all panel members are aware of the fair recruitment principles and that they are sufficiently briefed to ensure full compliance with the Church/Circuit/District's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

Panel members have a duty to declare to the Chair of the Recruitment Panel if they already know a candidate. If they have a close personal or familial relationship with a candidate, they will withdraw from the panel.

All panel members must be able to attend every part of the selection process (shortlisting, presentations, interviews etc.) for the duration of the recruitment process, to maintain consistency and to ensure fair treatment of all candidates.

The Aire and Calder Methodist Circuit will fulfil their legal duties, ensuring that reasonable adjustments, where practicable, are made to ensure that individuals with a disability are not disadvantaged as part of the recruitment and selection process.

BREACHES OF THIS POLICY

If any employee or minister believes that they have been subject to discrimination under this Policy, then they must raise the matter with their line manager or supervisor or Chair/ Superintendent/Minister.

Allegations regarding potential breaches of this Policy will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be investigated in accordance with the Grievance procedure. Lay employees or ministers who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False allegations which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, be dealt with under the Disciplinary procedure.

Any employee who is found to have committed an act of discrimination may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in formal disciplinary action up to and including summary dismissal. The Aire and Calder Methodist Circuit takes a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.

For ordained ministers serving within the Aire and Calder Methodist Circuit the Complaints and Discipline process as set out in Part 11 of Standing Orders will apply.

This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to reflect changes in the law and internal organisational requirements.