



# **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY**

# Equality and Diversity Policy

## Key points

In summary, under this Policy:

- You are required to undergo Unconscious Bias training.
- You are required to undergo Equality and Diversity training.
- You are required to treat other staff with dignity and respect at all times by taking a positive and supportive approach to inclusion.
- If you are a hiring manager, you are required to liaise closely with the Head of People to help ensure full and fair implementation of this policy.

## Purpose of this policy

1. The purpose of this policy is to outline and implement WCMC's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion within the organisation, eliminate the potential for unlawful discrimination, and take a positive and supportive approach to inclusion.
2. This policy should be read in conjunction with WCMC's Safeguarding Policy and with WCMC's Recruitment Policy.

## Context

3. WCMC believes that everyone deserves to be treated equally, fairly and with dignity, but fully recognises that inequalities of power and privilege in society, including workplaces, mean that some people are able to take advantage of these circumstances to a greater extent than others.
4. WCMC's aim is to create a supportive and inclusive working environment in which all individuals are able to make best use of their skills, free from discrimination and/or harassment, and in which employment-related decisions are principally guided by how well individuals perform their role. Every employee is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity, equality and respect for all.
5. WCMC values diversity and individual differences, whether these are visible or non-visible. We believe celebrating and fostering diversity has benefits for individual staff, for teams and for the organisation as a whole, including our ability to generate quality outputs, outcomes and impact.
6. When hiring new members of staff, WCMC's aim is to recruit, develop and retain the most talented people (see Recruitment Policy) whilst developing a team which is truly representative of different cultures, perspectives and experiences from all sections of society.

## Scope

7. This policy applies to all employed staff, trainees and interns, volunteers, field workers, agency staff and Trustees (collectively referred to as 'staff' in this policy unless stated).
8. This policy may be amended from time to time. Updates of this policy will be promptly communicated to all staff.

## Definitions

9. WCMC defines **equality** as ensuring every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents. By being conscious of, and actively challenging, bias or prejudice, WCMC will seek to ensure no-one is treated less favourably because of who they are, where they come from, what they believe, or whether they have a 'protected characteristic' (see Para. 20). This requires a proactive approach to make reasonable adjustments that address the visible and invisible barriers people face.
10. WCMC defines **equity** as treating people in ways that seeks to ensure they are not unfairly prevented from accessing resources and opportunities nor that others have an unfair advantage. The concept of equity focuses on equality of outcomes. Simply providing the same opportunities to everyone is not adequate to create equality of outcomes. Equity is also about taking proactive steps to remove sources of inequality, including structures which might put particular people or groups at a disadvantage, to make sure everyone has the chance to realise their ambitions.
11. WCMC defines **diversity** as recognizing and valuing differences between people within an organisation or setting. We are all different in many ways. Certain groups of people have experienced, and continue to experience, barriers to employment and hence are underrepresented in the workforce. WCMC is committed to identifying and removing barriers for people in recruitment, advancement and retention with the aim of building our organisation to be reflective of the society we live in and the communities we serve.
12. WCMC defines **inclusion** as being proactive to make sure people of different backgrounds, experiences and identities feel welcomed, respected and fully able to participate. It is not only about creating a diverse environment but also about ensuring a culture exists where every member of staff feels that they can contribute, that they are valued, and that they have a stake in the delivery of our mission and mandate.
13. There are several categories of discrimination covered by this policy:
14. WCMC defines **direct discrimination** as when one person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic. By way of example, refusing to promote a pregnant employee on the basis that she is shortly due to go on maternity leave would be direct discrimination on the protected characteristic of the employee's sex.
15. WCMC defines **associative discrimination** as direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic. For example, a refusal to allow a flexible working arrangement to an employee may amount to associative discrimination if an employee is treated less favourably because they are the parent of a disabled child.
16. WCMC defines **perceptive discrimination** as direct discrimination against an individual

because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. For example, discrimination because co-workers believe an individual is gay and treat that person less favourably as a result of that perception. It applies whether or not the person actually possesses that characteristic.

17. WCMC defines **indirect discrimination** as when an unjustifiable requirement or condition is applied, which appears to be the same for all, but which has a disproportionate, adverse effect on one group of people. This is discrimination even though there was no intention to discriminate. For example, a requirement for UK based qualifications could disadvantage applicants who have obtained their qualifications outside of the UK; this could amount to indirect discrimination on the grounds of race.
18. WCMC defines **victimisation** as when an employee is treated less favourably than others because they have made a complaint against a colleague. For example, victimisation may occur where an employee has raised a genuine grievance, or is involved in investigating a grievance, and is demoted as a result.
19. WCMC defines **harassment** as unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. It is important to remember that it is not always the intention of the harasser but how the recipient perceives their behaviour, which determines whether harassment has occurred (see Safeguarding Policy for more information).

### Key policy principles

20. WCMC staff must never discriminate against another member of staff (or potential member of staff) on the basis of:
  - I. age
  - II. disability
  - III. gender reassignment
  - IV. marriage and civil partnership
  - V. pregnancy and maternity
  - VI. race
  - VII. religion or belief
  - VIII. sex
  - IX. sexual orientation
21. WCMC staff must treat other staff with dignity and respect at all times (see also WCMC Safeguarding Policy) by taking a positive and supportive approach to inclusion. Examples include:
  - I. Modelling inclusive behaviours when engaging with people within the Centre and outside the Centre with people in external organisations;
  - II. Using appropriate channels to challenge instances of inequality, inequity, exclusion and discrimination whilst always treating the person being challenged with dignity and respect (see para. 28);
  - III. Helping WCMC build an equitable organisational culture including through agreed actions contained within Action Plans developed to implement this policy.
22. WCMC will take an inclusive and collaborative approach to the development of policies (including this Policy) and all policies, procedures and action plans related to

HR and employee matters.

23. WCMC believes that organisational actions and decision-making should be informed by, and carried out in partnership with staff, including those who may face discrimination and prejudice whether through conscious or unconscious bias<sup>1</sup>. WCMC believes this approach reduces the risk of the organisation making inappropriate assumptions or taking ineffective action.
24. All WCMC staff are required to take 1) Unconscious bias training and; 2) Equality and diversity training.
25. WCMC will take an 'intersectional' approach to equity, diversity and inclusion which acknowledges that multiple forms of discrimination may be experienced simultaneously, operating and interacting with each other at the same time in such a way as to be inseparable, potentially exacerbating disadvantage and inequality.

### Responsibility for policy implementation

26. All staff have responsibility for the implementation of this policy and must follow an appropriate standard of behavior in relation to equality and diversity through adhering to this policy in all aspects of their work.
27. The WCMC Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is accountable for ensuring the Policy is implemented and will work closely with the Chief Finance and Operations Officer (CFO) and the Head of People in doing so, including allocating adequate resources for implementation, for example to help those who may face additional costs when applying to WCMC due to geographical location or other circumstances. This may also involve proposing and consulting upon Action Plans to drive effective implementation. The Equality and Diversity Policy itself will be periodically reviewed and updated as appropriate.
28. Staff can lodge a concern, suggest changes or make a complaint about the content or implementation of this policy by contacting the WCMC CEO, CFO, Head of People, their line manager or the Staff Liaison Committee. All staff are expected to actively promote an equitable organisational culture and are encouraged to contribute ideas in this regard.
29. Staff should be aware that they may be subject to disciplinary procedure if they are found to have discriminated against another person whilst in work or on work-related business (see Safeguarding Policy). Any proven discrimination, including harassment, on the grounds of age; race; sex; disability; gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity; religion; faith or belief, may be viewed as a disciplinary offence. Serious cases may constitute gross misconduct and thus may result in dismissal.

### Recruitment and Progression

30. Any member of staff leading a recruitment or progression process is required to liaise closely with the Head of People to help ensure full and fair implementation of

this policy<sup>2</sup>.

31. WCMC will take a positive and supportive, approach to inclusion during the recruitment process. This will be evidence and data driven. For example, where we have under-representation of people from a particular group, we may address this by:

- I. Placing job (including internships) adverts in a wider range of places to improve visibility to a wide range of potential candidates from all backgrounds and, where appropriate, across non-conservation sectors.
- II. Including statements in adverts to encourage applications from a wide range of candidates;
- III. Earmarking budget and HR resources to allow visa sponsorship for suitable candidates who do not have the right to work in the UK;
- IV. Offering training that ensures equal opportunities for progression at work;
- V. Offering appropriate shadowing or mentoring to staff;
- VI. Continuously promoting WCMC as a workplace that is tolerant, supportive and takes a positive approach to inclusion.

32. WCMC recognises that discrimination on the grounds of criminal convictions may be detrimental to both society and staff. Under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974) it is unlawful to refuse employment because of spent criminal convictions. WCMC will not act upon unspent or new convictions unless the conviction renders the staff member unsuitable for their type of work.

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<sup>1</sup> See ACAS guidance for definitions <https://www.acas.org.uk/improving-equality-diversity-and-inclusion>

<sup>2</sup> 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 member of the People Team to request further information.

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