

## **Equality and Diversity Policy**

### **General statement**

Real Ideas Organisation CIC (RIO) and its associated subsidiaries is committed to becoming an equal opportunity employer and to ensuring that all employees, volunteers, job applicants, customers, participants, members and other people with whom we deal are treated fairly and are not subjected to unfair or unlawful discrimination. We aim to make our services as accessible and responsive as possible to all existing and potential members, and to provide a service to them which recognises and respects their differences. We recognise that our ability to meet their needs is improved by having a diverse workforce which generally reflects our customer base. We also wish to provide the best opportunities to all our employees/volunteers, based on their abilities and potential.

Our policy is designed to ensure that current and potential workers/volunteers are offered the same opportunities regardless of race, nationality, ethnic origin, age, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, domestic circumstances, disability, pregnancy, transgender, civil partnership or any other characteristic unrelated to the performance of the job. We seek to ensure that no one suffers, either directly or indirectly, as a result of unlawful discrimination. This extends beyond the individual's own characteristics, to cover discrimination by association and by perception.

We recognise that an effective Equality and Diversity Policy and associated plan will help all staff/volunteers to develop to their full potential, which is clearly in the best interests of both our staff/volunteer and our business. We aim to ensure that we not only observe the relevant legislation but also do whatever is necessary to provide genuine equality of opportunity. We further recognise the benefits of employing individuals from a range of backgrounds, as this creates a workforce where creativity and valuing difference in others thrives. We value the wealth of experience within the community in which we operate and aspire to have a workforce that reflects this.

We expect everyone who works for us to be treated and to treat others with respect. Our aim is to provide a working environment free from harassment, intimidation, or discrimination in any form that may affect the dignity of the individual.

This policy is not contractual but aims to set out the way in which RIO addresses equality of opportunity and diversity in all that we do. This policy applies to all employees/volunteers and workers and sub-contractors, who are required to understand and follow this policy, together with our associated policies on bullying and harassment.

### **Legal considerations**

The main legislation that covers equal opportunities and discrimination is the Equality Act 2010. In addition, the following should be taken into consideration:

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- the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- the Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- the Human Rights Act 1998
- the Modern Slavery Act 2015
- the Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999
- the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006
- any Codes of Practice issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission

plus any amendments to the above legislation.

Discrimination may be direct or indirect, and can take different forms, for example:

- treating any individual less favourably than others on grounds of a protected characteristic (sex, race, marital status, religion or belief, sexual orientation, disability, age, pregnancy, transgender or civil partnership)
  - expecting a person, solely on the grounds stated above, to comply with requirements that are different to the requirements for others, for any reason whatsoever
  - imposing on an individual requirements that are in effect more onerous than they are on others. This would include applying a condition (which is not warranted by the requirements of the position) which makes it more difficult for members of a particular group to comply than others not of that group
  - harassment i.e. unwanted conduct which has "the purpose, intentionally or unintentionally, of violating dignity, or which creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment" for the individual
  - victimisation - i.e. treating a person less favourably because he or she has committed a "protected act". "Protected acts" include previous legal proceedings brought against the employer or the perpetrator, or the giving of evidence at a disciplinary or grievance hearing or at tribunal, or making complaints about the perpetrator or the employer or their alleged discriminatory practices
  - discrimination by association, i.e. someone is discriminated against because he/she associates with someone who possesses a protected characteristic
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- discrimination by perception, i.e. discrimination on the grounds that the person is perceived as belonging to a particular group, e.g. sexual orientation, religion or belief, irrespective of whether or not this is correct
  - any other act or omission of an act, which has the effect of disadvantaging one person against another, purely on the above grounds.



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On all occasions where those in control of employees/volunteers are required to make judgements between them, for example disciplinary matters, selection for training, promotion, pay increases, awards etc it is essential that merit, experience, skills and temperament are considered as objectively as possible.

### **Aims of this policy**

Whilst we fully accept all our responsibilities under current legislation, we also aim to go beyond the strict confines of the law to provide equality of opportunity for all. We will continue to formulate and review policies to that end.

We aim to:

- recognise that everyone has a right to their distinctive and diverse identities
- have a workforce which generally reflects the customers we serve
- understand how diversity can improve our ability to deliver better services
- provide all employees/volunteers with the necessary training and development they need to contribute to our goals
- recognise the risk of slavery or human trafficking and put in place steps to manage these
- provide a supportive, open environment where all employees/volunteers may use their talents fully, and where employees, volunteers and participants are treated fairly and with dignity and respect, in an environment free from abuse or offensive behaviour, bullying or harassment, intimidation or prejudice regardless of sex, sexual orientation, race, ethnic origin, age, disability, religion or belief, marital status or civil partnership, gender reassignment, impairment, pregnancy, responsibility for dependents, social background or any other individual characteristic which may unfairly affect their opportunities in life.

Furthermore, we recognise the benefits of helping our employees/workers/volunteers to balance the responsibilities of their work and private life.

Learning to work with people's differences, visible or not, enables us to all work together effectively and helps us to anticipate and meet the needs of all of our customers; recruit, retain and develop the best people; act responsibly in the communities of which we are a part; and also fulfil our legal commitments.

### **Actions**

The actions we will take to make this policy work include:

- providing training and communications to raise awareness and understanding of diversity and equal opportunities issues, to show their impact on the business and individuals



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- through the above, ensuring that decisions on recruitment, access to training and promotion are made only based on ability
- regularly reviewing our employment policies to ensure that people are treated fairly, equitably and consistently with their skills and abilities
- developing patterns of work which are consistent with the need of all staff/volunteers to maintain an appropriate work-life balance
- reviewing working arrangements to ensure that they do not restrict the opportunity for employment or career progression of members of disadvantaged groups
- monitoring the composition of our workforce to provide us with robust data to evaluate the effect of our policies including Gender Pay Reviews.
- routinely monitoring all actions under the grievance and disciplinary procedures by gender, race, disability, age and any other criteria we deem to be appropriate
- providing the opportunity for employees/workers/volunteers who think they have been treated in any way contrary to this policy, to raise and resolve issues.

### **Responsibility for this policy**

#### **Managers' responsibility**

The overall responsibility for implementing and monitoring the effectiveness of this policy rests with the Leadership team of RIO.

Strategic Leads, Programme Leads, Managers and supervisors all have a crucial role to play in promoting equality of opportunity in their own areas of responsibility. As employers we are liable for the actions of our workers/volunteers and therefore all our managers are responsible for this policy's successful implementation within their own areas of responsibility and should take steps to ensure staff/volunteers working for them understand and follow this policy.

#### **Employees' responsibility**

All staff/volunteers, irrespective of their job or seniority, will be given guidance and instruction, through our induction and training, as to their responsibility and role in promoting equality of opportunity and not discriminating unfairly or harassing colleagues or job applicants, nor encouraging others to do so or tolerating such behaviour. Disciplinary action, including dismissal, may be taken against any employee/worker/volunteer found guilty of unfair discrimination or harassment.

#### **The working environment**

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that our working environment does not prevent people from taking up positions for which they are suitably qualified. This may include reasonable adjustments, physical adaptations or more flexible ways of working including home working (where appropriate and practical).



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### **Recruitment and selection**

We aim to ensure that our recruitment practices are free from unlawful discriminatory criteria and bias and that through written instruction, appropriate training and supervision, all staff who are responsible for recruitment and selection are familiar with this policy and apply it in conjunction with our Resourcing Policy.

Job adverts should encourage applications from all types of candidates and should not be stereotyped. All adverts will state: "Real Ideas Organisation CIC is an equal opportunity employer and values diversity". Reference to this policy will also be made on job and person descriptions. When advertising a position which has traditionally been done by one sex, adverts should specify they are open to both sexes.

We will provide full and fair consideration for all job applicants, based on merit and ability. We will review and develop our recruitment procedures to encourage applications from, and the employment of, people from a range of backgrounds reflecting our customer base. Procedures for testing or assessment will be reviewed so as not to disadvantage any applicant. Person specifications will be reviewed to ensure that criteria are not applied which are discriminatory, either directly or indirectly, and that they do not impose any condition or requirement which cannot be justified by the demands of the post.

Selection, including any tests which may be used, will be conducted on an objective basis and will focus on the applicants' suitability for the job and their ability to fulfil the job requirements. Our interest is in the skills, abilities, qualifications, aptitude and the potential of individuals to do their jobs.

Questions asked of candidates will relate to information that will help assess their ability to do the job. Questions relating to applicants' race, ethnic origin, age, disability, religion or belief, gender, colour, sexuality, marital status, current or future family responsibilities, or unrelated criminal convictions will not form part of our selection process.

We will ensure that other opportunities such as work experience, volunteering and placements, where available, are open to people from a wide range of backgrounds and we will work to create good education/industrial links in order to achieve this.

### **Training and development**

RIO recognises that equal opportunity responsibilities do not end at selection and is committed to ensure that wherever possible all staff/volunteers receive the widest possible range of development opportunities for advancement.

We recognise that our ability to meet our members diverse needs is improved by having a diverse workforce which has the skills and understanding to achieve our service objectives. We



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will take all appropriate steps to ensure that all staff/volunteers receive fair consideration of their training and development needs and promotion opportunities to enable them to develop their full potential within RIO. All employees/worker/volunteers will be encouraged to discuss their career prospects and training needs with their relevant Lead. Opportunities for additional responsibilities, promotion and training will be communicated and made available to all relevant staff/volunteers on a fair and equal basis.

The provision of training will be reviewed to ensure that provisions are made where necessary to enable part-time workers, shift or remote workers or those returning to work following a break to benefit from training. No age limits apply for entry to training or development schemes which are open to all employees/worker/volunteers.

Induction training for all new recruits will be tailored to individual needs but will in all cases include Equal Opportunities training and awareness of our Equality and Diversity Policy and how it applies to individuals.

We will then continue to take specific steps to raise awareness of diversity throughout the business, initially particularly targeting employees involved in recruitment and selection processes and the implementation of Real Ideas Equalities Plan.

### **Retention, retraining and redeployment**

Any employees whose circumstances change whilst employed by us will be given full support by the business to maintain or return to a job appropriate to their experience and abilities.

### **Terms and conditions of employment**

We will ensure that all of our personnel policies and procedures associated with terms and conditions of employment, are formulated and applied without regard to race, nationality, ethnic origin, age, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, domestic circumstances, disability, pregnancy, gender reassignment, civil partnership or any other characteristic unrelated to the performance of the job.

These will be reviewed regularly to improve, amend or adapt current practices and to ensure there is no discrimination. Length of service as a qualifying criterion for benefits will not exceed five years unless clearly justifiable.

### **Modern Slavery**

Modern slavery is a term used to cover slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking.

We are committed to understanding all potential slavery risks related to the business of RIO, and to put in place steps that are aimed at ensuring there is no slavery or human trafficking in our business or our partner organisations that we work with.



We will carry out right to work in the UK checks on all new employees, and DBS checks where the roles are identified as eligible. Where agency workers are used, RIO will use reputable employment agencies to source labour and always verify the practices of any new agency before accepting workers.

We will provide information and guidance to employees/volunteers as necessary to raise awareness and understanding of modern slavery issues. Safeguarding training will include reference to modern slavery as appropriate.

We encourage all employees/volunteers to report any concerns related to the direct activities of our organisation, or those of our partner organisations, using our Whistleblowing Policy. This includes any circumstances that may give rise to an enhanced risk of slavery or human trafficking. Our whistleblowing procedure is designed to make it easy for employees/volunteers to make disclosures, without fear of retaliation.

### **Flexible working**

We will consider requests for flexible working under our policies in a way which fairly balances the needs of the individual and our business.

### **Retirement**

We have no fixed retirement age and employees who wish to work beyond the age of 65 may choose to do so.

### **Grievances, disputes and disciplinary procedure**

Staff/volunteers who believe they have been discriminated against and have not been able to resolve this informally are advised to use our internal Grievance Procedure. An employee/worker/volunteer who brings a complaint of discrimination must not be less favourably treated.

Bullying and harassment, i.e. behaviour that is offensive, frightening or in any way distressing, will not be tolerated and any individual employee who feels that he/she has been subjected to harassment or bullying should refer to our Bullying and Harassment Policy. Equally, any employee who witnesses incidents of harassment or bullying should report this to his/her manager or an appropriate senior member of staff.

When dealing with general disciplinary matters, care is to be taken that employees/workers/volunteers who have, are perceived to have, or are associated with someone who has, a protected characteristic are not dismissed or disciplined for performance or behaviour which could be overlooked or condoned in other employees.

### **Positive action**



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We recognise that passive policies will not reverse the discrimination experienced by many groups of people. Positive discrimination which favours those with a protected characteristic is currently unlawful. It is however lawful to provide specific training or development opportunities aimed at under-represented groups to enable them to compete equally for job opportunities with the remaining workforce and we will do this wherever we feel it may be necessary to promote our Equality and Diversity Policy.

In addition, if certain groups are under-represented within our business we will actively seek to encourage applications from those groups. Any measures taken to encourage applications should not be construed as positive discrimination. The decision as to which applicant is offered a post must be based entirely on the merit of the individual.

### **Communication of this policy**

All job applicants, employees, volunteers and workers will be made aware of this policy on induction. Participants and Members will also be made aware of this policy.

In addition, staff/volunteers will be reminded of the policy through such means as advertisements, job descriptions (which will refer to this), application forms, training courses and any other methods which we consider appropriate.

### **Service Delivery**

In all aspects of service provision RIO will not tolerate less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnic origin, age, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, domestic circumstances, disability, pregnancy, gender reassignment, civil partnership, or any other characteristic which cannot be shown to be justified.

Anyone who feels they have been denied equality of opportunity whilst in receipt of RIO's services will be encouraged to use the Complaints Procedure so that their concerns can be investigated and responded to.

Employees/workers/volunteers are expected to make participants aware of their rights and obligations with regards to equality of opportunity. This may sometimes mean that staff/volunteers are required to act as advocates on a participant's behalf. It can also mean that staff/volunteers may be required to point out unacceptable behaviour on the part of a participant, if some aspect of this behaviour affects the rights and opportunities of others. We reserve the right to withdraw services to any participant if that person behaves in a discriminatory, disruptive or abusive manner to any member of staff, volunteer, participant or other person.

RIO is committed to meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and makes every effort to ensure our communications are accessible to people with special needs, including those with visual, hearing, cognitive and motor impairments. We recognise that our office space may not



be appropriate or accessible for all participants; in this event the participant is asked to inform a member of the team so that alternative arrangements can be made.

We undertake to listen to our members/participants and involve them in the development of services which recognise and value their diversity.

### **Breach of this policy**

Any employe/worker/volunteer who feels he/she has been treated in a way which is contrary to this policy should raise this either formally through the Grievance Procedure, or informally with a Senior staff member.

Any breaches of this policy by employees will be fully investigated and may lead to disciplinary action.

### **Implementation, monitoring and review of this policy**

Real Ideas Leaderships have overall responsibility for implementing and monitoring this policy, which will be reviewed on a regular basis following its implementation and may be changed from time to time.

Relevant data will be collected to support this policy. Personal details provided by employees or job applicants for the purposes of equal opportunity monitoring are confidential, will be kept apart from all other records and not used for any other purpose in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations (2018).

RIO will monitor its progress towards diversity by doing the following:

- annual monitoring reports on the ethnic, gender, age and disability profile of our employees to enable us to understand the composition of our workforce to identify any areas of inequality
- annual monitoring applicants for jobs, training and development, grievances, disciplinary hearings, dismissals and other reasons for leaving
- monitoring employee opinions and comments through an annual employee survey, employee forums and feedback via the appraisal system
- performance monitoring through customer feedback and complaints.

Any queries or comments about this policy should be addressed to the Head of Resourcing in the first instance.