



## Introduction and statement of intent

Heath United Reformed Church believes that all people are created in God's image and are loved by God. In his ministry Jesus showed God's love by his openness to all people, including those who were marginalised in his day.

This church affirms its commitment to show the same openness to all people in today's world. It intends, in spirit and in deed, to promote equality of opportunity and diversity in all spheres of its activity and is committed to behaving as an equal opportunity organisation. It acknowledges that people are called to be diverse and lively, inclusive and flexible through the sharing of the gospel.

We will nurture inclusive communities where all will be treated with dignity, respect and fairness.

We will value the distinctive contribution of diverse cultures in our society generally, and in our worshipping community in particular.

We are committed to social justice and will resolutely oppose discrimination within our church and in wider society.

### Discrimination

We recognise that discrimination can occur on many grounds including, but not limited to, those recognised in law, ie age, gender, gender reassignment, skin colour, race, ethnic origin, nationality, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation, child or domestic care arrangements, pregnancy and maternity arrangements, marital or civil partnership status.

We recognise that discrimination can be either:

- direct discrimination - where a person is treated less favourably for a reason unconnected with their ability
- indirect discrimination - when a condition, rule, policy or practice applies to everyone but disadvantages a particular group of people. Indirect discrimination is unlawful whether or not it is intentional
- perceptive - where discrimination occurs against someone because the discriminator thinks the person is of a particular racial group or sexual orientation etc, even if they are not

- associative - this type of discrimination can occur against someone because they have an association with someone who is of a particular sexual orientation or racial group etc.

We recognise that promoting equality of opportunity is not simply a matter of treating everyone the same. In some cases, more favourable treatment for an under-represented group might be necessary in order to redress an inequality of opportunity.

## Equal opportunities in church life

We will promote respect for other people and we will treat everyone fairly.

We will encourage the use of inclusive language and images in our conversations, worship, literature and publicity.

We will challenge any discriminatory attitudes and actions of members of our congregation and take steps to bring them to an end.

We will seek to address the inequalities of opportunity faced by people in under-represented groups. We will identify and remove barriers to participation in all aspects of church life, including employment (both paid and voluntary roles), training, promotion, leadership and representation on church committees.

We will challenge all forms of harassment, bullying or victimisation within the church and take steps to bring it to an end. Harassment consists of words or actions which are unwelcome, unwanted and offensive to the person receiving them and which create an atmosphere of intimidation, hostility or humiliation for that person.

We will ensure that this policy is known by the congregation and that staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities for implementing this policy. Where possible, we will offer education and training in the principles and practice of this equalities policy.

## Equal opportunities in provision of services

In this context, 'services' does not refer simply to acts of worship, but to the whole range of services a church might offer, including: children's activities, toddler groups, cafés, lunch clubs, coffee mornings and other such activities.

We are committed to providing services on a fair and equitable basis, regardless of age, gender, gender reassignment, skin colour, race, ethnic origin, nationality, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation, child or domestic care arrangements, pregnancy and maternity arrangements, marital or civil partnership status. No person requiring services from this church will be treated less favourably than any other person on any grounds.

We will take reasonable steps to alter or remove features of our premises which make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for people with a disability to make use of the facilities that the church provides.

## Equal opportunities in recruitment of paid staff and volunteers

In employment, this church actively seeks to recruit those with talent, skills and potential, promoting equality for all, and welcomes applications from a wide range of candidates. We select candidates for interview based on their skills, qualifications, experience and commitment to our values and purposes.

As an organisation seeking to deliver services within a Christian context, some posts can only be filled by Christians. The nature of these posts or the context in which they are carried out, and their link to the ethos of the organisation, give rise to a 'protected characteristic' (or 'genuine occupational requirement') for the post-holders to be Christians. Staff in these posts may be required to demonstrate a personal commitment to the Christian faith. A list of such posts is kept by the church secretary and is reviewed regularly. (This policy is in accordance with Employment and Race Directives issued by the government and ACAS guidance).

## Equal opportunities in assessing information about criminal records

As an organisation using the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in England and Wales/Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme (PVG) in Scotland to assess applicants' suitability for positions of trust, this church undertakes to comply fully with the DBS/PVG Codes of Practice and to treat all applicants for positions fairly. It undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of disclosure on the basis of conviction or other information revealed.

A Disclosure is only requested when one is both proportionate and relevant to the position concerned. For those positions where a Disclosure is required, all application forms, job adverts and recruitment briefs will contain a statement that a Disclosure will be requested in the event of the individual being offered the position.

Where a Disclosure is required for the post being recruited, we encourage all applicants called for interview to provide details of any criminal record at an early stage in the application process. We request that this information is sent under separate, confidential cover to the recruiter within the organisation and we guarantee that this information will only be seen by those who need to see it as part of the recruitment process.

At interview, or in separate discussion, we will ensure that an open and measured discussion takes place on the subject of any offences or other matter that might be relevant to the position. Failure to reveal information that is relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment or voluntary work.

We make every subject of a DBS Disclosure aware of the existence of the DBS Code of Practice<sup>1</sup> and make a copy available on request.

Any conviction or other information revealed on the Disclosure will be risk assessed by the Assembly Safeguarding Officer, in conjunction with the synod Safeguarding Officer. These individuals have been trained to identify and assess the relevance of circumstances or offences and understand the relevant legislation relating to the employment of ex-offenders.

We undertake to discuss any matter revealed in a disclosure with the person seeking a position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment. Please note that having a criminal record will not necessarily bar you from working with us. It will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of your offence/s, with due consideration given to our responsibilities to protect children and vulnerable people.

## Monitoring of equal opportunities within the church

The leadership team of this church will monitor the implementation of this policy. It will be displayed in the church building and on the church website, together with a notice advising people of the contact names and addresses of the people to whom they should make any complaints, or give compliments.

This policy is reviewed and updated annually by the church Eldership.

Signed: Jane Simmos

Dated: 29<sup>th</sup> February 2020

Position in the church: Secretary

On behalf of the Eldership of Heath United Reformed Church

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<sup>1</sup> Available from: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)