

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, & INCLUSION POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The purpose of this policy is to communicate and embed our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion in our work environment through our principles.
- 1.2. The policy applies to all colleagues within REACT and REACT Group Solutions Ltd (employees, casual or bank workers, Trustees, contractors, Responders, and volunteers - hereafter referred to as REACT). All colleagues are expected to maintain awareness of this policy and to put it into practice in the normal course of their work.
- 1.3. A copy of this policy will be shared with colleagues and will be updated from time to time, with the latest version posted on Breath, our employee HR System and our Volunteer Portal. All colleagues are expected to keep themselves up to date with this policy and any related training requirements.
- 1.4. Applicants will be sent a copy of the policy on request, which can be made in writing to people@re-act.org.uk. In addition, the induction process for new colleagues includes a briefing and on-line learning on this policy.
- 1.5. Any questions about the policy should be directed to the Director of People & Resources or if not resolved, the CEO.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

- 2.1. REACT are committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion among our entire workforce, and eliminating unlawful discrimination.
- 2.2. As a humanitarian charity and service provider, REACT respects and will take steps to preserve and uphold the human rights of all people who are connected with or who come into contact with the organisation through the delivery of our services.
- 2.3. We are passionate about our mission and deliver it with dignity and respect for all.
- 2.4. This means that we put in place practical steps to ensure our practice and procedures are fair, do not discriminate and ensure we meet our legal responsibilities towards the nine protected characteristics in UK law.
- 2.5. Beyond this legal duty our intention is to go further: -
 - We want our organisation to be a space where everyone's voice matters, there is a real sense of belonging for all and where our colleagues feel free to be themselves.

- We will proactively think about and assess the way we approach our work to identify and remove barriers, oppose, and avoid all forms of discrimination and ensure equality of access for all groups of people.
- We will encourage flexible work practices or ways of working to allow a diversity of people to join our workforce, and to help colleagues manage disabilities, illness or religious observances if this does not compromise operational delivery of services.
- This means that we recognise and embrace difference. We understand that difference brings diversity of thought and innovation and will work on cultural add, not cultural fit through our recruitment processes.

3. SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES

- 3.1. All colleagues will be expected to comply with our Code of Conduct and this policy including the Dignity at Work Statement at Appendix B. Any behaviour found to be in breach of our expected standards of conduct or employment policies will be investigated and may lead to disciplinary action and possible dismissal or removal from the database of volunteers.
- 3.2. REACT and the Director of People & Resources has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and associated legislation and for observing relevant Codes of Practice.
- 3.3. The Director of People & Resources is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of this policy and for ensuring that all employment-related policies, procedures and practices are aligned to the objectives of this this policy.
- 3.4. All colleagues have a responsibility to familiarise themselves with and adhere to this policy. REACT will not tolerate discrimination or harassment of any other person in connection with their relationship with us.
- 3.5. Colleagues are responsible for highlighting unacceptable behaviour should they become aware of it. Any colleague alleged to be involved in this behaviour may be investigated and may become subject to disciplinary procedures, or in the case of a volunteer, we may choose to end the relationship by removing their name from a list of people suitable to be deployed on our behalf.
- 3.6. A set of relevant definitions is attached to this policy at Appendix A.

4. OUR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION PRINCIPLES

- 4.1. We encourage equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace not least because it is best practice and makes business sense to grow and evolve our organisation.

- 4.2. We will have a workplace and working practices that are accessible, fosters a sense of belonging and feels welcome to all.
- 4.3. We will create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all colleagues are recognised and valued. We have a separate and specific risk assessment and policy related to the prevention of sexual harassment in line with UK employment law.
- 4.4. We will make opportunities for learning and development and progress available to all colleagues. We will help and encourage people to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of REACT and they can enjoy the benefits that self-development brings.
- 4.5. We expect people to take responsibility for themselves and their conduct in respect of our policy. These responsibilities include conducting ourselves in a manner that helps REACT to provide equal opportunities, to prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination of any kind.
- 4.6. We will ensure that all colleagues understand that they, as well as their employer or volunteering provider, and associated third parties, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, volunteers, beneficiaries, suppliers and the public.
- 4.7. We take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, volunteers, stakeholders, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others during the organisation's work activities.
- 4.8. Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and appropriate action will be taken.
- 4.9. Decisions concerning colleagues will be based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act). We will review our employment and volunteering practices and procedures regularly to ensure fairness and update them and the policy to take account of legal changes.
- 4.10. We regularly monitor the make-up of our workforce in meeting the aims and commitments set out in our policy. We know that representation matters, we aim to be a diverse organisation.

- 4.11. Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality, diversity and inclusion policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and acting to address any issues.

5. CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH DIVERSITY & INCLUSION CAN FLOURISH

- 5.1. There are various ways that we can help to create a positive environment in support of Diversity & Inclusion.
- 5.2. **Recruitment and selection** - We will advertise widely, giving consideration to our audiences and how we can appeal to a diverse pool of candidates. Recruitment and selection procedures will be designed to be free from bias or discrimination, procedures will be conducted objectively, and decisions will be based upon specific and reasonable job-related criteria.
- 5.3. We will make appropriate reasonable adjustments wherever feasible to the recruitment process to ensure that disabled applicants have equal access to our selection processes.
- 5.4. **Career development and training** - All colleagues will be given an appropriate induction to enable them to fulfil the responsibilities of their role. Employee training will also be available through Atlas (on our line Mandatory Training – previously known as IHASCO), external courses and apprenticeships where these provide good value for money and benefit to REACT as well as the development of the individual.
- 5.5. All colleagues will be encouraged to develop their full potential, and we will not unreasonably deny anyone access to training or other career development opportunities. These will be determined objectively, considering the needs of the business and available resources.
- 5.6. Selection for promotion will be based on objective criteria and decisions will be made based on merit.

6. KNOWING OUR WORKFORCE

- 6.1. We encourage our colleagues to share with us who they are. By collecting data about who our colleagues are, we are better able to shape our employment policies and offer to maximise our opportunities to attract and retain a talented workforce.
- 6.2. We will also be able to contrast these overall figures to the wider market to get an idea of whether we need to urgently address any aspect of equality within our work environment.
- 6.3. We will protect any personal data provided by colleagues, and any protected characteristic reporting will be anonymised. We will never share personal data

without colleague specific permission, and we will not make individual or machine-based decisions about colleagues based on protected characteristic data.

6.4. By truly knowing our workforce, we can ensure that our policies, approaches, and internal communications are sensitive and supportive to the needs of our colleagues.

7. EMPLOYMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES

7.1. REACT aims to ensure that employment policies and practices, including any rules or requirements, do not directly or indirectly discriminate and are applied fairly and consistently.

7.2. We will consider making appropriate reasonable adjustments to the working environment or any work arrangements wherever feasible that would alleviate any substantial disadvantage to anyone with a protected characteristic.

7.3. We will aim as far as reasonably practicable within the delivery of our business objectives, to accommodate the requirements of different religions and cultures and will consider requests from employees to vary or change their working hours to enable them to care for a dependant.

8. WORKING ENVIRONMENT

8.1. All individuals have a right to be treated with dignity and respect. We will take reasonable steps to prevent discrimination, bullying or harassment in our working environment. In the event of a complaint, we will take appropriate action to prevent, as far as possible, a further occurrence. All colleagues are encouraged to report any incidents of inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour at work or that occurs during the course of employment/deployment, on or off premises, including at work social events (whether organised by us officially or not) or at formal or informal events involving colleagues, partners, volunteers, stakeholders, or other work-related contacts.

8.2. All colleagues are encouraged to try to address any concerns locally and informally in the first instance, however if a matter cannot be resolved, or is so serious that it must be escalated, colleagues should follow either the Early Resolution and Grievance procedure, or if the complaint relates to organisational practice, they may wish to consider whether the Whistleblowing policy is more appropriate as a matter of Public Interest Disclosure. Matters of alleged sexual harassment should be raised using the Prevention of Sexual Harassment policy.

8.3. More detail is provided in the Dignity at Work – prevention of harassment and bullying statement attached at Appendix B and the Prevention of Sexual Harassment policy which is a separate policy document.

9. GENDER TRANSITION AND REASSIGNMENT

- 9.1. We recognise that any employee, volunteer or worker may wish to change their gender during their employment or volunteering with us.
- 9.1. REACT will support any colleague who states that they intend to undergo gender transition or reassignment and will make every effort in consultation with the individual, to support and preserve their dignity. Every effort will be made to prevent discrimination or harassment within the workplace.
- 9.2. Where a colleague has told us that they are undergoing transition, we will discuss with them any challenges that they envisage or are arising with the delivery of their role. We will make every effort to redeploy the colleague or work to an alternative role in the organisation, if so desired by the individual.
- 9.3. Any colleague suffering discrimination on the grounds of gender reassignment should raise their concern with their team leader/manager, following the grievance procedure.

10. MONITORING

- 10.1. REACT will monitor the effectiveness of this policy to ensure it is achieving its objectives.
- 10.2. Information collected for monitoring purposes will be treated as confidential and will not be used for any other purpose.

11. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- 11.1 Whistleblowing policy
- 11.2 Prevention of Sexual Harassment

Jane Pound
Director Resources
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Next Review: January 2026

APPENDIX A - DEFINITIONS

Direct Discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic that they either have or are thought to have (for example, Race, Sex, Gender, Pregnancy/maternity, religion). Direct discrimination can also occur by way of association, which is when a person is treated less favourably because, for example, their spouse or partner or other relative has the protected characteristic.

Indirect Discrimination occurs when a provision, criterion or practice is applied equally to everyone but has a disproportionately adverse effect on people who share a particular protected characteristic. A person with the protected characteristic who is disadvantaged in that way has the right to complain.

To be justified the provision, criterion, or practice must be necessary for legitimate business reasons in circumstances where less discriminatory alternatives are not reasonably available.

REACT will not discriminate directly or indirectly, harass, or victimise any person on the grounds of any protected characteristic. We will encourage recruiting leaders to recruit on the basis of objective job-related criteria and seek to test competence and skills.

REACT is committed to recruiting and retaining employees whose skills, experience and attitude are suitable for the requirements of the various positions available regardless of any protected characteristic.

REACT will request some information about these characteristics as part of its recruitment process but such information will not be used as selection, training, or promotion criteria or in any detrimental way and is only for compilation of personal data, which the organisation holds on all employees and workers and as part of its equal opportunities monitoring process.

Victimisation occurs where someone is treated unfavourably because they have raised a complaint under this policy or taken legal action, in relation to any alleged act of unlawful discrimination, against the Organisation or because they supported someone else in doing this.

Harassment is unwanted conduct that violates an individual's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment can take many different forms and may involve inappropriate actions, behaviour, comments, emails or physical contact that causes offence or are objectionable. Further detail is set out in the policy statement at Appendix B.

Harassment of any kind is always unacceptable and where it relates to a protected characteristic it will amount to an unlawful act of discrimination.

APPENDIX B

DIGNITY AT WORK – PREVENTION OF HARASSMENT AND BULLYING

REACT believes all our colleagues have the right to work in an environment free from bullying behaviour and any form of harassment, be it on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, marital status or civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, gender reassignment or appearance. This is in line with our values as an organisation and our expectation that all colleagues are treated with dignity and respect.

Bullying or harassing behaviour has no place in our organisation and will not be tolerated. We seek to ensure that our working environment is sympathetic to all our colleagues and to those who we serve or who we have business dealings with. Furthermore, in keeping with the law on prevention of sexual harassment, we carry out at least an annual risk assessment to ensure that we are taking positive steps to prevent sexual harassment.

This policy applies to all colleagues, (Trustees, Employees, Contractors, Casual Workers and Volunteers). It is important also to note that this policy applies both internally – how we behave towards each other within our organisation, but it also applies to how we behave externally, a recipient of bullying or harassing behaviours may be a beneficiary of our services or another stakeholder.

It is everyone's responsibility to have a zero tolerance of bullying and harassment, and to do your utmost to prevent, report or evidence if you see it happen.

WHAT IS HARASSMENT?

Harassment is any unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. A single incident can amount to harassment. A person may be harassed even if they were not the intended "target".

Harassment also includes treating someone less favourably because they have submitted or refused to submit to such behaviour in the past. It is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 to harass a person because of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

It also includes conduct of a sexual nature (sexual harassment). Harassment is unacceptable even if it does not fall within any of these categories. Sexual Harassment is addressed under a separate policy document Prevention of Sexual Harassment.

Examples of harassment include, but are not limited to:

- unwanted physical conduct including touching, pinching, pushing and grabbing.
- unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour.
- offensive e-mails, text messages or social media content or the display of offensive materials.

- unwanted jokes, “banter”, mocking, mimicking or belittling a person that undermines or intimidates in any way.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate, or injure the recipient.

Bullying can include the use of personal strength or the power to coerce through fear or intimidation, not necessarily from someone in a position of authority. In the context of the work of REACT it is especially important to be cognisant of our behaviours as in a disaster response scenario our colleagues may be perceived to be in a position of power over individuals or populations experiencing life changing events.

Bullying may be physical, verbal, or non-verbal. It can include conduct that is not face-to-face, including via text message, email, and social media.

Examples of bullying include (but not limited to):

- physical or psychological threats.
- overbearing and intimidating levels of supervision.
- inappropriate derogatory remarks about a person or their performance.
- shouting at colleagues or stakeholders.
- persistently picking on people in front of others or in private.
- blocking promotion and training opportunities.
- regularly and deliberately ignoring or excluding certain colleagues from work activities or work-related social events.
- setting a person up to fail by overloading them with work or setting impossible deadlines.
- regularly making the same person the butt of jokes.

Legitimate and reasonable criticism of a colleague’s performance or behaviour, or reasonable management instructions, do not amount to bullying. Line managers should ensure that they follow the appropriate policy (e.g. Probation Procedure, Performance Management Procedure, Disciplinary Procedure. Please take the advice of the People Team if you need support.)

IMPLEMENTATION

Breaches of this policy and any form of bullying and harassment are not tolerated in our workplace, and all colleagues are required to treat each other, along with our stakeholders, suppliers, and visitors, with dignity and respect. Breaches of this policy will be dealt with in accordance with our disciplinary procedures.

Serious cases of bullying or harassment may amount to gross misconduct resulting in dismissal of an employee or removal of a volunteer from the list of deployable volunteers. Colleagues who make complaints or who participate in good faith in any investigation must

not suffer any form of retaliation or victimisation as a result. However, making a false allegation deliberately and in bad faith will be treated as misconduct and dealt with under our disciplinary procedure. Anyone found to have retaliated against or victimised someone in this way will be subject to disciplinary action under our disciplinary procedure.

IF YOU BELIEVE YOU ARE BEING HARASSED OR BULLIED

If you believe you are being harassed or bullied, you may wish to raise the problem informally with the person responsible. Explain the situation and how it has made you feel. It can be helpful to describe the event, so the other person is clear about your concerns and the impact of their behaviour. Use the opportunity to ask the person to change or stop their behaviour. Alternatively, if you do not feel able to raise the issue directly, you may speak to your manager, or the Director of Resources, who can provide confidential advice and assistance in resolving the issue formally or informally.

If you do not feel that informal steps are appropriate, or they have been unsuccessful, you should raise the matter formally as a complaint or grievance.

All complaints will be investigated in accordance with our grievance procedure. If we consider that there is sufficient evidence to suggest you have been harassed or bullied, we will consider the appropriate action to take. Whether or not your complaint is upheld, we will consider how best to manage any ongoing working relationship between you and the person concerned during any investigation and after the outcome is known.