



SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY

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Policy Statement

School Of Hard Knocks (hereafter SOHK) is committed to encouraging diversity and eliminating discrimination in both its role as an employer and as a provider of services. The SOHK aims to create a culture that respects and values each other's' differences, that promotes dignity, equality and diversity, and that encourages individuals to develop and maximise their true potential. We are committed wherever practicable to achieving and maintaining a workforce that broadly reflects the local community in which we operate.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide equality and fairness for all in our employment and in the provision of services, and not to discriminate on the grounds of gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, colour, nationality, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, religion, age, or union membership status.

The SOHK opposes all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. All employees, trustees and volunteers, whether part-time, full-time or temporary, will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, training, volunteering or any other benefit will be on the basis of skills and ability.

All employees/volunteers/members have a legal and moral obligation not to discriminate and to report incidents of discrimination against any individual or group of individuals to the COO. In the event that the COO is involved in any discrimination then this should be reported to the Trustees.

Principles

SOHK'S commitment to Equality and Diversity is:

- To create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all our employees, trustees and volunteers are recognised and valued.

- To create a working environment that promotes dignity and respect for all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.
- To ensure appropriate training, development and progression opportunities are available to all.
- To promote equality in the workplace, which it believes is good management practice and makes sound business sense.
- To review regularly all employment and volunteering practices and procedures to ensure that no job applicants, staff, trustees or volunteers are treated less favourably than others.
- To regularly review services to ensure they are accessible and appropriate to all groups within society.
- To treat breaches of the equality policy seriously and to take disciplinary action when required.
- To provide information and training to all employees, trustees and volunteers so that they are fully aware of the issues relating to Equality and Diversity and their responsibilities relating to it.
- To ensure the policy is fully supported by the senior management team.
- To monitor and review the policy annually.

Procedures

SOHK will act positively in using the Equality and Diversity Policy as a means of making public its commitment to provide equal opportunities to all present and future employees, trustees and volunteers.

SOHK encourages all employees to apply for suitable opportunities and to seek training for promotion or in particular skills.

Training in Equality and Diversity is provided as part of the Induction Programme.

Any form of discrimination, or breach of our equality policy by an employee, trustee or volunteer is treated very seriously and where appropriate will lead to disciplinary proceedings.

Recruitment

Job descriptions and person specifications

Job Descriptions and Person Specifications are prepared for all posts. The job description indicates the responsibilities and tasks to be undertaken by the job holder. The person specification describes the qualifications, skills and abilities required.

A list of preferred criteria may also be prepared. Care will be taken to ensure that neither the description nor the specification are discriminatory on the grounds quoted in the Policy Purpose.

Advertising

SOHK will use a range of advertising methods in order to attract the widest pool of appropriate applicants and give clear instructions about obtaining the application pack. Vacancies for new and existing jobs will normally be advertised internally and externally. All our advertising will:

- Ensure that we do not exclude, discriminate against, or discourage any particular group from applying, nor make it difficult for anyone from such a group to apply.
- Refer to the job description and person specification in order to give information about the requirements of the job.

Applications and short-listing

Applications will be short-listed. Short-listing will be performed on the basis of objective criteria and the extent to which candidates have shown, in the application form, that they meet the required person specification, and can carry out tasks and responsibilities required of the post-holder. Formal qualifications and standards of literacy and numeracy will only be taken into account when they are recognised as necessary for a particular job.

Short-listed candidates will be invited to an interview. Staff and members of the senior management team responsible for short-listing, interviewing and selection of candidates will be:

- Clearly informed of selection criteria and the need for their consistent application;
- Given guidance on the effects which generalised assumptions about people from groups quoted in the Policy Statement can have on selection decisions;
- Made aware of the possible misunderstandings that can occur between persons from different cultural backgrounds

Interviewing

All interviews will be carried out by a minimum of two people.

The questions asked will seek to gather objective evidence in support of the job description and person specification. The same core questions will be asked of all candidates applying for the job. Although candidate-specific questions may be asked, interviewers will ensure that they do not compromise the principles of the Policy Statement.

Disabled candidates will be asked if they need support during the interview process or adjustments should they be offered the position.

Notes will be taken and evidence gathered against the job description and person specification.

All candidates will be asked about their eligibility to work.

Selection

All candidates will be scored against the job description and person specification. The highest scoring applicants will be offered the position.

Offers will be made to successful candidates, subject to satisfactory references and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check (where required).

All unsuccessful candidates will be informed of the result of their application and offered brief feedback.

DBS Policy

For certain positions we will request enhanced disclosures for all employees, trustees and volunteers. This requirement will be clearly stated in the application pack.

Ex-Offenders

SOHK will not discriminate against ex-offenders with unspent convictions, unless required to do so because of the nature of the post. All applications will be considered on an individual basis.

Induction and training

All employees, trustees and volunteers will be required to follow an appropriate induction process to ensure they are equipped to do the job.

All employees, trustees and volunteers will receive training on the Equality and Diversity policy, procedures and action plan as part of their induction.

Flexible working

SOHK will consider all requests for flexible working arrangements constructively and creatively, taking account of the balance between the needs of the organisation and the needs of the individual employee.

SOHK will offer a range of flexible working arrangements and will work collaboratively to identify solutions that suit both the individual and the organisation.

Promotion

All vacancies will be advertised internally and externally, where appropriate.

Training

All employees, trustees and volunteers have access to an appropriate range of training opportunities.

Training opportunities will be discussed during supervision sessions and selection for training will be made on the basis of both the needs of the business set out in the Business Plan and the personal development of the individual.

Special needs and requirements for people with disabilities or caring responsibilities will be taken into account whenever practicable and methods sought to help them overcome disabilities in taking up training opportunities.

Staff with management, recruitment and selection responsibilities will be given guidance in the implementation of the Equal and Diversity Policy to ensure that they understand their position in law and under the organisation's policy.

Induction training will include an explanation of the Equal Opportunities Policy and a requirement to undertake formal training within the probationary period of employment

Terms and Conditions

Annual leave and religious holidays

SOHK will not ask about an employee's religion and will not discriminate against anyone wishing to celebrate their festivals. Employees are required to use part of their annual holiday entitlement to cover time off for these and must follow the normal holiday booking procedure.

Cultural and religious needs

Where employees, trustees or volunteers have particular cultural and religious needs, SOHK will consider whether it is reasonably practicable to meet these needs while maintaining the efficiency of the business.

People with disabilities

SOHK will make genuine efforts to recruit people with disabilities and take reasonable steps to make the workplace and individual jobs accessible to people with disabilities.

SOHK will regularly review its facilities for disabled employees, trustees and volunteers and will try to overcome any problems faced wherever practicable and within reasonable resources available.

SOHK will ensure that people have maximum access to employment opportunities and to meetings and events, regardless of any disability.

Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures

SOHK will take seriously any complaints of discrimination and will not victimise people who make such complaints.

Staff will be made aware as part of the induction process of their responsibilities in relation to Equality and Diversity and that discriminatory behaviour will be fully investigated and dealt with using the Disciplinary Procedure.

Bullying and Harassment

SOHK upholds the right of all employees and volunteers to be treated with respect and dignity and to work in an atmosphere free of bullying and harassment.

All employees and volunteers are responsible for ensuring that their own behaviour is sensitive to others and for ensuring that they do not condone or support the bullying or harassing behaviour of others.

All complaints of bullying and harassment will be treated seriously and should be raised using the Grievance Procedure. All complaints will be investigated and where appropriate, the Disciplinary Procedures will be followed.

Service provision

SOHK will endeavour to ensure that its services to and for the voluntary sector are sensitive and appropriate to respond to the needs of all groups, whenever practicable, i.e. taking account of the needs of minority groups.

SOHK will take care to avoid unintentionally discriminatory passages appearing in published, printed or spoken material.

SOHK will continue to take a leading role in combating any form of discrimination.

Responsibility

It is the Director's responsibility with the support of senior management to ensure the implementation of the Equality and Diversity Policy. Appropriate funds will be sought to implement approved aspects of the Policy which require special and additional resources.

All employees, trustees and volunteers have the individual responsibility to:

- Follow procedures introduced to ensure equal opportunity and non-discrimination;
- To draw the attention of management to suspected or alleged discriminatory practices;
- To refrain from harassing or intimidating other employees, trustees or volunteers, clients or visitors of SOHK on any of the grounds cited in the Policy Statement.

The successful implementation of this policy depends on the awareness and commitment of all staff/volunteers/members of the management committee. Hence, all new staff/volunteers/members of the management committee will be made aware of its existence and on joining the organisation, and reminded they must conform to it on a regular basis.