



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Statement of Commitment

Cheshire Halton & Warrington Race & Equality Centre (CHAWREC) is an equality organisation committed to the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equal opportunities and good relations between different groups. We have particular expertise in the field of race equality, having been previously a Racial Equality Council and we therefore try to ensure that race is prioritised in our day to day work. We do however ensure that we work with other specialist equality groups to expand our services into all equality fields where appropriate.

In employment CHAWREC declares that its policy is anti discriminatory as far as is lawful as regards all minorities and disadvantaged groups including Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) individuals, women, transgender people, people with disabilities, ex offenders and persons irrespective of age, religion, sexual orientation and marital or civil partnership status.

Through our community and policy development work it is our aim to develop and implement anti discrimination strategies and positive action programmes and promote these policies throughout our sphere of influence.

What Do We Mean by Equal Opportunities?

By equal opportunities, we mean treating people fairly, taking into account their individual circumstances and not making decisions based on pre conceived ideas/stereotypes.

Equal Opportunities is not about treating people exactly the same, it is about making sure that everyone has equal access to employment and other opportunities and to appropriate service provision. It has full regard to fair treatment through meeting people's needs equally. For example, putting a ramp into a building isn't treating people the same – but it has the same result, both wheelchair users and non-wheelchair users can access the building. Similarly providing documents in more than one language will allow both English speaking and non-English speaking people to understand the information provided.

What is the Aim of this Policy?

Our aim in this policy is to challenge discrimination whenever it may occur, to promote and implement equality measures and to progress social justice.

We recognise that we are both an employer and a service provider and this policy will apply in all of our functions.

Legislation

We will in all our functions ensure that we comply with all relevant laws. The primary legislation around equality is now the Equality Act 2010, which harmonises and strengthens the law on equality.

The Equality Act 2010

The Act provides protection from discrimination on the grounds of the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment status
- Religion or belief
- Civil partnership status
- Marital status
- Gender
- Pregnancy

The Act defines 6 types of discrimination:

1. **Direct discrimination** is where someone is treated less favourably on the grounds of their protected characteristic
2. **Discrimination by association** –this is new protection and is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic
3. **Perception discrimination** - This is where someone is discriminated against because someone perceived they had a protected characteristic
4. **Indirect discrimination** - it is about applying a provision, criteria or practice (PCP) that applies to all but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic
5. **Harassment** - 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

6. **Victimisation** - When someone is treated badly as a result of: making a complaint or supporting a complaint under the Equality Act; raised a grievance or supported a grievance under the Equality Act or they are **suspected** of doing so.

Human Rights Act 1998

The Human Rights Act came into being on 2nd October 2000 and made the European Convention on Human Rights part of UK law. This means that all public bodies (including RECs in some of their functions) must ensure that they take account of the Human Rights Act in their functions.

Under the Act all people are entitled to:

- *The right to life and liberty*
- *Freedom from slavery and right to security*
- *Right to a fair trial*
- *Right to respect for family life*
- *Freedom of thought, conscience, religion, expression & opinion*
- *Freedom of peaceful assembly*
- *Right to marry*
- *Freedom from torture & inhumane & degrading treatment*
- *No discrimination in the enjoyment of these rights*

Service Provision

The Race and Equality Centre (REC) provides a range of services to individual members of the public and local statutory, private and voluntary agencies. We strive to provide a quality service to all and to treat all users and potential users in a fair and non discriminatory way.

We will not discriminate against any person on the basis of their gender, transgender status, race, colour, ethnic or national origins, religion or belief, disability, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy, sexual orientation, criminal record, age or other social circumstances in providing a service to any member of the public.

In order to do this we will:

- Monitor by all protected characteristics all users of the service to ensure that the REC is catering for all sections of the community
- Seek to respond to any service needs requests e.g. translation & interpretation
- Make information about our services available in large print and other alternative formats
- Ensure that our website is accessible to all, particularly those with visual disabilities

- Make sure that all venues we use are accessible where possible
- Take complaints seriously and allow the opportunity for people to have their say through proper evaluation questionnaires

Employment

Our aim is to create a workforce that is diverse and socially inclusive to provide effective services to all users.

All employees of the REC shall be afforded equal opportunities regardless of age, gender, transgender status, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy, race, disability, religion or sexual orientation.

We will:

- Ensure our recruitment and selection processes are in accordance with best practice including Codes of Practice in Employment.
- Monitor applicants by all protected characteristics for positions with the REC
- Ensure that all members involved in recruitment and selection:
 - have undergone equal opportunities training
 - retain interview notes for a period of 6 months (within the REC office)
 - provide feedback to applicants where requested
 - ensure that job and person specifications relate to job requirements only
- Publicise all advertisements for positions in the REC as widely as possible. All posts of longer than a year will be advertised in regional or national press (depending on the position). Consideration will always be given to including the post in specialist press. All posts will be circulated to RECs in the region and community groups in the locality
- Regularly review all personnel policies to ensure they do not discriminate against any particular groups
- Ensure that all staff receive regular appraisals and are judged solely on their abilities and skills at work
- Ensure workers have equal access to training and development opportunities
- Ensure that part time workers are not treated less favourably than full time workers
- Aim to be family friendly by offering working conditions that are flexible, such as:

maternity leave	paternity leave	childcare voucher
scheme	flexible working hours	job share
- Consider all requests to adapt working practices to enable cultural and religious needs of an employee to be met. We will try to accommodate any reasonable requests such as observance of prayer times.
- Implement a specific harassment policy for staff

Who Does This Policy Apply To?

It is everyone's responsibility in the REC to ensure that this policy is adhered to which means that it applies to:

- all staff employed by CHAWREC irrespective of funding agent
- Executive Committee members
- Volunteers & student placements
- all members and affiliate organisations

Reviewing This Policy

We will monitor and review the effectiveness of this policy on at least an annual basis.

The Director will present an annual report to the Executive Committee, as part of the work programme review and business planning cycle.