

Equal Opportunities Guidelines

These guidelines for action have been produced to aid the practical implementation of the Forum's Equal Opportunities Policy. The guidelines are intended to:

- be a useful checklist
- be specific enough to be useful, without being impossibly detailed
- allow space for further developments of the policy in the future

1 Membership

The Forum aims to have a membership that fully reflects voluntary organisations in York and North Yorkshire. To seek to ensure this we will:

- 1.1 actively seek out all voluntary and community organisations and encourage them to join our mailing list
- 1.2 actively encourage all voluntary and community organisations on our mailing list to become members of the Forum
- 1.3 annually monitor the composition of our membership and further encourage under-represented groups to become members. Monitoring shall be undertaken by the small working group outlined in section 6.5. The process will involve members of the working group considering a list of members and, using their personal knowledge of the area and sector, seeking to identify gaps
- 1.4 send a copy of the policy to all applying for membership

2 Board of Trustees

The Forum aims to have a Board membership that fully reflects voluntary and community organisations and the communities in York and North Yorkshire. To seek to ensure this:

- 2.1 we will annually monitor the composition of the Board and encourage under-represented groups to make nominations to the Board. Monitoring shall be undertaken by the small working group outlined in section 6.5. The process will involve members of the working group considering a list of members and, using their personal knowledge of the area and sector, seeking to identify gaps.
- 2.2 we will include a copy of the policy with the papers inviting nominations for election or appointment to the Board
- 2.3 we will where necessary co-opt individuals from under-represented groups on to the Board
- 2.4 we will provide induction and support to all new Board member
- 2.5 we will ensure that all Board members know that expenses are available and ensure that they are paid promptly

- 2.6 at each meeting of the Board, the Chair will ensure that all Board members are aware of the need to ensure that the conduct and decisions are in accordance with the spirit of our policy

3 Services

The Forum aims to provide services to all voluntary and community organisations in York and North Yorkshire, within the limits of the Forum's constitution and mission statement, particularly giving priority to working with those whose full participation in society is limited by economic, political or social disadvantage. The Forum is working towards creating a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere and will positively encourage and assist disadvantaged and under-represented groups to use its services. We will, where appropriate:

- 3.1 consult with special interest groups to find out needs
- 3.2 provide special sessions to encourage involvement by groups who do not normally use our services
- 3.3 ensure when planning a new piece of work that we consider the needs of under-represented groups
- 3.4 monitor our services regularly in relation to equal opportunities, in particular using a standard monitoring form (including ethnic origin, gender, age group and disability) for all conference and training participants

4 Access to all meetings and events

The Forum aims to make its service provision as accessible as possible. At all times we will seek to create a friendly and welcoming atmosphere for all, taking into account where appropriate:

- 4.1 people's dependent and childcare responsibilities
- 4.2 different religious and cultural needs
- 4.3 different sexual orientations
- 4.4 personal safety
- 4.5 timings of meetings
- 4.6 single sex provision
- 4.7 dates of major religious festivals
- 4.8 access to public transport
- 4.9 physical access including toilets
- 4.10 dietary requirements
- 4.11 access to information in large print, on tape, on computer disc or in Braille
- 4.12 access to signers and induction loop systems

5 Recruiting and employing staff

The Forum recruits on the basis of the best candidate for the job, irrespective of race, gender, religion, sexuality, disability, age, class or geographical location. The Forum will follow all legal requirements when recruiting and employing staff and also undertakes to follow current good practice. We will:

- 5.1 ensure that all those involved in the recruitment and employment of staff are aware of the policy and have received a briefing on implementation
- 5.2 advertise in a range of publications, media and locations as appropriate (including the Forum's own publications)
- 5.3 state that the Forum is seeking to be an equal opportunities employer
- 5.4 consider all jobs for their suitability for job share/flexi-time/part-time/term-time working and, where this has been agreed, indicate this in adverts

- 5.5 apply for and maintain our commitment to the Disability Symbol, in particular:
- to interview all applicants with a disability who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy and consider them on their abilities
 - to ensure there is a mechanism in place to discuss, at any time, but at least once a year, with disabled employees what we and they can do to make sure they can develop and use their abilities
 - to make every effort when employees become disabled to make sure they stay in employment
 - to take action to ensure that all employees develop the appropriate level of disability awareness needed to make these commitments work
 - each year, to review the five commitments and what has been achieved, to plan ways to improve on them and let employees and the Employment Service know about progress and future plans.
- 5.6 use clear language and avoid jargon in all adverts, application forms, job descriptions and person specifications;
- 5.7 use a standard application form and ask only for information relevant to the post to be filled
- 5.8 write and review job descriptions and person specifications to ensure that they are accurate and fair
- 5.9 monitor our recruitment and employment practice in relation to equal opportunities, in particular using a standard monitoring form (including ethnic origin, gender, age group and disability) for all applicants and employees
- 5.10 send to all applicants for the post: brief information about the Forum and its work; a job description; a person specification; details of the main conditions of service; a standard application form; a standard equal opportunities monitoring form; and this policy
- 5.11 undertake shortlisting solely on the job description, person specification and an agreed scoring system; and to interview all applicants with a disability who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy
- 5.12 ensure the interview panel agrees a structure and common set of questions for the interview
- 5.13 ensure that questions asked are fair, non-discriminatory and in accordance with good practice
- 5.14 accommodate the needs of any disabled candidate and if we know in advance of a candidate's disability consult with the candidate before the interview
- 5.15 make a selection based solely on the candidates' performance in relation to the job description and person specification
- 5.16 offer all unsuccessful candidates feedback on why they were not selected
- 5.17 ensure there is a staff appraisal system in place to discuss, at any time, but at least once a year, individually with all employees their work and what we and they can do to make sure they can develop and use their abilities
- 5.18 consider sympathetically the needs of staff who have childcare or other caring responsibilities, who are pregnant or about to become parents, or who have health problems or disabilities
- 5.19 take disciplinary action against staff and volunteers who use discriminatory behaviour

- 5.20 make available a grievance procedure to any member of staff or volunteer who considers themselves to have been discriminated against and ensure that they are aware of how to implement it.

6 Implementing and monitoring

The Forum regards the implementation and monitoring of its Equal Opportunities Policy as a continuing process. We will:

- 6.1 ensure that all staff, volunteers and Board members have a copy of the policy and the guidelines
- 6.2 provide training and guidance to ensure that all staff, Board members and volunteers understand their responsibilities under the policy and the guidelines
- 6.3 publicise the policy and include it within the Forum's annual report and website
- 6.4 on an ongoing basis, examine our procedures, services and work practices, identify areas where improvements can be made and draw up plans to implement them
- 6.5 summarise annually the results of monitoring exercises of conference and training participants, and job applicants and employees, compared to the latest census data
- 6.6 ensure that the Board reviews the policy, the guidelines and their implementation annually at its September meeting, upon receipt of a report from a small working group of Board members and staff established by the Chief Executive specifically for that purpose

September 2001, minor updates December 2006.