

Equal Opportunities Policy

Context and Overview:

Key Details

Policy prepared by:	AW
Approved by board / management on:	19 February 2018
Policy became operational on:	19 February 2018
Next review date:	One year from approval or when any national legally binding changes are notified

Introduction

MS Research Treatment & Education (MSRTE) recognises that it is essential to provide equal opportunities to all persons without discrimination. This policy sets out the organisation's position on equal opportunity in all aspects of employment, including recruitment and promotion, and provides guidance and encouragement to employees and volunteers at all levels to act fairly and prevent discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, marital status, disability as defined by the Equal Opportunities and Discrimination (Equality Act 2010), part-time and fixed term contract status, age, sexual orientation or religion.

Legal Obligations

Equal Opportunities and Discrimination (Equality Act 2010)

The new Equality Act came into force in October 2010 and replaces all previous equality legislation in England, Scotland and Wales – namely the Race Relations Act 1976, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Sex Discrimination Act, the Equal Pay Act, the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006, The Civil Partnership Act 2004, the Employment Equality Regulations 2003 (religions and belief and sexual orientation).

The Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics are:

Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief sex and sexual orientation.

In valuing diversity MSRTE is committed to go beyond the legal minimum regarding equality.

The **Equality Act 2010** harmonises and strengthens and replaces most previous equality legislation.

The following legislation is still relevant:

- The Human Rights Act 1998.
- The Work and Families Act 2006.
- Employment Equal Treatment Framework Directive 2000 (as amended).

Definition of Discrimination

(a) Discrimination can be direct or indirect. Both forms of discrimination must be avoided.

(b) Direct discrimination occurs when one person is treated less favourably than another on grounds relating to gender, race, marital status, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.

(c) Indirect discrimination occurs where a requirement is imposed which can be complied with by a smaller proportion of persons of a particular gender, race, marital status, disability, age, part-time or fixed term contract status, sexual orientation or religion, than persons in another group and which is not objectively justifiable in the given situation.

Statement of Policy

(a) The objective of this policy is that no person should suffer or experience less favourable treatment, discrimination or lack of opportunities on the grounds of gender, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religious or philosophical beliefs, health status, HIV status, age, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, political beliefs or trade union membership, class, responsibility for dependents, physical attributes, ex-offender status as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, lack of formal qualifications where such qualifications are not formally required, or any other grounds which cannot be shown to be justifiable within the context of this policy.

(b) The organisation recognises that adhering to the Equal Opportunities Policy, combined with relevant employment policies and practices, maximises the effective use of individuals in both the organisation's and employees' best interests. MSRTE recognises the great benefits in having a diverse workforce with different backgrounds, solely employed on skills and ability.

(c) The application of recruitment, training, and promotion policies to all individuals will be on the basis of job requirements and the individual's ability and merits.

(d) All employees and volunteers of the organisation will be made aware of the provisions of this policy.

Recruitment and Promotion

(a) Advertisements for posts will give sufficiently clear and accurate information to enable potential applicants to assess their own suitability for the post. Information about vacant posts will be

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provided in such a manner that does not restrict its audience in terms of gender, race, marital status, disability, age, part-time or fixed term contract status, sexual orientation or religion.

(b) Recruitment and volunteering literature will not imply a preference for one group of applicants unless there is a genuine occupational qualification which limits the post to this particular group, in which case this must be clearly stated.

(c) All vacancies will be circulated internally.

(d) All descriptions and specifications for posts will include only requirements that are necessary and justifiable for the effective performance of the job.

(e) All selection will be thorough, conducted against defined criteria and will deal only with the applicant's suitability for the job. Where it is necessary to ask questions relating to personal circumstances, these will be related purely to job requirements and asked to all candidates.

Employment

(a) **MSRTE** will not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, marital status, disability, age, part-time or fixed term contract status, sexual orientation or religion in the allocation of duties between employees employed at any level with comparable job descriptions.

(b) **MSRTE** will put in place any reasonable measures and/or adjustments within the workplace for those employees who become disabled during employment or for disabled appointees.

(c) All employees will be considered solely on their merits for career development and promotion with equal opportunities for all.

Training

(a) Employees will be provided with appropriate training regardless of gender, race, marital status, disability, age, part-time or fixed term contract status, sexual orientation or religion.

(b) All employees will be encouraged to discuss their career prospects and training needs with their Manager or Mentor.

Monitoring

(a) It is the responsibility of the Trustee Board to ensure that all aspects of this policy are kept under review and are operated throughout the organisation.

(b) Where it appears that applicants/employees/volunteers are not being offered equal opportunities, circumstances will be investigated to identify any policies or criteria which exclude or discourage certain employees and, if so, whether these are justifiable.

Grievances and Victimisation

(a) MSRTE emphasises that discrimination is unacceptable conduct which may lead to disciplinary action under the organisation's Disciplinary Procedure.

(b) Any complaints of discrimination will be pursued through the organisation's Grievance Procedure.

Risk Management:

Review of policy development at defined intervals or when national legal employment policy changes

All employees to sign contract including confirmation of clear understanding of policies

All employees have access to the Trustee board in case of any cause for concern or grievance in line with the MSRTE grievance policy

At least two interviewees will participate in appointment interviews to each advertised post and where necessary one or more interviewees will have expertise in the area of work relating to the potential employee

All employees will be required to undergo Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) clearance.

All staff volunteers and trustees will have access to all policy documents and any updates as they occur

All trustees will contribute to ensuring the legal, ethical and non-discriminatory policies of the charity through review and approval of policies, policy updates and changes arising from national applied policy alterations.

Relevant Policies - This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies MSRTE policies:

- Grievance
- Health & Safety
- Insurance
- Financial Management