



## **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Action for Conservation (“AFC”, “we” or “us”) is an environmental education charity that runs workshops, residential camps and events for children inside and outside of school environments across the UK. AFC recognises that it is essential to provide equal opportunities to all people without discrimination. This policy sets out the AFC’s position on equal opportunity in relation to staff, volunteers, beneficiaries and anyone else who comes into contact with the organisation.

### **SCOPE**

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and delegates of AFC.

### **PURPOSE**

This policy provides guidance to staff and volunteers at all levels to act fairly and prevent discrimination on the grounds of age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage or civil partnership status, disability as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, which are collectively referred to as protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 (hereafter referred to as ‘protected characteristics’) as well as to ensure equality, fairness and respect for all in AFC’s employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time and to prevent discrimination against them on the basis of their type of contract (hereafter referred to as ‘contract status’).

### **WHAT IS DISCRIMINATION**

Discrimination can be direct or indirect. Both forms of discrimination must be avoided. Direct discrimination occurs when one person is treated less favourably than another on grounds relating to protected characteristics or contract status. Indirect discrimination occurs where a requirement is imposed which can be complied with by a smaller proportion of persons with a particular protected characteristic or contract status, than persons in another group and which is not objectively justifiable in a given situation.

### **WE WILL PROVIDE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES TO ALL BY:**

- Ensuring that no job applicant, staff member, volunteer or beneficiary with whom we engage receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of protected characteristics or contract status or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable.

The organisation is committed not only to its legal obligations but also to the positive promotion of equality of opportunity in all aspects of its work.

- Recognising that adhering to the Equality and Diversity Policy maximises the effective use of individuals and that this is in the best interests of the organisation, its beneficiaries, staff and volunteers. AFC recognises the great benefits in having a diverse workforce and volunteer base with different backgrounds.
- Applying recruitment, training, and promotion policies to all individuals on the basis of role requirements and individual ability and merits.
- Making all volunteers and employees of the organisation aware of the provisions of this policy.

## **RECRUITMENT**

- 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 provided in such a manner that does not restrict its audience in terms of any protected characteristics.
- Recruitment 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.
- All vacancies will be circulated internally as well as externally.
- All descriptions and specifications for posts will include only requirements that are necessary and justifiable for the effective performance of the job.
- All selection will be transparent and 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 of all candidates.
- AFC undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a criminal record check on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed, and can only ask an individual to provide details of convictions and cautions that AFC is legally entitled to know about.
- For those positions where a criminal record check is identified as necessary, all application forms, job adverts and recruitment briefs will contain a statement that an application for a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate will be submitted in the event of the individual being offered the position.
- At interview, or in a separate discussion, AFC ensures that an open and measured conversation takes place on the subject of any offences or other matters that might be relevant to the position. Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment or termination of employment.
- Recruitment practices and procedures will be reviewed when necessary to ensure transparency, fairness, inclusivity and equality of opportunity, and also to update them on account of changes in the law.
- In encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion, AFC will monitor the makeup of applicants for its job vacancies regarding information related to protected characteristics.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

- AFC will not discriminate on the basis of protected characteristics or contract status in the allocation of duties between staff employed at any level with comparable job descriptions.
- AFC will put in place any reasonable measures and/or adjustments within the workplace for those staff members who become disabled during employment or for disabled appointees.
- Where possible, AFC will endeavour to make tailored adjustments to accommodate the needs of its staff and volunteers.

## PROMOTION

- All staff will be considered for promotion and decisions about this will be made solely based on their merits for career development and promotion with equal opportunities for all.

## TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

- All staff and volunteers will be provided with appropriate training as required for the performance of their duties. Opportunities for further training and development will be made available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
- All staff will be invited and encouraged to discuss their career prospects and training needs with their Line Manager or the HR Department as part of the annual performance appraisal cycle. For further details, please refer to the Staff Appraisals Policy (pending)
- All staff will have access to training through mandatory and recommended routes to assist them to translate the requirements of this policy into practice.

## BENEFICIARIES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

- It is the responsibility of AFC staff and volunteers to ensure all beneficiaries are equally able to participate and engage with our programmes and related materials.
- Where beneficiaries require selection, AFC will ensure no discrimination takes place on grounds of protected characteristics.
- AFC will accommodate beneficiaries with disabilities wherever possible and train staff accordingly to assess individual needs and help everyone enjoy our programmes.
- AFC staff and volunteers will be expected to use appropriately inclusive language and behave in a way that will uphold the dignity of programme beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

## GRIEVANCES AND VICTIMISATION

- Discrimination is considered to be unacceptable conduct. Complaints of discrimination or related grievances will be taken seriously and will be promptly and thoroughly investigated in line with AFC's Disciplinary Procedure and/or Grievance Policy. Appropriate measures will be taken which may lead to disciplinary action or, in particularly serious cases amounting to gross misconduct, dismissal without notice.
- **Any individual who experiences or witnesses discrimination/harassment is encouraged to report it** to the Chief Executive who will refer the matter to the board of trustees. For further details, please refer to the Staff Grievance Policy.

## MONITORING

- It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive and the board of trustees to ensure that all aspects of this policy are kept under review and are operated throughout the organisation. The policy will be reviewed annually.
- All board discussions will take into consideration the Equality and Diversity Policy.
- Where it appears that individuals are not being offered equal opportunities, circumstances will be investigated to identify any policies or criteria that exclude or discourage certain individuals and, if so, whether these are justifiable.

**We are committed to reviewing this policy annually.**

Policy	Equality & Diversity Policy
Review dates	04/10/2017; 16/03/2018; 15/03/2019; 11/02/2020; 14/12/2020; 01/04/2022; 19/01/2023
Chief Executive Officer:	Hendrikus van Hensbergen