

Equal Opportunities - Code of Practice

A. INTRODUCTION

Healthwatch Manchester is committed to a programme of action to make its Equal Opportunities Policy fully effective in all aspects of employment, including recruitment, training and promotion, and will ensure that all members of staff it employs and all applicants for employment are given equal opportunity, irrespective of their personal circumstances and beliefs, in their access to posts and in the terms of benefits on which employment is available here.

The purpose of this Code of Practice is to define procedures which ensure that the organisation operates fairly in the recruitment, promotion, transfer, training, welfare and dismissal of employees.

B. IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY

1. Application of the Policy

- This Code of Practice is based on the premise that there will be no discrimination, either direct or indirect, against applicants or employees and that the only criterion for appointment and promotion is ability to fulfil the requirements of the post in question.
- The Code of Practice is subject to annual review, and to this end discussions on its application shall be held with the Board with a view to identifying areas for improvement.

2. Responsibility

- All members of staff are expected and encouraged to participate in the implementation and development of Healthwatch Manchester Equal Opportunities Policy and this Code of Practice.
- A copy of the Equal Opportunities Policy is available to all existing members of staff and is issued to all new employees during their induction.

3. Recruitment and Appointment

- Recruitment material will be written to ensure that applications from suitable persons are encouraged without discrimination. Job Descriptions and Person Specifications will include only requirements that are necessary and justifiable for the effective performance of the post.
- External notices of job vacancies will be made available to as wide a public as possible and in accordance with the nature of the post.

- Requests from applicants for job-sharing will be considered in the light of operational requirements of the post.
- Recruitment practices will not discriminate against disabled people. Where practicable, recruitment material will be available in a range of formats and applications for employment will be accepted in a range of formats such as e-mail and computer disk, as well as by way of the standard application form.
- The ability of an applicant to carry out the duties of a post will be assessed according to the requirements of the post. All interviews shall be conducted on an objective basis and questions shall deal exclusively with the applicant's ability to fulfil the necessary job requirements.
- Applicants invited for interview will be asked to indicate whether any reasonable adjustments can be made to the interview process to help overcome any possible disadvantage an applicant may face.
- Guidelines will be issued for all interviewing panels setting out acceptable procedures under this Code of Practice and in law. **See also Recruitment and Selection Policy**
- Staff involved in the short-listing, interviewing and selection of candidates will be given training and guidance on the effects which generalised assumptions about race, nationality, sex, marital status, disability, or any other characteristics which are not relevant to an applicant's merits and abilities, might have on a selection decision, and informed of the need for consistency and fairness in applying selection criteria.
- Any complaint, on the grounds of discrimination, arising from an unsuccessful application for a post will be investigated in the first instance by Chief Officer. To facilitate such investigation, all papers relevant to an appointment process shall be kept for at least twelve months.

4. Promotion and Career Development

- Healthwatch Manchester is committed to developing the careers of all members of staff. To this end, it shall endeavour to provide staff with opportunities for training and promotion within the terms of their employment and on the basis of their relevant qualifications and abilities.
- In assessing the training needs of individuals within their career structure, particular regard will be given to the possible special needs of individuals; for example, those with language difficulties, physical or mental disabilities, or those returning to work after a career break or long term of absence.
- Healthwatch Manchester will consult with all disabled employees to determine what is required for them to continue to develop and use their abilities at work.
- Appropriate training and guidance will be provided to all members of staff, particularly those with managerial responsibility, to develop

their awareness of fair and non-discriminatory practises and of disability issues for both staff and volunteers

5. Conditions of Service

- Healthwatch Manchester is committed to maintaining an environment which encourages all members of staff to contribute fully and on an equal basis in their work to the life of the organisation
- Efforts will continue to ensure that, having taken into account any reasonable adjustment, all parts of the premises are accessible and safe for all staff, regardless of physical disablement.
- Actions or words embodying discrimination against members of particular groups liable to cause offence to them are not conducive to good working relationships. Any complaint arising from behaviour of this kind will be investigated in the first instance by the Chief Officer
- Healthwatch Manchester accepts the need to provide a work-life balance for members of staff, including parental and family responsibility leave, and will review regularly the adequacy of its provision.

6. Change of Circumstances

- Every effort will be made to enable any employee who becomes disabled, who has problems returning to work after illness, or whose disability worsens during service, to continue in employment with Healthwatch Manchester. This will include making reasonable adjustments for disabled employees to maintain, or return to, a role appropriate to their experience and abilities and involve re-training or re-deployment dependent on the circumstances. The disabled employee will be consulted at the appropriate time, or times, about their needs and any effect the disability might have on future employment.
- Information will not be divulged about someone's disability to any other employee unless it is absolutely necessary to do so, to ensure a reasonable adjustment can be implemented. Where it becomes necessary to pass on such information, the matter will be discussed with the disabled employee in the first instance.
- When requested by the employee, job-sharing, reduced hours or flexible working arrangements will be considered positively for existing employees, including those who return to work after leave taken for domestic reasons, or whose personal circumstances alter radically.

7. Investigation of Complaints

- Healthwatch Manchester will give a proper hearing, through its established procedures, to any employee who alleges that she or he has been unfairly discriminated against. Such allegations will be

treated seriously and handled with sensitivity, speed and confidentiality.

- Complaints of acts of unfair discrimination by individual employees will be investigated by a nominated officer.

8. Religious and Cultural Provision

- Healthwatch Manchester will not place constraints on any individual that would unreasonably affect her or his religious or cultural obligations. Wherever practicable, requests will be met for the timing of annual leave and for special leave without pay in order to meet major religious, family or cultural obligations.
- Requests for changes in normal hours of work in order to comply with religious obligations will be met, wherever practicable.

9. Monitoring

- The operation of the Equal Opportunities Policy and this Code of Practice will be kept under review, and Healthwatch Manchester will work towards their development and improvement.
- Healthwatch Manchester will take steps to monitor the implementation of the Policy and Code of Practice. For monitoring to be effective, the maintenance of a statistical record is necessary, and every effort shall be made to maintain and update this record.
- The report will include the steps taken to implement the Equal Opportunities Policy, including the results of monitoring, and provide an account of specific measures adopted in that year to promote equality of opportunity.
- Healthwatch Manchester will review its commitments regarding disability, on a yearly basis, to determine what has been achieved and plan ways of improvement. Progress and future plans will be communicated to all employees.

10. Co-operation with Statutory Authorities

Healthwatch Manchester will seek the specialist help and advice of the relevant advisory service or commission in resolving any problem that might arise in the implementation of this Policy and Code of Practice and in amending or adding to the Policy and/or Code of Practice.