



Equal Opportunities Policy

1. Introduction

First Fostering recognises that it is essential to provide equal opportunities to all persons without discrimination. This policy sets out the Company's position on equal opportunity in all aspects of fostering and employment, including recruitment, training and advancement. It provides guidance and encouragement to foster carers and employees at all levels to act fairly and prevent discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, marital status, disability, age, sexual orientation or religion.

2. Definition of 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 sex, race, marital status, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.

Indirect discrimination occurs where a requirement is imposed which can be complied with by a smaller proportion of people of a particular sex, race, marital status, disability, age, sexual orientation or religion, than persons in another group and which is not objectively justifiable in the given situation.

3. Statement of policy

It is the policy of First Fostering to ensure that no applicant for a foster carer role or as an employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of sex, race, marital status, disability, age, sexual orientation or religion, or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable. The Company is committed not only to its legal obligations but also to the positive promotion of equality of opportunity in all its activities.

The Company recognises that adhering to the Equal Opportunities Policy, combined with relevant fostering and employment policies and practices, maximises the effective use of individuals in the interests of children and young people, the Company and its employees. First Fostering recognises the great benefits in having a diversity of foster carers and employees with different backgrounds, utilised solely on ability and suitability.

All foster carers and employees of the Company will be made aware of the provisions of this policy.

4. Recruitment

Advertisements for both foster carers and staff will give sufficiently clear and accurate information to enable potential applicants to assess their own suitability for these positions. Information will be provided in such a manner that does not restrict our audience in terms of sex, race, marital status, disability, age, sexual orientation or religion.

Literature will not imply a preference for one group of applicants unless there is a genuine reason to do so (in accordance with current legislation). All descriptions and specifications will include only requirements that are necessary and justifiable for effective performance.

All selection will be thorough, conducted against defined criteria and will deal only with the applicant's suitability as a foster carer or employee. Where it is necessary to ask questions relating to personal circumstances, these will be related purely to requirements.

5. Employment

First Fostering will not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, marital status, disability, age, sexual orientation or religion in the allocation at any level. Employees will be considered solely on their merits for career development and promotion with equal opportunities for all

First Fostering 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.

6. Fostering

The primary purpose of our organisation is to promote the care and welfare of children and young people and to provide a service that meets their needs. We therefore welcome, and concur with, the key elements of the 'United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child'.

Our equal opportunities policies are implemented by promoting diversity, by valuing people and respecting their rights as individuals. Our aim is to ensure that children and young people have access to equitable services that are geared to meet their needs and by taking positive actions to enable them to reach their full potential and allow their voices to be heard.

First Fostering is committed to working in partnership with local authorities and other individuals to provide a service that is free of oppression and discrimination.

6. Training

Foster carers and employees will be provided with appropriate training regardless of sex, race, marital status, disability, age, sexual orientation or religion.

All will be encouraged to discuss their career prospects and training needs with their supervising social workers and/or the Director of Operations and Training.

7. Monitoring

At First Fostering we believe that Equal Opportunities can only be achieved if all those involved are committed to anti-discriminatory practice. It is our intention to ensure that this is achieved through training, monitoring, challenging, reviewing and by personal example.

It is the responsibility of the Director of Operations and Training to ensure that all aspects of this policy are kept under review and are operated throughout the Company.

Where it appears that applicants for foster carers or employees are not being offered equal opportunities, circumstances will be investigated to identify any policies or criteria which exclude or discourage certain people and, if so, whether these are justifiable.

8. Grievances and victimisation

First Fostering emphasises that discrimination is unacceptable conduct which may lead to disciplinary action under the Company's Disciplinary Procedure.

Any complaints of discrimination will be pursued through the Company's Grievance Procedure.

