

Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy

1. Statement of principles

In Peeples we value the diversity of backgrounds and cultures within our community. We respect the variety of ways in which parents and carers support children's learning. Peeples aims to promote equality in the provision of our services and as an employer, and to develop practices which remove barriers to participation and promote social inclusion. We will collect and manage relevant information to enable us to do so in line with the aims of the charity, in accordance with privacy and any other relevant legislation.

We recognise that groups and individuals within society face direct and indirect discrimination, which limit choices and options. We are committed to challenging discrimination and stereotyping (often about gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, class, religion and age) in all aspects of our work. Peeples aims to be an equal opportunities employer, offering a supportive working environment where staff respect each other.

2. Aims

Peeples aims to:

- avoid and challenge discrimination in a constructive way in all aspects of our work. This will include associative discrimination, perceptible discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- promote equality in the provision of our services and in our employment practices
- develop practices and promote initiatives which remove barriers to participation and actively support equality and social inclusion
- make training and qualification activities accessible to all learners by supporting external body guidance and working with learners
- ensure that our employment practices do not discriminate against employees or potential employees on any of the above grounds except where this can be objectively justified by the needs of the job, on the grounds of:
 - age
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage and civil partnership
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - race
 - religion or belief
 - sex
 - sexual orientation

To promote equality of opportunity, Peeples managers will ensure that:

- A clear structure exists within which the implementation of the above aims can be discussed and reviewed
- All staff are aware of and committed to upholding the equal opportunities and diversity policy
- Relevant information and updates on equality and diversity working practices are disseminated throughout the organisation on a regular basis

3. Equality and Diversity Strategies

3.1 Human Resources management

Our objectives are:

- a diverse workforce which reflects the community in which we work
- an objective and fair selection process which does not discriminate directly or indirectly against disadvantaged/minority groups
- staff who gain job satisfaction and are highly motivated leading to high performance and staff retention
- application of equal opportunities in our dealings with all people who do work for People whether as employees, secondees, casual workers, volunteers or self-employed consultants
- a positive image for People with all its client groups as an equal opportunities employer

The strategies we will employ include:

- clear guidelines for staff recruitment - with special attention to the content of person specifications and where posts are advertised, e.g. using a range of community venues and minority group networks
- clear guidance to job applicants on recruitment procedures
- a supportive, clear structure for voluntary workers
- pro-rata entitlement to all forms of leave for part-time staff
- open access to information for all staff – e.g. minutes, newsletters, information about training, employment policies, induction procedures
- provision of “reasonable adjustments” to enable people with disabilities to be employed by People wherever such adjustments are considered “reasonable”
- clear management structure/supervision
- opportunities for all staff to develop the skills and knowledge needed in their jobs
- opportunities to express interest in new areas of work which provide relevant development opportunities for staff

3.2 Resources

Resources will be designed and selected so that that they:

- reflect positively a range of cultures, lifestyles and abilities as a part of everyday life
- portray positive age and gender roles
- provide for the special needs of individual children e.g. hearing impaired, partially sighted
- provide for needs of families whose first language is not English
- provide for the needs of individual children in particular circumstances e.g. books dealing with death, parental materials, separation.
- are as accessible as possible to participating parents e.g. in different languages and a range of formats.

3.3 Partnership with Parents, Carers, Families

We work in partnership with parents, carers and families to ensure that information is communicated clearly both verbally and in written format.

We operate an open door policy and we welcome and value the views and opinions of our parents, carers and families.

3.4 People programme delivery

In delivering programmes to families, we will seek to ensure that:

- group and setting session plans are flexible enough to take into account a wide range of learning styles
- session materials (books, multimedia resources etc) are appropriate and responsive to the range of backgrounds, abilities and cultures of families attending
- the curriculum is available, through home visits, to families unable or unwilling to attend group sessions.
- parents/carers are treated as partners in the project

As part of our visits and recruitment programme, we will:

- Engage bi-lingual support workers where appropriate
- Offer information about Peeple in different languages
- Ensure home visits are sensitive to variety of cultures and backgrounds
- Be proactive in researching and consulting parents and community groups about the needs of different groups within the community
- Equip practitioners with information and training about different languages, cultural values etc.
- liaise with user/support groups for people with disabilities
- liaise with providers of services e.g. pre-school teacher counsellors, health visitors, hearing impaired service
- display the Equal Opportunities Policy Statement in all Peeple premises.

3.5 Peep Pre-school and Little Peeple Nursery

When delivering services at the Peep Pre-school and Little Peeple Nursery, we will ensure that:

- All members of the community are eligible to apply for Pre-school and Nursery places
- We reflect the diversity of members of our society in our publicity and promotional material.
- We provide information in clear, concise language, whether in verbal or written form.
- We ensure all parents are made aware of our equal opportunities policy through having access to our parent policy folder.
- We work to inclusive principles and practice, ensuring that all Pre-school and Nursery users are treated with respect. We work with the individual needs of families and the local community.
- We help children and families learn about a range of food and cultural approaches to mealtimes and eating and to respect the differences among them.
- As a staff team we will challenge and take action against any discriminatory behaviour by staff members, parents or other organisations using the centre. Any remarks or behaviour that is regarded as unacceptable in or around the premises will be dealt with in line with Peeple policy and procedures
- We encourage parents/carers to take part in the life of the Pre-school and Nursery and to contribute fully, through news letters, volunteering, membership of the advisory group.
- For families who speak languages in addition to English, we will develop a means to ensure their full inclusion.

3.6 Equality and diversity training

Central to Peeple is the recognition of parents'/carers' role in their children's learning. Staff training encourages:

- unconditional acceptance for all families attending groups/ participating in Peeple activities
- awareness of celebrations, religious festivals, variety of cultural attitudes, social mores
- informed decisions about resources to use in group sessions e.g. content of books which may be culturally offensive
- asking families (rather than making assumptions) when uncertain of aspects of their practice
- constructive ways of challenging behaviour or language which discriminates against groups or individuals
- a sensitive and respectful approach to families during home visits.

General awareness-raising for staff on equal opportunities issues takes place within a variety of forms:

- Induction
- existing Peeple Practitioner training/meeting schedules
- one-off training events
- management/working area meetings
- Whole staff development sessions

Equal Opportunities in Employment Policy

Policy statement

People is a people company. Our people matter.

People is committed to being an equal opportunity employer and to ensuring that all employees, job applicants, customers/clients and other people with whom we deal are treated fairly and are not subjected to unfair or unlawful discrimination. This policy is not contractual, but aims to set out the way in which People aims to manage equal opportunity. This policy applies to all employees and workers.

Our policy is designed to ensure that current and potential workers are offered the same opportunities regardless of race, age, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marital status/civil partnership, disability, pregnancy/maternity, gender reassignment, civil partnership or any other characteristic unrelated to the performance of the job. We seek to ensure that no one suffers, either directly or indirectly, as a result of discrimination. This extends beyond the individual's own characteristics, to cover discrimination by association and by perception.

We recognise that an effective equal opportunity policy will help all staff to develop to their full potential, which is clearly in the best interests of both our staff and our business. We aim to ensure that we not only observe the relevant legislation but also do whatever is necessary to provide genuine equality of opportunity.

We expect everyone who works for us to be treated and to treat others with respect. Our aim is to provide a working environment free from harassment, intimidation, or discrimination in any form that may affect the dignity of the individual.

We further recognise the benefits of employing individuals from a range of backgrounds as this creates a workforce where creativity and valuing difference in others thrives. Relevant data will be collected to enable this. Personal details provided by employees or job applicants for the purposes of equal opportunity monitoring are confidential, will be kept apart from all other records and not used for any other purpose.

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis and may be changed from time to time. Any queries or comments about this policy should be addressed to the Finance and HR Manager.

Definition of discrimination

Discrimination may be direct or indirect, and can take different forms, for example:

- treating any individual less favourably than others on grounds of a protected characteristic (sex, race, marital status/civil partnership, religion or belief, sexual orientation, disability, age, pregnancy/maternity or gender reassignment)
- expecting a person, solely on the grounds stated above, to comply with requirements that are different to the requirements for others, for any reason whatsoever
- imposing on an individual, requirements that are in effect more onerous than they are on others. This would include applying a condition (which is not warranted by the requirements of the position) which makes it more difficult for members of a particular group to comply than others not of that group
- victimisation, i.e. treating a person less favourably because he or she has brought previous complaints including previous legal proceedings brought against the employer or the perpetrator, or the giving of evidence at a disciplinary or grievance hearing or at tribunal, or making complaints about the perpetrator or the employer or their alleged discriminatory practices.
- harassment, i.e. unwanted conduct which has the purpose, intentionally or unintentionally, of violating dignity, or which creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the individual
- discrimination by association, i.e. someone is discriminated against because he/she associates with someone who possesses a protected characteristic
- discrimination by perception, i.e. discrimination on the grounds that the person is perceived as belonging to a particular group, e.g. sexual orientation, religion or belief, irrespective of whether or not this is correct
- any other act or omission of an act, which has the effect of disadvantaging one person against another, purely on the above grounds.

On all occasions where those in control of employees are required to make judgments between them, for example disciplinary matters, selection for training, promotion, pay increases, awards etc. it is essential that merit, experience, skills and temperament are considered as objectively as possible.

Responsibility for this policy

The overall responsibility for implementing and monitoring the effectiveness of this policy rests with the senior management of Peeples.

Managers and supervisors have a crucial role to play in promoting equality of opportunity in their own areas of responsibility.

All staff, irrespective of their job or seniority, will be given guidance and instruction, through our induction and other training, as to their responsibility and role in promoting equality of opportunity and not discriminating unfairly or harassing colleagues or job applicants, nor encouraging others to do so or tolerating such behaviour. Disciplinary action, including dismissal, may be taken against any employee found guilty of unfair discrimination or harassment.

Recruitment and selection

We aim, through written instruction, appropriate training and supervision, to ensure that all staff who are responsible for recruitment and selection are familiar with this policy and apply it in conjunction with our recruitment policy.

Selection will be conducted on an objective basis and will focus on the applicants' suitability for the job and their ability to fulfil the job requirements. Our interest is in the skills, abilities, qualifications, aptitude and the potential of individuals to do their jobs.

Person specifications will be reviewed to ensure that criteria are not applied which are discriminatory, either directly or indirectly, and that they do not impose any condition or requirement which cannot be justified by the demands of the post. Questions asked of candidates will relate to information that will help assess their ability to do the job. Questions about marriage plans or family intentions or any other issues which may give rise to suspicions of unlawful discrimination should not be asked. Selection tests will be specifically related to the job and measure an individual's actual, or inherent, ability to do or train for the job.

Job adverts should encourage applications from all types of candidates and should not be stereotyped.

All adverts will include a statement regarding equal opportunities: "Peeples is an equal opportunities employer and values diversity". Reference to this policy will also be made on job and person descriptions. When advertising a position which has traditionally been done by one sex, adverts should specify they are open to both sexes.

Training and development

Peeples recognises that equal opportunity responsibilities do not end at selection, and is committed to ensure that wherever possible all staff receive the widest possible range of development opportunities for advancement.

All employees will be encouraged to discuss their career prospects and training needs with their manager. Opportunities for career progression (including promotion and transfer to different teams and roles) and training will be communicated and made available to all staff on a fair and equal basis.

The provision of training will be reviewed to ensure that provisions are made where necessary to enable part-time workers, shift or remote workers or those returning to work following a break to benefit from training.

No age limits apply for entry to training or development schemes which are open to all employees

Terms and conditions of employment

We will ensure that all of our policies including compensation, benefits and any other relevant issues associated with terms and conditions of employment, are formulated and applied without regard to race, age, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marital status/civil partnership, disability, pregnancy/maternity, gender reassignment or any other characteristic unrelated to the performance of the job.

These will be reviewed regularly to ensure there is no discrimination. Length of service as a qualifying criterion for benefits will not exceed five years unless clearly justifiable.

Grievances, disputes and disciplinary procedure

Staff who believe they have been discriminated against and have not been able to resolve this informally are advised to use our appropriate internal procedures. An employee who brings a complaint of discrimination must not be less favourably treated.

Harassment or bullying will not be tolerated, and any individual employee who feels that he/she has been subjected to harassment or bullying should refer to our bullying and harassment policy. Equally, any employee who witnesses incidents of harassment or bullying should report this to his/her manager or an appropriate senior member of staff.

When dealing with general disciplinary matters, care is to be taken that employees or workers who have, are perceived to have, or are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic are not dismissed or disciplined for performance or behaviour which could be overlooked or condoned in other employees or workers.

Positive action

We also recognise that passive policies will not reverse the discrimination experienced by many groups of people. To this end, if certain groups are under-represented within our business we will actively seek to encourage applications from those groups.

Any measures taken to encourage applications should not be construed as positive discrimination. The decision as to which applicant is offered a post will be based entirely on the merit of the individual.

Communication of this policy

All job applicants, employees and workers will be made aware of this policy and a copy will be included alongside the Employee Handbook, given to all employees on joining us. Customers/clients will also be made aware of this policy via our web site. In addition, staff will be reminded of the policy through such means as our web site, advertisements, job descriptions (which will refer to this), application forms, posters and other media.

Personnel policies and procedures

Our personnel policies and procedures will be reviewed regularly to improve, amend or adapt current practices to promote equality of opportunity within our business.