

AGENDA ITEM 9i
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The Highland & Western Isles
Valuation Joint Board

Equal Opportunities Policy

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Introduction

The Joint Board is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity. It is intended that no job applicant or employee shall receive less favourable treatment because of sex, marital or family status, age, ethnic origin, disability, race, colour, nationality, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or any other non-job related factor.

Aims

The aim of this policy is to ensure equality of opportunity and non-discriminatory employment practices. This will support an environment where the talents and skills of employees are utilised to their full potential.

Principles

Elected members, managers, employees and trade unions are committed to working in partnership to ensure equality of opportunity at every level and stage of employment.

No partner will induce, or attempt to induce, colleagues, managers or Trade Union officials to practice discrimination.

All partners will ensure that the principles of equal opportunity and non-discrimination are extended to all dealings with the public.

All employees should be aware of the policy's content, its implementation and their responsibility in ensuring its effectiveness. This will be achieved through induction, awareness raising, training and direct communication.

All recruitment exercises will focus on the selection of the most suitable person for the job. Person specifications will only include those factors which are necessary and justifiable as objective criteria for the satisfactory performance of the job.

All training delivered will be consistent with this policy and use non-discriminatory language. It will provide specific guidance to employees involved in key areas of people management including recruitment and selection, grievance and disciplinary matters and employee development.

The Board will provide training and development to seek to eliminate actual or potential inequality in the opportunities available for staff to develop skills relevant to their roles.

No assumptions will be made that members of a particular group are unable to undertake career development opportunities.

All partners must be aware that conduct and behaviour of a nature that contravenes equal opportunities legislation that they find personally offensive will not be tolerated. Individuals taking action in good faith under the Equality Act 2010 will not receive less favourable treatment than other employees.

Where allegations of discrimination or harassment are found to have substance, disciplinary action may be taken against the member of staff who has acted in a discriminatory manner.

The Board is committed to meeting its employment monitoring duties set out by the Equality Act 2010.

Genuine Occupational Requirement

In very limited circumstances it will be necessary and lawful for the Board to treat people differently where there is a Genuine Occupational Requirement (GOR) that an employee must be of a particular sex, race, disability, religion or belief or sexual orientation.

Positive Action

Positive action, as allowed by legislation, will be used as appropriate to offset past discrimination, and overcome inequality which may persist. Action will be designed to remove barriers to equality of access to employment, promotion, training and personal development.

Guidance

Guidance, information and tools will be developed and maintained in partnership through the Board. In relation to equal opportunities this guidance will:

- Provide managers with advice on the successful implementation of the Equal Opportunities Policy
- Emphasise that decisions made about individuals by managers should be objective and focus on the requirements of the job and unique aptitudes and abilities
- Provide an overview and awareness of the relevant legislation in terms of the Public Sector Duty to promote equality and each of the Protected Characteristics
- Provide clear information on the various categories of discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Provide examples of appropriate positive action
- Provide guidance on the application of Genuine Occupational Requirements

Legislation

The development and application of this policy is guided by:

- Equalities Act 2010
- Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/162)

Monitoring

The application of this policy will be monitored through the Board.

Data on the protected characteristics will be collected on job applicants and employees. Regular reports will be prepared on the composition of the workforce and the recruitment, retention, promotion, reward and development of employees.

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