

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY



1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 United Welsh is committed to upholding the principles of equality and diversity in employment and in the provision of its services. Underlying this commitment is a fundamental belief in the right of all employees, tenants, Board members and other customers to be treated with dignity and respect.
- 1.2 Some relevant key words in our Values Word Cloud are: 'respect', 'supportive' and 'caring'.
- 1.3 Whilst recognising that particular groups or characteristics are protected in law, we strive to ensure that our employment practices and service provision are inclusive across all groups.
- 1.4 This approach is consistent with the Well-being Goal in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act of 'A more equal Wales' described as being 'a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic background and circumstances)'.
- 1.5 Our approach includes participating in schemes to promote awareness of and reduce stigma attached to certain characteristics. Examples of these include Time for Change and the White Ribbon campaign.

2.0 Legal Framework

- 2.1 The Equality Act 2010 provides a cross-cutting legislative framework to protect the rights of individuals, advance equality of opportunity for all and to deliver a simple, modern and accessible framework of discrimination law which protects individuals from unfair treatment and promotes a fair and more equal society.
- 2.2 In line with our duties and as laid out in the Equality Act, we will actively work to eliminate all forms of discrimination, as defined below.

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Direct discrimination: when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic

Indirect discrimination: when you have a condition, rule, policy or even a practice in an organisation that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic

Associative discrimination: direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.

Perceptive discrimination: direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic.

2.3 The protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010 are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy & maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

2.4 We will operate this policy in line with relevant statutory requirements and appropriate codes of practice, whilst being mindful of the current rapidly changing environment.

3.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 United Welsh will take all reasonable steps to ensure that individuals, or groups of individuals (not necessarily limited to those defined by the protected characteristics listed below), are not excluded, disadvantaged nor unlawfully discriminated against in any manner as outlined in the Equality Act 2010. In particular we take hate crime seriously as described in the Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Crime policy.

3.2 United Welsh will not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment, victimisation or bullying, and deems any such

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behaviour to be potential gross misconduct and will take appropriate action under its relevant procedures.

- 3.3 All employees have a duty to co-operate with us to ensure that this policy is effective. Each employee is required fully to commit to this ethos, and strive towards participating in creating a working environment free from unlawful discrimination and harassment or bullying.
- 3.4 All employees are responsible for their individual behaviour, at all times striving to be aware of their fellow employee's sensibilities and treating them and customers with respect.
- 3.5 If any member of staff observes behaviours which are inconsistent with this policy, they should report them using the appropriate procedure. If they are not comfortable with this approach for any reason, they may use the arrangements described in the Confidential Reporting procedure.
- 3.6 United Welsh will make all staff aware of the provisions of this policy and provide training and guidance in its implementation.
- 3.7 We will provide our Board members with the appropriate Equality and Diversity training to ensure that they:
- are made aware of anti-discrimination legislation
 - are able to identify areas of inequality in the provision of our services and employment
 - can promote Equality and Diversity
- 3.8 The Board will nominate one of its members to act as Equality and Diversity Champion. The current Champion is Alan Meudell.
- 3.9 The Equality and Diversity agenda within United Welsh is defined and led by the Executive Team.
- 3.10 Through consultation and engagement United Welsh has established an Equality and Diversity Best Practice Group. The Group's role is to inform, advise, guide, monitor and report so that United Welsh is meeting its obligations. The Group's Terms of Reference are included as Appendix 1.

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4.0 APPLICATION OF THE POLICY TO EMPLOYMENT

4.1 Our aim is to protect employees from any form of discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation in the work place and/or whilst undertaking duties on behalf of United Welsh.

4.2 In line with our third-party duties we will not accept any form of discrimination toward any employee by our customers, tenants or partners and should this occur we will investigate promptly and take any necessary action to rectify the situation. However, if there is no immediate improvement we will consider disassociating ourselves from the third-party relationship.

4.3 In accordance with relevant legislation United Welsh may consider applying Genuine Occupational Qualifications where appropriate.

4.4 United Welsh undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any person being the subject of a Disclosure on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed. Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar an applicant from working with us. This will depend on the nature and the circumstances and the background of the offence.

5.0 APPLICATION OF THE POLICY TO PROVISION OF SERVICES

5.1 Our commitment to Equality and Diversity as a service provider is to:

- Build and deliver services, facilities and resources that are accessible, relevant and of use to all people in the communities in which we work.
- Better understand who our customers are so that we are able to provide appropriate services which are accessible.
- Be mindful that people are different and that we need to recognise this in tailoring when and how we help and advise our customers.
- Provide clear, meaningful and accessible information in a way that meets the diverse needs of our communities.
- Ensure that our products and services are inclusive for all.
- Work with partners in consulting with all sections of the community on services, needs and provision.

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- Monitor service provision to ensure that it does not discriminate or exclude individuals or people from different groups.
- Consult with different individuals and communities to ensure that the services which are provided are responsive and reflect the diversity of need.

6.0 APPLICATION TO PROCUREMENT

6.1 We will apply the principles of fairness, openness and equality in procurement and strive to ensure that people we choose to work with share the equality values of United Welsh.

7.0 REPRESENTATION

7.1 In the composition of our workforce and Board, we aim to include a diversity of life experience and background so as to reflect the communities within which we work.

8.0 IMPACT OF OUR WORK ON DIFFERENT GROUPS

8.1 In making decisions, designing policies and procedures and general behaviour at work all employees will take account of the effect or impact on different groups of people of that decision, policy, procedure or behaviour.

8.2 In particular formal decisions by the Board or Executive Team will always have consideration of the impact of equality and diversity as part of the information presented and discussed.

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Equality and Diversity Best Practice Group

Purpose

The group will focus on developing policy across the organisation:

- embedding best practice,
- reviewing recruitment & selection practices,
- defining mandatory training requirements,
- up-skilling of employees in respect of Equality and Diversity,
- embedding of appropriate behaviours.

The Best Practice Group is not the 'owner' of the Equality and Diversity agenda, this is defined and led by the Executive Team. The Group's role is to inform, advise, guide, monitor and report so that United Welsh is meeting its obligations.

Terms of Reference

The Group will:

- Define the United Welsh policy for Board approval
- Disseminate best practice
- Review legislation, keeping policies and staff updated with changes
- Shape our activity on the Equality & Diversity agenda
- Source information to highlight best practice to shape our action planning
- Maintain links to key organisations e.g. Tai Pawb
- Communicate and inform – keeping Equality & Diversity “alive” for United Welsh
- Be responsible for the management and dissemination of information through tools such as the intranet, share-point & tweets etc
- Feed identified needs into HR for training & induction purposes

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DEFINED TERMS

Protected Characteristics

Throughout the guidance you will see reference to 'protected characteristics'. This page gives you more information on each of the nine protected characteristics.

Age

A person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18 - 30 year olds).

Disability

A person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Gender Reassignment

The process of transitioning from one gender to another.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Marriage is a union between a man and a woman or between a same-sex couple.

Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act).

Pregnancy and Maternity

Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

Race

Refers to the protected characteristic of Race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

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Religion and Belief

Religion refers to any religion including a lack of religion. Belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief and includes a lack of belief. Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

Sex

A man or a woman.

Sexual Orientation

Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

Third Party Duties

Workers are sometimes harassed by third parties, such as customers or clients. Employers should where possible protect their employees from such harassment and take reasonable steps to deal with any situations like this.

The Equality Act makes employers potentially liable for third party harassment in circumstances where:

- harassment has occurred on two previous occasions. This means that the same employee has been subjected to harassment twice, not necessarily from the same third party;
- the employer is aware that it has happened; or
- the employer has not taken reasonable steps to prevent it from happening again.

Genuine Occupational Qualification

There are certain very limited situations in which it is possible to specify the sex, racial background, religion or sexual orientation of the person that you wish to carry out a role.

Disclosure

A Standard Disclosure will contain details of spent and unspent convictions and any other matters such as cautions. It will also state if there are no such items on record.

An employer may only lawfully request a potential or existing employee to provide a Standard Disclosure in support of employment or work in relation to certain types of occupations and professions.

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