

Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities Policy

STIKLINGS C.I.C. (Stiklings) will work to remove any barriers, real or perceived, which might deter people from participating in a project, either as a member of staff, participant or volunteer. All our projects aim to provide an inclusive and safe environment that values diversity and maintains a working, learning and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all of its staff, participants and volunteers are respected in order to assist them to reach their full potential.

STIKLINGS C.I.C. is committed to promoting equality of opportunity, good race relations and avoiding racial discrimination. Before, during and after involvement or employment with any project, no prospective or actual participant, staff or volunteer, will be treated less favourably than any other on one or more of the protected characteristics. The only exception to this is when such treatment is within the law and determined by lawful requirements.

UK Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities Legislation

The 2010 Equality Act and the related Public Sector Equality Duty bring together previous legislation into a single act, which provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all. See <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/legislation/equality-act-2010/what-equality-act>. It identifies nine "protected characteristics" that can form the basis of discrimination:

- ★ Age
- ★ Disability
- ★ Religion or belief
- ★ Pregnancy and maternity
- ★ Sexual orientation
- ★ Race
- ★ Gender
- ★ Gender reassignment
- ★ Marriage or civil partnership status

The three aims of the Act are to:

- ★ Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- ★ Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- ★ Foster good relations (tackling prejudice and promoting understanding) between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Equality Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality (the second aim) entails:

- ★ Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- ★ Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

- ★ Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

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This policy applies to staff/volunteers and anyone hired to teach/work/perform for STIKLINGS C.I.C. and its participants engaging in activities.

- ★ Staff related activities include but aren't limited to: job advertisements, recruitment and selection, training and development, promotion opportunities, conditions of service, pay and benefits, facilities, health and safety, conduct at work, grievance and disciplinary procedures and termination of employment.
- ★ Participant related activities include but aren't limited to: recruitment, support, learning and volunteering provision, bursary provision and other awards within the project's control, participant support, childcare and other facilities, health and safety, personal conduct and participants complaints and disciplinary procedures.

STIKLINGS C.I.C. Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities Policy Objectives

Equality of opportunity is central to the aims of Stiklings, We will:

- ★ Ensure that equality of access to resources and opportunities underpins all policies, procedures and practises and complies with current legislation.
- ★ Ensure all staff/volunteers are fully informed of policies and procedures.
- ★ Work towards a workforce and participant group that reflects our local communities.
- ★ Work together with partners for the promotion of equality of opportunity.
- ★ Monitor and evaluate this policy including race equality and keep it under regular review.

Forms of Discrimination, Harassment and Victimisation

<https://www.gov.uk/discrimination-your-rights/how-you-can-be-discriminated-against>

Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally. The Law protects staff from unlawful discrimination during their work on grounds of gender, sexual orientation, marital or civil partner status, gender reassignment, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, disability or age. These elements are known as protected characteristics.

- ★ **Direct discrimination:** occurs where someone is put at a disadvantage for a reason related to one or more of the protected characteristics. For example, rejecting an applicant on the grounds of their race because it is considered they would not "fit in" could be direct discrimination. This also includes discrimination on the grounds of perception and association.
- ★ **Indirect discrimination:** occurs where an individual is subject to an unjustified provision, criterion or practice that puts them at a disadvantage because of, for instance, their gender or race. A height requirement would be likely to eliminate proportionately more women than men. If this criterion cannot be objectively justified for a reason unconnected with gender, it would be indirectly discriminatory on the grounds of gender.
- ★ **Harassment:** conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

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- ★ **Victimisation:** treating someone unfairly because they've complained about discrimination or harassment.

Recruitment and Exceptions

Stiklings will ensure that no job applicant receives less favourable treatment because any of the protected characteristics have been disregarded. Applicants should not be asked about their health or disability before a job offer is made. There are limited exceptions that should only be used with the HR and Policies Manager approval. E.g. positive action may be needed to recruit disabled persons or it may be necessary to establish that an applicant:

- ★ Can perform an intrinsic part of the job (subject to any reasonable adjustments).
- ★ Needs any reasonable adjustments to be able to attend an interview or assessment.

Recruitment procedures and job selection criteria are reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are treated based on their relevant merits and abilities and criteria relates to the effective performance of the job and are therefore justified on non-discriminatory grounds.

We will ensure that awareness of vacancies reaches a wide labour market including groups under-represented in our projects. When appropriate, lawful exemptions may be used to recruit suitably qualified people to cater for the special needs of particular groups.

Staff Training and Promotion

The purpose of staff training is to ensure that the principles underlying this policy inform decision-making and processes throughout the project. We will:

- ★ Regularly monitor the composition and movement of staff/volunteers at different grades to ensure equal opportunity at all levels. Promotion will be achieved solely based on merit.
- ★ Identify training needs through regular staff/volunteer appraisals and give all staff/volunteers access to training materials to enable them to progress.
- ★ Regularly review conditions, benefits and facilities to ensure that they are accessible to all staff/volunteers. Unnecessary barriers must be removed and appropriate facilities and conditions provided to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or under-represented groups.

Implementation of the Policy and Complaints

Implementation of the policy is overseen by the Directors who fully endorse this policy.

The Directors have overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework prohibiting discrimination. Day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy, ensuring its maintenance and reviewing has been delegated to Georgina Disney.

Directors working on projects have a specific responsibility to lead by example and to ensure that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote Stiklings aims and objectives. All members of staff/volunteers must adhere to this policy and familiarise themselves with the policy and act in accordance with its aims and objectives.

If you are involved in management of staff or if you have any questions about the content or application of this policy, you should contact Georgina Disney to request

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further information. Complaints about the Project's Equal Opportunities Statement or Policy should be raised with any of the Directors who will raise it at quarterly meetings. If it is not resolved at this stage it should be escalated in writing.

Specific Responsibilities

It is unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, gender, marital status or disability (a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day to day activities). However, responsibilities go beyond mere compliance with legislation.

STIKLINGS C.I.C. has an obligation to promote equality of opportunity and equity of treatment in all aspects of our work and throughout the project. This means understanding, recognising and challenging discrimination in all its forms. The specific responsibilities of members of staff/volunteers and project partners and participants are as follows:

Stiklings Director (Jamie Moore)

- ★ Oversee the policy and action plan and monitor its implementation.
- ★ Resolve issues.
- ★ Promote good practice in equal opportunities across the project and with partners.
- ★ To ensure that good practice is embedded in all aspects of our activity.

Stiklings Director (Georgina Disney)

- ★ Review the policies and manage action plans.
- ★ Responsible for strategic planning and ensuring that project planning addresses equal opportunities issues.
- ★ Ensure that facilities and resources are available.
- ★ Review policy in line with current legislation.
- ★ Ensure the policy is developed, reviewed and implemented as part of the annual due diligence process.

Stiklings Director (Julia Cormack-Cooke)

- ★ To take equal responsibility for the development, implementation and review of this policy.

Stiklings Director (Peter Duncan)

- ★ Raise Directors awareness of equal opportunities' issues and procedures to adopt.
- ★ Review with Directors practice, performance and training needs.
- ★ Ensure that Directors undertake training as required for the post.

All staff/volunteers

- ★ Comply with legislation and this policy.
- ★ Promote equality of opportunity in their dealings with participants, stakeholders, partners, contractors and other staff/volunteers.
- ★ Maintain awareness of and implement best practice.
- ★ Contribute to the identification and dissemination of good practice.
- ★ Participate in any training that is identified as mandatory for their post.

Participants

- ★ Not to discriminate against or harass any member of staff/volunteer, in relation to their race, gender or disability.
- ★ Treat other participants with respect, with no discrimination or harassment.
- ★ Report incidents or discrimination or harassment that occur in relation to services that Stiklings delivers.

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