

## **Global Challenge (GC) Equality and Diversity Policy**

### **1. Our Commitment**

Our Equality and Diversity Policy sets out our commitment to creating an inclusive environment for everyone who volunteers for, and accesses GC. We are committed to encouraging equality and diversity amongst our UK volunteers and trustees and eliminating unlawful discrimination.

Whilst we are fully committed to compliance with all relevant equality legislation, (including the UK Equality Act 2010, Codes of Practice and best practice guidance), this policy builds on the statutory position to ensure effective policies and practice that promote equality and inclusion.

### **2. Principles**

- We have a culture in which everyone is treated with respect, valued and rewarded for what they contribute, with zero tolerance of unfair discrimination at every level.
- We will ensure that all of the people who volunteer with us, as well as those who apply to volunteer with us, are treated fairly and are not discriminated against on any grounds, including those protected by the UK Equality Act 2010.
- We will always take any discrimination/sexual harassment complaints seriously, respond sensitively and quickly and, if proven, ensure that the action taken is prompt and effective.
- Serious offences such as discrimination on protected grounds – serious offences including harassment, bullying, or victimisation - will be treated as gross misconduct and may lead to disciplinary action including dismissal as a trustee or from volunteering for GC, without notice.

### **3. How we will do this**

We are committed to providing equality of opportunity for all, irrespective of:

- age
- caring responsibilities
- disability
- economic hardship / poverty
- gender reassignment/gender identity
- marriage or civil partnership status
- pregnancy or maternity
- race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

We will pro-actively tackle discrimination or disadvantage, and aim to ensure that no individual or group is directly or indirectly discriminated against for any reason regarding employment, volunteering or accessing our services in the UK.

We will:

- ensure that all UK volunteers and trustees are aware of their duty to treat one another with dignity at all times, and to never discriminate against or harass anyone associated with GC in any capacity
- take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, volunteers, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities.

We all have a personal responsibility to:

- read and understand this policy and act in a manner that is consistent with our values and behaviours at all times

#### **4. Who this policy is applicable to**

This policy is applicable to all UK volunteers and trustees.

#### **5. Definitions**

Equality can be described as breaking down barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity and access for all groups both in employment, and to goods and services; the basis of which is supported and protected by legislation. Equality is about valuing a person 'as an equal' and treating people according to their needs and characteristics to achieve an equal or fair outcome – it's not necessarily about treating everyone the same.

Diversity is defined as celebrating differences and valuing everyone. Each person is an individual with visible and non-visible differences and by respecting this everyone can feel valued for their contributions which is beneficial not only for the individual but for the wider organisation.

Direct discrimination occurs where a person is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics set out above. For example, rejecting an applicant on the grounds of their race because they would not "fit in" would be direct discrimination.

Indirect discrimination occurs where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice is applied equally to all groups of people but puts a particular group sharing a protected characteristic at a disadvantage when compared with other people. For example, a requirement to work full time may put women at a disadvantage because they generally have more childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement would need to be objectively justified.

Discrimination by association is a type of direct discrimination. It occurs where a person is treated less favourably because they associate with someone who possesses a protected characteristic.

Harassment can be described as unwanted behaviour, including for example, emails, remarks or gestures, which are intended or have the effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person. This can be related to gender, race, religion or other "protected characteristics" and it includes, but is not limited to, sexual harassment. Sexual harassment may be both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in the case of allegations of sexual assault. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

Perception discrimination is also a form of direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic. If you discriminate against people because you think they are transgender or LGBTQ, for example, then they will be protected even if they do not have these protected characteristics.

Victimisation broadly refers to derogatory treatment directed towards someone who has made or is believed to have made or supported a colleague's complaint under the UK Equality Act. It can also include

situations where a complaint hasn't yet been made but someone is victimised or treated unfairly because it's suspected they might make one.

## **6. Breaches of this policy**

Whilst the aim of the policy is prevention, if you believe you have been the subject of discrimination, harassment or victimisation, you are encouraged to report it.

Any such proven breaches of policy will be regarded as a breach of our code of conduct which may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal from your volunteering without notice.

## **7. Exceptions to this policy**

Discrimination by or against volunteers and trustees is generally prohibited unless there is a specific legal exemption.

There are certain circumstances when organisations might be within their legal rights to treat an individual less favourably and where these instances will not be counted as discrimination.

Policy Agreed & Adopted: July 2021

Reviewed by GC Trustees: January 2024

Minuted by Trustees 11 January (Point 4.2)

**To be reviewed biennially thereafter.**