

Equal Opportunities Policy
Agreed by EXTERN Board: 22nd April 2021

Review History

Version	Date Reviewed	Brief Summary of Change	Owner's Name
1	July 06	Approved	HR
2	June 2017	Approved	Chris Carson
3	April 2021		Deirdre Congdon
4	April 2023	Next Review	

Author:	Deirdre Congdon (Senior HR Business Partner)
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Approved by:	Jonathan Carroll (Director of People and Organisational Development)
Effective from: Reviewed by EXTERN SMT/Board	22 nd April 2021
For attention of and action by:	Members of the Strategic Leadership Team, Management Committee/Group; Managers and leaders; staff and volunteers;
Review date:	April 2023

1.0 Introduction

Established in 1978, Extern is the leading social justice charity across Ireland, changing lives every day through our work. As a charity we believe that everyone should be able to find stability to change their lives and contribute to the community in which they live.

The organisation is committed to creating an environment that promotes equality. We are committed to treating all employees, service users and contacts equally, irrespective of the legislative protected grounds.

The Director of People and Organisational Development is the designated authority for the competent application of the Equal Opportunities policy, both internally and externally, and for the auditing and arbitration of matters arising from the policy.

This policy has been written in line with the relevant Equality Legislation in the respective jurisdictions. . This policy should be read in conjunction with all other policies and procedures.

2.0 Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to set out Extern's commitment to creating a supportive environment in which all employees can flourish and reach their full potential, regardless of differences, experience or education. Harnessing the wide range of perspectives that diversity brings promotes innovation and will help Extern make more creative and competitive decisions.

The organisation is committed to implementing policies and practices which provide equality of opportunity and ensure that no job applicant, employee, service user or organisation associate receives less favourable treatment on any of the nine grounds. This policy commits to ensuring all other policies and practices reflect our promise to treating people fairly, promoting an integrated way of working and respecting the dignity of everyone at all times.

3.0 Aims of the Policy

The organisation believes that embracing equality and diversity in the workplace benefits not just the organisation but also individual employees, departments and the service user. All our employees bring their own background, work style, distinct capabilities, experience and characteristics to their work. We recognise that our talented and diverse workforce reflects the diversity of our work and we want to utilise the widest range of skills, knowledge and experience in our business whilst complying with legislation.

4.0 General Provisions

4.1 Extern prides itself on being an equal opportunities employer. This means that we make every effort in good faith to fully and rigorously comply with equality laws within Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland. We will promote a harmonious working environment in which all our employees will be treated with dignity and respect.

4.2 It is Extern's policy to take proactive steps to prevent discrimination and / or harassment against any person or individual on the grounds of:

ROI

- Gender
- Civil status
- Family status
- Sexual orientation
- Religious belief
- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Membership of the traveller community

NI

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Political opinion

4.3 These principles apply to a wide range of employment and related areas, including; recruitment, promotion, equal pay, working conditions, training and/or experience, dismissal and harassment including sexual harassment.

4.4 Extern will strive to prevent both direct and indirect discrimination.

- Direct discrimination: where an individual is treated less favourably than another based on a specific characteristic.
- Indirect discrimination; when a requirement or condition, which cannot be justified on grounds other than any of the above characteristics, is applied equally but has the effect in practice of disadvantaging a considerably higher proportion of persons in one or other of the above groups.

4.5 Extern will endeavour to ensure the workplace and employment policies and practices do not unreasonably exclude or disadvantage job applicants and employees with disabilities. To this end, Extern will comply with its duty to make the reasonable adjustments required by such persons.

5.0 Employees' Rights

- 5.1 Employees have the right to work in a positive and harmonious environment which is free from discrimination and harassment and to complain about such behaviour should it occur. Complaints of this nature will be dealt with through the Grievance policy.
- 5.2 Extern will act to protect any individual who raises a complaint, as well as those who give evidence or information, from victimisation in relation to such complaints. Victimisation is also deemed discrimination as set out in this policy.
- 5.3 Internal procedures do not replace the rights of individuals to seek external advice from the Equality Commission (NI) or the Workplace Relations Commission (ROI) or to pursue complaints of unlawful discrimination to an Industrial Tribunal or the Fair Employment Tribunal.

6.0 Employees' Responsibilities

- 6.1 All employees must comply with this policy, by way of treating each other with dignity and respect.
- 6.2 Employees must not commit any acts of unlawful discrimination and / or harassment against any person whom they encounter through their work. Such behaviour will not be tolerated.
- 6.3 All our employees should discourage discrimination and harassment by making it clear that they find such behaviour unacceptable and by supporting co-workers who suffer such treatment.
- 6.4 Employees have a responsibility to notify a member of management when they have witnessed any act of discrimination and / or harassment.
- 6.5 Employees are expected to engage in any process initiated by the organisation in which they have been named as a witness to any alleged act of discrimination and / or harassment.
- 6.6 Employees must ensure they are familiar with the policy and promote the contents of same.

7.0 Extern's Responsibilities

- 7.1 All employees will be made aware of the existence of the Equal Opportunities policy upon commencement. A copy of the most up to date policy will be sent to employees as part of their terms and conditions and a copy of the policy will be freely available on the staff intranet and from the HR department. This policy will also form part of the standard induction procedure.
- 7.2 Managers will be provided with appropriate training to support the successful implementation of this policy.
- 7.3 Extern will set a good example by treating all employees with fairness, dignity and respect under the terms of this policy and Extern's Code of Conduct.
- 7.4 All complaints pertaining to the terms of this policy will be dealt with promptly, seriously and confidentially, in accordance with the Grievance policy and/or the Complaints Policy.
- 7.5 Following a thorough investigation, behaviour found to be discrimination and / or harassment will be deemed gross misconduct and will be managed through the Disciplinary policy. This may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.
- 7.6 Reference Joint Declaration of Protection – Appendix A.

8.0 Equality Monitoring (Northern Ireland only)

- 8.1 Under Article 55 of the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 in Northern Ireland, Extern, as a Registered Employer with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, is obliged to monitor the community background and sex of all job applicants and the current workforce, as well as other protected characteristics including disability, race, age, civil status, caring responsibilities and sexual orientation.
- 8.2 Extern is also obliged to review the composition of the workforce in Northern Ireland and its employment policies and practices every three years and, where appropriate, consider taking affirmative action to promote fair participation.

9.0 Affirmative action

- 9.1 Where appropriate lawful positive action measures will be developed, for example special encouragement in advertisements or special training, etc.

- 9.2 Affirmative action measures are appropriate in certain circumstances, for example; where there is an under-representation of a particular group or characteristic in specific areas of work. In such instances, these proposals should be discussed and agreed with HR who may seek further advice from the relevant external equality bodies as appropriate.

10.0 Monitoring and Review

Extern's HR Department will monitor the implementation of this Policy.

This policy will be reviewed on a biennial basis, however will be updated in line with statutory requirements in the United Kingdom and Ireland or when changes to relevant legislation and/or codes of practice are introduced.

Appendix A - Joint Declaration of Protection

We, Extern, and the following recognised trade union(s) which represent our employees:

1. Declare that all of our employees have the right to be treated with dignity and respect and the right to work in a positive and harmonious environment that is free from unlawful discrimination or harassment on any of the following grounds:
 - Sex (this means man, woman or transgender)
 - Marital or civil partnership status
 - Racial group (including membership of the Traveller Community)
 - Age
 - Pregnancy or maternity status
 - Religious/community background or similar philosophical belief
 - Sexual orientation
 - Gender reassignment
 - Political opinion
 - Disability
 - Family status (this refers both to having or not having dependents as well as to parents of a person under 18 years or resident primary carer's or parents of a person with a disability)
2. Declare that we condemn all acts of unlawful discrimination and harassment and that we are committed to ensuring that any such acts that are carried out by one employee against another will be vigorously opposed by us both.
3. Declare that we will deem acts of unlawful discrimination or harassment to be acts of misconduct which may warrant dismissal.
4. Declare that we will take all reasonable steps to promote a positive and harmonious working environment in which all persons are treated with dignity and respect and in which no person is subjected to unlawful discrimination or harassment on any of the grounds listed above.
5. Declare that we will endeavour to ensure that our workplace and our employment policies and procedures do not unreasonably exclude or disadvantage those of our job applicants and employees who have disabilities. To this end, we will comply with the duty to make any reasonable adjustments required in relation to such parties.
6. Declare that we are committed to ensuring that no employees are victimised (i.e. discriminated against or harassed) in retaliation for having exercised their rights under the anti-discrimination laws, or for assisting other persons to exercise those rights.

7. Declare that its premises shall be a neutral work environment. It, therefore, prohibits the display of flags, emblems, posters, offensive material, graffiti or the circulation of any material or deliberate articulation of slogans or songs which are likely to give offence or cause apprehension to an individual or a particular group of employees.

Action

Extern commit to issuing this declaration to all staff upon commencement and will display the declaration in prominent positions within the company premises and on the Xnet intranet.

Review

Extern will keep the effectiveness of this declaration under constant review and will consult with the recognised trade union(s) and employees about any changes which may be required in the future.

Signed on behalf of

The Company by: _____

The Trade Union(s) by: _____

Date: _____