

The background of the document features a blurred image of several people's silhouettes in various colors (yellow, orange, blue, purple) against a light background. A large, dark blue rounded rectangle is overlaid on the right side of the page, containing the title and other text.

Equality and Diversity Policy

St James Clitheroe

April 2021

1. Our Commitment

Every person in our church community has been made in the image of God and is loved unconditionally by God.

Equality is simply about making sure that people are treated fairly and given equal access to opportunities and resources. Equality is not about treating everyone in the same way: it is about treating everyone fairly, with respect and recognises that people from different backgrounds may have needs that are met in different ways.

Everyone is equal and we treat each other with dignity and respect. In our church, each person in all their unique difference should be able to thrive, irrespective of physical appearance, gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic background, health, academic ability, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity.

Diversity is about valuing individual difference. Diversity challenges us to recognise and value all sorts of differences that exist when people work together in order to build stronger communities and harmonious environments for the benefit of all. Diversity is God's idea, and we want to celebrate it and cultivate it in our church.

We are committed to proactive equal opportunities, welcoming all members of our church family as individuals, according to their needs, with an awareness of our diverse society and appreciating the value of difference. We actively seek to challenge discrimination as it is wholly incompatible with the good news of Jesus.

St James Church Clitheroe is committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion among our workforce and our congregation, and eliminating unlawful discrimination. Because of the nature and responsibilities of many roles – both paid and volunteer - at the Church, there may be a genuine requirement for the jobholder to be a practising Christian. Such job requirements are reviewed regularly to ensure they remain valid.

This policy's purpose is to:

- Provide equality, fairness and respect for all in our employment, whether temporary, part-time or full time
- Not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- Oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities.

2. Legal framework

We welcome our duties under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion, sex and sexual orientation.

Equality legislation also identifies a number of types of discrimination that people need protection from:

- Direct discrimination occurs where a person is treated less favourably than other persons and where the only reason for the treatment is on one or more of the equality grounds.
- Indirect discrimination occurs where a provision, criterion or practice is applied equally to everyone but puts people from a particular background at a disadvantage compared to others; and which is not a reasonable and proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- Disability discrimination: One of the most notable features of the disability discrimination legislation is that in prescribed circumstances it imposes a duty on employers and service providers to make reasonable adjustments in order to remove or reduce disadvantages suffered by disabled people in those circumstances. The duty to make reasonable adjustments may require that policies, practices and procedures are modified or waived; or that certain physical features of premises are removed, altered or avoided; or that auxiliary aids or services are provided. A failure to comply with the duty, when it arises, is a form of disability discrimination.
- Victimisation: means treating someone less favourably than others because they have already made a complaint under the relevant legislation (eg. undertook proceedings or threatened to bring proceedings), have helped someone else to do so (eg. provided evidence in proceedings or acted as a witness), or alleged that a service provider or others have committed an unlawful act under the law.
- Harassment is unwanted conduct which is related to any of the equality grounds and which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or of creating an intimidating, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person. Many forms of behaviour can constitute harassment including physical assault, using derogatory language and visual or written material containing derogatory words or images.

We recognise that these duties reflect international human rights standards as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and the Human Rights Act 1998.

We also welcome our duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure our services and activities are accessible to all, including the removal, adaptation or alteration of physical features, if the physical features make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to participate. In addition, leaders have an obligation to think ahead and address any barriers that may impede disabled people from accessing a service.

3. Procedure for Volunteers, Employees and Employers

We commit to the following measures:

- Being an equal opportunity employer. Equal opportunity is about good employment practices and efficient use of our most valuable asset, our employees. Every employee has personal responsibility for the implementation of our policy. Any instant of doubt about the application of the policy, or any other questions, should be addressed to the Operations Manager.
- Encourage equality, diversity and inclusion in the church through real, authentic inclusion in decision making processes, with clear, effective communications and clear feedback loops.
- Create an environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff and volunteers are recognised and valued.
- All staff should understand they, as well as the PCC of St James Church, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, clergy and parishioners.
- Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, clergy, parishioners, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities.

Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under St James Church's grievance and disciplinary procedures, and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

Further, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. 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.

- Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
- Make decisions concerning both staff and volunteers based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
- Review employment practices and procedures when necessary, to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.
- Monitor the make-up of the workforce, the PCC and leadership of the church regarding information such as age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, and disability in encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality, diversity and inclusion policy.

Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality, diversity and inclusion policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

4. Complaints and Grievances

It will be ensured that:

- An employee or volunteer who reports another employee or volunteer for behaving in a discriminatory manner will be fully supported, assumed to be telling the truth, and encouraged to use the grievance procedure. Employees will be offered counselling, supervision and support.
- Breaches of the Equality and Diversity Policy, intentional or unintentional, are dealt with promptly and properly, fully investigated and accurately recorded and appropriate disciplinary or remedial action taken.
- When an employee has been disciplined for misconduct in respect of the Policy, a satisfactory change of conduct and attitude is sought and monitored by the line manager through formal supervision.

5. Training and Development

We commit to training employees and volunteers about their rights and responsibilities under the equality, diversity and inclusion policy. Responsibilities include staff and volunteers conducting themselves to help the church provide equal opportunities for all, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

Applications for training should be made to the Operations Manager for both staff and volunteers.

Training will not be used as a substitute for disciplinary action in incidents that contravene the Equal Opportunities Policy.

6. To foster good relations

In working within the community and offering services, activities and facilities to the community, the Church will

- Ensure that what we offer is accessible and provided fairly to people who seek our help
- Make sure that all service users are treated with dignity and respect, and that we recognise and value people's differences
- Make sure that complaints procedures are easy to use and that we respond to complaints efficiently and promptly.

In our own practice, we will

- Consider diversity and equality where relevant, including considering historical and systemic prejudice
- Strive to ensure the projected image of the church, including on our website and social media, reflects our diverse and inclusive nature
- Ensure that our language and attitude remains inclusive and welcoming.

Date of Last review:

Rector signed:

Date:

Warden signed: