



The Free Church, St Ives

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

Policy

The Free Church, St Ives is committed to encouraging equality, diversity, and inclusion amongst our workforce of staff and volunteers, and eliminating unlawful discrimination.

As part of the national United Reformed Church, the Free Church St Ives is committed to support the Equalities Policy published in <https://urc.org.uk/equal-opportunities.html>

The aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and those using our building, and for each employee and volunteer to feel respected and able to give their best.

The Free Church St Ives, in providing goods, services and facilities, is also committed against unlawful discrimination of customers or the public.

The policy's purpose is to:

- **Provide** equality, fairness, and respect for all in our employment, whether temporary, part-time, or full-time, and for all volunteers.
- **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, or gender.
- **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.

The Free Church St Ives commits to:

- **Encourage** equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace as they are good practice and support the church's ethos, as well as making business sense.
- **Create** a working 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.

This commitment includes training managers, all other employees and volunteer workers about their rights and responsibilities under the equality, diversity, and inclusion policy.

Responsibilities include staff and volunteers conducting themselves to help the Free Church provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination.

All staff and volunteers should understand that they, as well as their employer/manager, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment or volunteering, against fellow employees, volunteers, customers, suppliers and the public.

All staff and managers should 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 Free Church's work activities.

Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the church's grievance and/or 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.

Decisions concerning staff being based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).

Review employment practices and procedures where 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 regarding information such as age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, 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.

The equality, diversity and inclusion policy is fully supported by the trustees of the church who act in the role of senior management. It has been agreed with employee and volunteer representatives, managers and line managers who are in the group of trustees.

Details of the Free Church’s grievance and disciplinary procedures can be found in the Staff Handbook, a copy of which is given to each member of staff on the first day of employment. This includes with whom an employee should raise a grievance, which is their line manager in the first instance.

Use of the Free Church’s grievance and/or disciplinary procedures does not affect an employee’s right to make a claim to an employment tribunal within three months of the alleged discrimination.

The Elders as Trustees will review this policy, amending and updating it as required, and informing Church Meeting that this has been done.

	Name		Approval Date
Author	Adapted from ACAS model by Sally Runham		April 2021
	Elders as trustees		May 2021
Review Period:	3 years		
Date of Last Review:	May 2021	Date of Next Review:	May 2024