



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Equal Opportunities Policy
for South Eastern Baptist Association

July 2024

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Equal Opportunities Policy

1. Glossary of terms

The following terms used in SEBA policies and guidance have specific meanings and are defined here to avoid confusion:

- **The Association** – The South Eastern Baptist Association (SEBA);
- **Staff** – Employees and Ministers;
- **Employees** – people who are paid to work for the Association and are not Ministers;
- **Ministers** – ordained members of staff;
- **Volunteers** – are those people who carry out a specific role within the Association without being paid;
- **Colleagues** – Staff and volunteers (including trustees);
- **Members** – Baptist churches in the region in membership with the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB);
- **Workers** – The terms worker has a particular legal meaning and defined as ‘An employee (who works under a contract of employment) or one who has any other type of contract (written or unwritten) under which they are personally obliged to work or perform services’.

2. Who does this policy apply to?

This Policy applies to all colleagues and workers including Ministers, employed staff, volunteers and Trustees and contractors engaged by the Association.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and the Association may amend it at any time.

3. Equal Opportunities Statement

The Association is committed to promoting equal opportunities in employment in accordance with this statement. Our staff, colleagues and any job applicants will receive equal treatment regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation (Protected Characteristics) except where the Association is able to rely on any of the religion or belief occupational requirements explained and set out at paragraph 10 below.

4. About this policy

This policy sets out the Association's approach to equal opportunities and the avoidance of discrimination at work. It applies to all aspects of employment with us, including recruitment, pay and conditions, training, appraisals, promotion, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment.

The Operations Manager is responsible for this policy and any necessary training on equal opportunities.

This policy does not form part of any employee's or Minister's contract of employment or terms of appointment and the Association may amend it at any time.

5. Discrimination

You must not unlawfully discriminate against or harass other people including current and former employees, job applicants, members, suppliers and visitors. This applies in the workplace outside the workplace when dealing with members, visitors or other work-related contacts, and on work-related trips or events including social or Association events.

The following forms of discrimination are prohibited under this policy and are unlawful (subject to the Association relying on one of the religion and belief occupational requirements set out at paragraph 10):

Direct discrimination: treating someone less favourably because of a Protected Characteristic. For example, rejecting a job applicant because they are not a Christian or because they might be gay.

Indirect discrimination: a provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone but adversely affects people with a particular Protected Characteristic more than others, and is not justified. For example, requiring a job to be done full-time rather than part-time would adversely affect women because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement would be discriminatory unless it can be justified.

Harassment: this includes sexual harassment and other unwanted conduct related to a Protected Characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

Victimisation: retaliation against someone who has complained or has supported someone else's complaint about discrimination or harassment.

Disability discrimination: this includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability.

6. Recruitment and selection

Recruitment, promotion and other selection exercises such as redundancy selection will be conducted on the basis of merit, against objective criteria that avoid discrimination. Shortlisting will be done by more than one person if possible.

Vacancies will generally be advertised to a diverse section of the labour market. Our job advertisements will avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage particular groups from applying.

Job applicants will not be asked questions which might suggest an intention to discriminate on grounds of a Protected Characteristic. For example, applicants will not be asked whether they are pregnant or planning to have children.

Job applicants will not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made, except in the very limited circumstances allowed by law: for example, to check that the applicant could perform an intrinsic part of the job (taking account of any reasonable adjustments), or to see if any adjustments might be needed at interview because of a disability. Where necessary, job offers can be made conditional on a satisfactory medical check. Health or disability questions may be included in equal opportunities monitoring forms, which must not be used for selection or decision-making purposes.

7. Disabilities

If you are disabled or become disabled, we encourage you to tell us about your condition so that we can consider what reasonable adjustments or support may be appropriate.

8. Part-time and fixed-term work

Part-time and fixed-term members of staff will be treated the same as comparable full-time or permanent members of staff and enjoy no less favourable terms and conditions (on a pro-rata basis where appropriate), unless different treatment is justified.

9. Breaches of this policy

We take a strict approach to breaches of this policy, which will be dealt with in accordance with our Disciplinary Procedure. Serious cases of deliberate discrimination may amount to gross misconduct resulting in dismissal.

If you believe that you have suffered discrimination you can raise the matter through our Grievance Procedure. Complaints will be treated in confidence and investigated as appropriate.

You will not be victimised or retaliated against for complaining about discrimination. However, making a false allegation deliberately and in bad faith will be treated as misconduct and dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

10. Occupational requirements

The Association acknowledges that selected posts in the Association will require an occupational requirement for that member of staff to be a Christian and to accept and abide by the BUGB Declaration of Principle and the Association’s values. The Association will determine which posts have an occupational requirement to be a Christian on a case by case basis.

The Association will ensure that an assessment is carried out for each proposed post to consider whether there is an occupational requirement for the member of Staff to be a Christian in each case or alternatively, to sympathise with the BUGB Declaration of Principle and the Association’s values.

Whether or not a role is required to carry an occupational requirement will be determined by the Association giving consideration to the nature and/or context of the role and its duties. There will also be an assessment as to whether any identified Christian elements in the role could be carried out by other members of staff. The specific requirements of each post should then be detailed in the job description and person specification.

11. Commitment to implementing this policy

As an association, we are committed to implementing this policy well, and with due care for all those who are impacted or affected in any way by its terms.

Policy Owner	Operations Manager
Date Issued	09/07/2024

Version	Revisions	Date Approved
1.0	New standalone policy (previously part of the staff handbook)	08/07/2024