

# RNLI Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

## Policy Statement

The RNLI saves lives at sea without prejudice. We aspire to be an organisation where our people, too, are valued no matter who they are. We aim to be truly inclusive, benefit from diversity and appreciate everyone for their individual contribution.

Our aim is to promote an RNLI culture that is inclusive and values diversity and the benefits this brings to saving lives at sea. We can all help to achieve this through our day to day behaviour and treatment of others.

The RNLI recognises the benefit of developing an RNLI that includes the many diverse skills and backgrounds available to us and will strive to become an organisation that recognises, values and understands diversity and provides its people with genuine opportunities to improve and reach their full potential.

We want everybody to feel respected, to give their best and reach their potential. There is an expectation that we should all be champions of equality, diversity and inclusion because it is the right thing to do, treating all as you expect to be treated, in a fair and respectful manner. It is also important that we do this in order to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the organisation; we need to recruit and retain the best people, as employees and volunteers, and aim to be truly representative of all sections of society.

Our approach is supported by legislation, as we aim to extend the same equal and fair treatment to all of our employees, volunteers and those who come into contact with the RNLI. Any breaches of this policy are taken seriously by the organisation and we are committed to a zero tolerance approach.

Essentially, our approach is summed up by the following behavioural statement:

*At the RNLI we respect people's views, interests and uniqueness. We do not tolerate disrespectful behaviour towards each other, supporters or members of the public. This is underpinned by equality legislation and RNLI policy.*

## Scope

This policy applies to all those who are part of the RNLI as an employee, volunteer or are likely to access the organisation's premises or those who are affected by its work. This includes volunteers, permanent and temporary workers, agency workers and contractors, anyone who comes into contact with the RNLI including applicants for any roles and in certain circumstances those who no longer have involvement with the organisation.

## Principles

Inclusion will lead to greater diversity in the RNLI, which will naturally bring a variety of benefits to the organisation. Being inclusive means recognising and valuing everybody's

ability to support the RNLI in saving lives. Whilst legislation must be complied with, this policy is more about questioning our own behaviours and asking ourselves if our treatment of others is inclusive, fair and respectful. The RNLI is committed to promoting an inclusive and diverse culture in all its practices, policies and procedures. No one should receive less favourable treatment and we expect everyone to treat individuals equally and fairly regardless of whether they may have particular characteristics. (See Appendix 1) Selection for employment, promotion, training, volunteering or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. All our people will be helped and encouraged to develop to their full potential and their talents and resources will be used to maximise the efficiency of the organisation. This can only be achieved by striving to be fully inclusive.

### **Our commitment:**

- To create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of everyone are recognised and valued;
- To create an environment where everyone feels welcome and that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, discrimination, bullying or harassment will be tolerated;
- To ensure training, development and progression opportunities are available to all;
- To promote an inclusive culture and good management practice within that culture, through the development of codes of best practice, policies, and training;
- To regularly review all employment and volunteering practices and procedures to ensure that no roles, applicants, employees or volunteers are treated less favourably than others;
- To treat breaches of the policy seriously and to take appropriate action according to our policies.

Any employee or volunteer who feels that they have experienced direct or indirect discrimination and raises it will be fully supported. All breaches of the policy will be taken seriously and could lead to formal action being taken, which in some cases could lead to dismissal.

### **Equal Opportunities in Employment**

The RNLI is committed to equality of opportunity in employment and volunteering. We will take every possible step to avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment and volunteering including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline and selection for redundancy.

Our aim is that our employees and volunteers will be representative of all sections of society. Everyone should feel valued and able to achieve their full potential.

The RNLI aims to ensure it values the diversity of communities throughout the regions. The protected characteristics below will be reflected at all levels, in volunteers and employees.

### **Gender**

Women and men are fully and properly represented and rewarded for their contribution at all levels of the organisation through:

- challenging gender stereotypes;
- supporting employees in balancing their life at work and at home;
- working to remove barriers in the workplace.

## **Gender Identity**

Employees who plan to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone gender reassignment are legally protected against all forms of discrimination and harassment. The RNLI are committed to ensuring that everyone is treated with dignity and respect and this includes those who reject the traditional gender definitions of male and female and express their gender identities in non-traditional ways. The RNLI takes positive steps to support all transgender people, and ensures they are treated with dignity and respect.

## **Marital/Civil Partnership Status**

Employees and volunteers are treated fairly and equally in the workplace, irrespective of their marital/civil partnership or family status.

## **Ethnicity**

The ethnic and cultural diversity of our communities is represented at all levels of the organisation through:

- challenging racial/ethnic stereotypes;
- understanding, respecting and valuing racial/ethnic and cultural differences and perspectives;
- encouraging and enabling members of minority ethnic groups to volunteer or work for the RNLI at all levels.

## **Disability**

The abilities of disabled people are recognised and valued at all levels of the organisation through:

- focussing on what employees can do rather than what they cannot do;
- challenging stereotypes about disabled people and in particular, not making assumptions about an individual's ability;
- making appropriate reasonable adjustments in the workplace so that all employees can reach their full potential regardless of any disability;
- appropriate use of the Wellbeing, Caring and Disability Passport.

## **Age**

Age diversity within the workforce is promoted and valued through:

- challenging age stereotyping, recognising that new ideas and fresh approaches can come from anyone irrespective of their age;
- recognising the benefits of a mixed-age workforce;
- Challenging workplace barriers and restrictions where they can't be objectively justified.

## Religion or Belief

Employees are treated fairly in the workplace irrespective of their religious beliefs, faith or lack of belief. The RNLI and all our employees are expected to value and respect these differences and to recognise the individual freedom of belief and right to protection from intolerance and persecution of other individuals and groups.

## Sexual Orientation

People are treated fairly in the workplace irrespective of their sexual orientation through:

- respecting the rights of everyone irrespective of whether or not they are open about their sexual orientation;
- respecting different life choices even if they conflict with one's own religious or cultural beliefs;
- challenging negative stereotypical views;
- Celebrating and welcoming significant lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) events in the same way that similar events of importance to heterosexual people would be, for example civil partnerships.

## Pregnancy, Maternity and Paternity

People should be treated fairly in the workplace throughout their maternity or paternity period. Women should be supported appropriately through pregnancy. Women will not be discriminated against within the RNLI's employment policies and practices.

## Legal Requirements

In valuing inclusion, diversity and equality, the RNLI is committed to complying with current Equality legislation and associated codes of practice (see Appendix 1 for details)

## Definitions

### Protected characteristics

Protected characteristics refer to groups that are protected under the Equality Act. These are best described as certain attributes that people possess, which the law considers should be safeguarded. There are nine protected characteristics upon which discrimination is unlawful. (See Appendix 1)

### Positive Action

Positive action means the steps that an employer can take to encourage people from groups with different needs or with a past track record of disadvantage or low participation to apply for jobs.

An employer can use positive action where they reasonably think (on the basis of some evidence) that:

- people who share a protected characteristic suffer a disadvantage connected to that characteristic;
- people who share a protected characteristic have needs that are different from the needs of people who do not share it;

- participation in an activity by people who share a protected characteristic is disproportionately low.

## **Equality**

Equality is about fairness, it is not about treating everyone in the same way, but it recognises that their needs are met in different ways. It is based on the legal obligation to comply with anti-discrimination legislation. Equality protects people from being discriminated against on the grounds of group membership (gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religion, belief, gender identity, age). See Appendix 1.

## **Diversity**

Diversity is about valuing all visible and non-visible differences and recognising and accepting that harnessing these differences creates an environment where everyone feels valued. A diverse approach aims to recognise value and manage differences to enable all employees to contribute and realise their full potential.

## **Inclusion**

Inclusion involves taking action to remove barriers to participation. It also involves eliminating discrimination and promoting equality.

## **Responsibilities**

All employees, volunteers and trustees must adhere to this policy. The Executive Management Team and the Chair of the Board of Trustees are accountable for ensuring the policy is implemented.

## **Role of Line Managers (employees and volunteers)**

As a line manager, you have a responsibility to:

- set a positive example by ensuring that your actions and behaviours promote inclusion and diversity;
- ensure you treat all people fairly, with dignity and respect;
- stop inappropriate behaviour as soon as you become aware of it;
- be aware of the policy and attend training as required;
- act in accordance with the values of the RNLI;
- ensure that the standards within this policy are adhered to within your area of responsibility e.g. when recruiting new people;
- take responsibility for monitoring individual behaviour and taking immediate action where there is evidence of discrimination, harassment, bullying or any other unacceptable conduct;
- encourage and support all people to reach their full potential and remove any barriers you become aware of that may exist;
- ensure that all candidates for employment, promotion or volunteering roles will be short listed and assessed objectively against the stated criteria;
- ensure employees and volunteers are aware of and carry out their responsibilities under the law and this policy.

## Role of Employees

As an employee, you have a responsibility to:

- act in ways that respect and value the diversity of others;
- ensure you treat all people fairly, with dignity and respect;
- challenge and report any behaviour that could be interpreted as discriminatory;
- complete the mandatory EDI training;
- understand what is expected of you in terms of your performance, behaviour and conduct towards others;
- set a positive example at all times;
- listen to and respect others and discourage discriminatory speculations;
- act in accordance with the values of the RNLI.

## Role of Volunteers

As a volunteer, you are expected to:

- Behave in ways that demonstrate fair and equal treatment of others;
- Behave in ways that value diversity and promote inclusion;
- Listen to others and treat them with dignity and respect;
- Behave in accordance with the RNLI values, Volunteer Commitment and Volunteer Code of Conduct;
- Not bully, harass or discriminate unfairly against anyone when carrying out your role;
- Challenge any behaviour that could be interpreted as unfair discrimination;
- Attend relevant RNLI EDI training as requested by your volunteer manager.

## Breaches of Policy

All complaints of discrimination will be sensitively investigated and, if proven, will result in appropriate action for the perpetrator. Any employee or volunteers found to be in breach of this policy could be subject to disciplinary action.

Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against employees, volunteers or any people associated with or who come into contact with the RNLI will be dealt with under the organisation's disciplinary procedure for employees and the problem solving procedure for volunteers which can be found on Compass.

## Executive Team and Senior Management Group Responsibility:

As a member of the Executive Team or a Senior Manager, you have a responsibility to:

- Be leaders by example for equality, diversity and inclusion, ensuring that your actions and behaviours promote equality, diversity and inclusion;
- be visible sponsors for equality, diversity and inclusion;
- support others in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion;
- ensure you treat all people fairly, with dignity and respect;
- challenge any behaviour that could be interpreted as unfair discrimination;

- listen to and respect others and discourage any discriminatory speculations;
- attend appropriate training regarding EDI issues;
- fulfil your duty to ensure that the policy is implemented.

## **Role of Trustees**

As a Trustee, you have a responsibility to:

- act in ways that respect and value the diversity of others;
- attend appropriate training provided by the RNLI regarding EDI issues;
- challenge any behaviour that could be interpreted as unfair discrimination;
- listen to and respect others and discourage discriminatory speculations and behaviour.

## **Collective responsibility**

All our people have a responsibility to ensure that the terms and spirit of this policy are observed and to understand clearly that there is a moral duty not to discriminate against any individual, however they come into contact with the RNLI.

Any queries on the application or interpretation of policy must be discussed with the People Team prior to any action being taken.

The People Team has the responsibility of ensuring the maintenance, regular review and updating of this policy in accordance with changes in the law. The policy does not form part of an employee's terms and conditions and may be subject to change. Revisions, amendments or alterations to the policy can only be implemented following the approval of the People Team.

## **Associated Documents and Policies**

**Appendix 1** – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Legislation

**Appendix 2** – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Definitions

Please refer to associated policies on Compass: HR Policy Zone Data Protection Policy, Dignity at Work Policy, Disabled Persons Policy, Disciplinary Policy, Grievance Policy, Flexible Working Policy & Flexible Working Procedure, Maternity Policy, Adoption Policy, Public Interest Disclosure Policy, Recruitment Policy, Volunteer Zone, Volunteer Problem Solving Policy, Volunteer Code of Conduct.

**-ENDS-**