

GROUNDWORK FIVE COUNTIES EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

1. Key points for training and awareness

For entry in staff and volunteer handbooks:

Groundwork Five Counties is committed to ensuring that no person receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of the protected characteristics specified in the Equality Act 2010:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin)
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

This Equality and Diversity policy aims to create a culture that respects and values difference, promotes dignity and equality, and encourages individuals to develop and fulfil their potential.

It is the responsibility of employees and volunteers to:

- Co-operate with measures introduced to fulfil the aims of the policy, such as undertaking relevant training.
- Ensure that their actions and decisions are not discriminatory or contrary to the spirit or intent of this policy – for example, harassing or abusing others, or inducing others to discriminate.
- Make efforts to avoid unconscious bias across all our programmes and communications.
- Maintain a professional working environment; treating colleagues, participants and visitors with equal respect and fairness, taking care to avoid giving offence or causing embarrassment because of assumptions or preconceptions.
- Challenge any discriminatory or harassing behaviour and report the incident to their line manager.

If anyone covered by the policy feels they have been the subject of direct or indirect discrimination or harassment, they should refer to GWFC's *Grievance Procedure*.

2. Introduction

Groundwork Five Counties ("GWFC" or "the Trust") fully supports the principles of equality and managing diversity:

- GWFC's internal processes and practices ensure that employees, volunteers, board members, and users of our services are given equitable and fair treatment.
- Everybody is given equal opportunity to benefit from and contribute to GWFC's project delivery.
- GWFC expects its suppliers and subcontractors to demonstrate the same commitment to eliminating unlawful or unfair discrimination.

Groundwork Five Counties is committed to ensuring that no person receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of the protected characteristics specified in the Equality Act 2010:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin)
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

This Equality and Diversity policy aims to create a culture that respects and values difference, promotes dignity and equality, and encourages individuals to develop and fulfil their potential.

Groundwork Five Counties recognises and values the diversity within its operational areas, including the variety of traditions, cultures, and beliefs, and demonstrates this through its practices and policies.

Both the policy and the associated action will be implemented in accordance with the statutory requirements, see **Appendix I**.

3. Equality and Diversity in the Workplace

The main responsibility for ensuring equality of opportunity rests with the employer. However, individual employees at every level have a responsibility to demonstrate commitment to excellence in practice through the advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion, as stated in GWFC's Behaviours Framework (**Appendix II**).

Groundwork Five Counties believes that all employees and volunteers have the right to not be subject to any form of harassment. Operational policies and procedures will be regularly reviewed and developed to ensure that they are consistent with the spirit of this policy.

Groundwork Five Counties aims to maintain a fair working environment for all employees and volunteers, and will oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination through every stage of employment, including:

- pay and benefits.
- terms and conditions of employment

- dealing with grievances (see section 8) and discipline (see section 9)
- dismissal
- redundancy
- leave for parents
- requests for flexible working
- selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities

4. Equality and Diversity in Project Delivery

Groundwork Five Counties is committed to ensuring that nobody is denied access to the services it delivers on the grounds of protected characteristics. Where provision has been designed for a specific group – e.g., children – the principles of equality and inclusion will still apply to that group.

Groundwork Five Counties will continue to monitor and improve its services to ensure they are responsive to local need across the Trust's operational areas. It will consult with relevant local communities and ensure that services are targeted appropriately and effectively.

5. Equality and Diversity in the Trust's Supply Chain

The procurement process of Groundwork Five Counties seeks to ensure that no potential supplier or subcontractor will receive less favourable consideration on the grounds of protected characteristics.

Organisations which are engaged in the delivery of GWFC's provisions or supply GWFC with goods and services must have a commitment to the principles of equality and diversity.

Groundwork Five Counties expects its suppliers and sub-contractors to ensure that their staff are aware of the Equality and Diversity Policy and their own responsibilities for its implementation.

Employees of suppliers and sub-contractors that are likely to interact with GWFC's beneficiaries will be expected to exhibit behaviours which are compliant with the Equality and Diversity Policy. They will be expected to behave in a respectful, courteous, and non-discriminatory manner befitting GWFC's own Behaviours Framework (**Appendix II**).

6. Responsibilities

The Board

It is the responsibility of the Board to:

- Ensure that the Trust's Equality and Diversity policy is up-to-date, relevant to the work of the organisation, meaningful to the staff, compliant with current legislation, and fully integrated into all GWFC business, in both service delivery and in the treatment of employees and volunteers.

- Periodically review the organisation's Equality and Diversity, Recruitment, and Employment policies to ensure that they promote fairness and equality, and to ensure that they do not exclude any section of the community.
- Ensure that Board members are appropriately trained in managing equality and diversity.
- Advise, support, and monitor the Chief Executive in implementing the policy.

Chief Executive

It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive, supported by the Head of Operations, to:

- Ensure that this policy is implemented in full, and that the commitment from GWFC to equality and diversity is communicated to all employees and volunteers.
- Ensure that employees are familiarised with the policy during their induction with GWFC.
- Ensure that the Trust's Grievance procedure is implemented for any employee who feels they have been subject to discrimination.
- Ensure that the Trust's Disciplinary procedure is implemented for any employee guilty of discrimination.
- Ensure that all related policies and procedures (particularly Recruitment & Selection, and Training & Development) adhere to the principles of equality of opportunity.
- Ensure that all policies, procedures, and practices are consistent with legislative requirements and best practice in accommodating diversity within the workplace and the delivery of projects.
- Lead by example, developing and promoting an organisational culture that is supportive of the benefits of managing diversity, in accordance with the **Behaviours Framework (Appendix II)**.
- Ensure recruitment of staff and volunteers is completed in such a way as to be inclusive and encouraging to all.
- Review and update this policy document as necessary, considering and responding to changes in legislation, codes of practice, and personnel practices.
- Report data relating to diversity and equality to the Board on an annual basis.

Managers

It is the responsibility of managers to:

- Ensure knowledge of the principles of Equality and Diversity within their team, and promote a professional and positive working environment where employees are aware of the standard of behaviour that is expected of them.
- Ensure that policies and procedures relating to managing diversity are implemented and communicated to all employees, participants, and volunteers.
- Be directly responsible for the resolution of issues relating to harassment and discrimination in their work areas, in accordance with GWFC policies and procedures – including the Disciplinary policy where necessary.

Employees and Volunteers

It is the responsibility of employees and volunteers to:

- Co-operate with measures introduced to fulfil the aims of the policy, such as undertaking relevant training.
- Ensure that their actions and decisions are not discriminatory or contrary to the spirit or intent of this policy – for example, harassing or abusing others, or inducing others to discriminate.
- Make efforts to avoid unconscious bias across all our programmes and communications.
- Maintain a professional working environment; treating colleagues, participants and visitors with equal respect and fairness, taking care to avoid giving offence or causing embarrassment because of assumptions or preconceptions.
- Challenge any discriminatory or harassing behaviour and report the incident to their line manager.

7. Training, Development, and Communication

This Equality and Diversity policy must be reinforced through training and awareness-raising. This will ensure that all employees understand the objectives of this policy and possess a common understanding of the principles of equality and diversity, which will cultivate and maintain good working practices.

- Employees and volunteers will receive a copy of this policy during induction. They will be required to read the policy and sign a declaration of agreement. There will be opportunity for them to query anything that they do not understand.
- Equality and Diversity training will be part of the training and development programme for employees.
- Recruitment advertising will demonstrate that the Trust is committed to being an equal opportunity employer, both to potential applicants and the wider community.

8. Scope

This policy covers:

The Board of directors, employees, job applicants, consultants, volunteers, trainees.

It also outlines Groundwork Five Counties' expectation of its:

Partners, suppliers, contractors, and customers.

Employees are discouraged from working with any individual or organisation who does not uphold the principles of equality of opportunity, or who knowingly discriminates against others.

9. Grievance and Complaint

Groundwork Five Counties takes any allegation of discriminatory behaviour very seriously and will seek to address it as a matter of urgency.

If anyone covered by the policy feels they have been the subject of direct or indirect discrimination or harassment, they should refer to GWFC's *Grievance Procedure*, which documents the steps to be taken.

Members of the public, partners, suppliers, customers, or contractors who feel that they have been the subject of direct or indirect discrimination or harassment should in the first instance address any complaints to the Chief Executive, who shall seek to resolve the issue using GWFC's *Complaints Procedure*.

9. Disciplinary

Anyone covered by the policy that wilfully discriminates against or harasses another employee, fails to co-operate with measures designed to promote equal opportunity, or induces others to practice unlawful discrimination, will be subject to disciplinary action.

10. Monitoring and Review

All job applicants will be asked to complete a form stating their sex, ethnicity, and disabilities (if any). The Trust guarantees that this form will only be used for the purpose of monitoring the effectiveness of the Equality and Diversity policy.

The Equality and Diversity policy is not a static document. It is essential that it is monitored, reviewed, and modified as necessary. The Head of Operations will ensure the policy is reviewed periodically and advise on revisions to this policy document, responding to changes in legislation, codes of practice, and personnel practices. This advice will be incorporated into the policy subject to the approval of the Board of directors.

The Trust's related policies and procedures (particularly Recruitment & Selection, and Training & Development) will be regularly reviewed to ensure that they meet the requirements of the Equality and Diversity Policy.

Appendices

Appendix I

Legislation

Groundwork Five Counties Equality and Diversity Policy has been developed within the framework of existing UK legislation, including:

- Equality Act (2010)
- Employment Relations Act (1999)
- Employment Rights Act (1996)
- General Data Protection Regulation (2018)
- Human Rights Act (1998)
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974)

Codes of Practice

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has issued Codes of Practice which employers should adopt to ensure equal opportunities at work. The Codes do not have statutory force but codify well-defined operating practices for employers which – if not followed – may result in action through Employment Tribunals. In such cases, the Tribunal will take into account the extent to which an employer has followed the Codes of Practice.

Implications of the Legislation


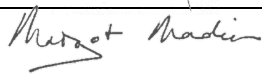
Both Groundwork Five Counties and individual employees may be liable for legal action if found to be in contravention of the legislation listed above. GWFC will take all reasonably practicable steps to prevent acts of discrimination.

Appendix II

Groundwork Five Counties' Behaviours Framework

1. Demonstrate high levels of professionalism at all times.
2. Demonstrate a commitment to excellence in practice through the advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
3. Be able to put the needs of our beneficiaries at the heart of everything we do – being considerate of them at all times.
4. Be on time and self-manage effectively and efficiently.
5. Be positive in outlook – have a growth mind set and willingness to learn new skills.
6. Have a passion to help people, place, and planet.
7. Have a default to work in the partnership with others for the collective good.
8. Be respectful of colleagues – communicating effectively, responding to requests, and letting people know your availability.
9. Be accountable and take responsibility.
10. Be adaptable and self-motivated.
11. Be aware of the bigger picture and how your role contributes.
12. Take pride in your own work and that of your team members – be willing to CELEBRATE and SHOUT ABOUT all of our good work.

Policy Approval

Name	Position	Signature	Date
Adam West	Head of Operations		23/01/2024
Margot Madin	Chair of the Board		23/01/2024

Version control

Version	Scheduled revision date	Actual revision date	Document name	Description of change
Previous				
Current	January 2024	January 2024	GWFC Equality and Diversity Policy 1.0	Initial rewrite
Next	January 2026			