



Equal Opportunity Policy

Excel Church aims to be an equal opportunities employer.

The Church is committed to being a successful, caring and welcoming place for all employees, volunteers, and those engaged in ministry or service. We want to create a supportive and inclusive environment where everyone can reach their full potential without prejudice and discrimination.

We are committed to fostering a culture of dignity, respect and understanding, where the diversity of people's backgrounds, experiences and circumstances is positively valued.

Purpose and Scope

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, contractors, and job applicants. It aims to achieve equality by removing any potential discrimination in how individuals are treated by others within the Church or on behalf of the Church, including but not limited to:

- people with disabilities
- people of different sexual orientations
- people who are transgender or non-binary
- people of different races or ethnic origins
- people on the grounds of their sex or gender
- those of faith and of no faith
- in relation to their age
- in relation to their social class or medical condition
- people who work part-time or on flexible contracts
- those who are married or in a civil partnership
- women who are pregnant, have recently given birth or are breastfeeding.

Discrimination, harassment, and victimisation are prohibited under this policy and under the Equality Act 2010, unless a lawful and proportionate occupational requirement applies.

Types of Discrimination

Direct discrimination

Occurs when someone is treated less favourably because of one (or more) protected characteristics. This can be intentional or unintentional. It can also occur by association (e.g. treating someone unfairly because of the protected characteristic of a person they are connected to) or by perception (e.g. assuming someone has a particular protected characteristic).

Example: An advert that specifies “men only” or “under 30s only.”

Indirect discrimination

Occurs when an apparently neutral provision, criterion, or practice (PCP) applies to everyone but puts people with a protected characteristic at a disadvantage.

A PCP may be justified if it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim (e.g., health and safety or safeguarding).

Victimisation

Occurs when someone is treated less favourably because they have made or supported a complaint about discrimination or harassment or have raised equality concerns in good faith.

Harassment

Harassment is unwanted behaviour related to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Legal Framework

The Equality Act 2010 applies to how employees, volunteers and representatives of the Church treat:

- fellow employees and volunteers
- job applicants
- visitors, suppliers and contractors
- members of the congregation and the public
- former employees or volunteers

The Church is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity and providing services that are free from unfair, unlawful or discriminatory practices.

Recruitment, Training and Development

The Church will ensure that recruitment, selection, promotion, and training are based solely on merit, skills, and abilities.

All employees and volunteers will have equal access to:

- apply for training and development opportunities. Training opportunities will sometimes be assigned based on current or future roles.
- fair performance management
- career and ministry progression

Reasonable adjustments will be made for applicants and employees with disabilities to ensure accessibility and fairness.

Occupational Requirements

Under the Equality Act 2010, certain exemptions allow faith-based organisations to apply Occupational Requirements (ORs) where it is essential for a person to have (or not have) a particular protected characteristic, such as religion or belief.

For Excel Church, this primarily concerns Christian religious requirements for particular roles.

If applying an OR, the Church must demonstrate that:

- it has an ethos based on the Christian faith that is clearly defined and reflected in its mission, policies, and practices;
- the role in question requires the post-holder to be a practising Christian to achieve the Church's legitimate aims; and
- the OR is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim and cannot reasonably be achieved through less discriminatory means.

All ORs must be approved by the Church Council and clearly stated in the job description.

Implementation and Responsibilities

The personal commitment of every employee and volunteer to this policy is essential to eliminate discrimination and promote equality throughout the Church.

All staff, volunteers, and leaders have a responsibility to:

- uphold and apply the principles of this policy;
- treat others with dignity and respect;
- challenge inappropriate behaviour; and
- report concerns to their line manager or the Church Council.

The Church Council has overall responsibility for:

- implementing, monitoring, and reviewing this policy;
- ensuring compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and Charity Commission guidance;
- reviewing recruitment, pay, and progression data to identify inequalities; and

- providing appropriate training to all staff and leaders.

Monitoring and Review

The Church will regularly monitor the effectiveness of this policy by reviewing:

- recruitment and promotion data
- feedback from staff and volunteers
- any reported incidents of discrimination or harassment

This policy will be reviewed annually every 3 years (or sooner if there are significant legal or organisational changes).

Comments, concerns, or suggestions can be directed to the Church Council.