

POLICY DOCUMENT

Policy	Equality & Diversity Policy
Policy Number	A8
Approved Date	September 2014
Review Date	September 2017
Reviewed By	Human Resources
Connecting Policies	(A1) Integrity at Work & Code of Conduct (A3) Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy (A10) Prevention of Bullying & Harassment Policy (A19) Recruitment & Selection Policy (A22) Criminal Records Checks (DBS) Policy (A23) Disability Policy

Policy Statement

GFS is committed to being an inclusive organisation that values diversity and puts people at the heart of what we do. Ours is an environment which seeks to actively challenge inequality and unfair treatment and encourage mutual respect.

GFS aims to ensure that the young women and everyone who uses our services, members, job applicants, employees, volunteers and contractors receive equal treatment within current equality legislation.

This commitment is reflected in all our policies and specifically in the areas of recruitment and selection, appraisal, promotion, training and personal development, and in terms of access to our services.

GFS strives to create an inclusive environment where difference is celebrated and everyone is valued and respected. The organisation is pledged to taking steps to identify and address unfair or unlawful discrimination or prejudice where these are identified in the organisations procedures or practices.

The organisation perceives bullying, harassment and victimisation of any individual contrary to our values and expectations, and will not be tolerated. Any allegations of such behaviour will be investigated, and in accordance with our procedures, disciplinary action will follow.

All staff and volunteers have a moral and legal responsibility to promote fair and equal treatment and to respect diversity, and in so doing, to maintain professional standards and uphold the organisations Values.

Aims and Context

- A1 GFS is committed to compliance with all relevant legislation and good practice, in particular the Equality Act 2010, which identifies nine protected characteristics. No individual will be discriminated against or receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, age, disability sex gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief or sexual orientation, or any other unjustifiable reason, (also see B3 below).

Positive Action provisions also permit the organisation to take proportionate action to address disadvantage and tackle under representation. Appendix 1 provides definitions under the Equality Act 2010 in respect of the Protected Characteristics, and Positive Action. Appendix 2 provides a list of the applicable legislation and regulations.

- A2 GFS endeavours to recruit, train and develop all staff and volunteers using fair and consistent criteria relating to the requirements of the work. All staff and volunteers are expected to share responsibility for implementing the Equal Opportunities policy within their work environment.
- A3 The organisation aims to effectively integrate and mainstream diversity and equality into our organisational strategies, and operational and management practices. This policy must be referred to when formulating or reviewing any of GFS' other policies. The policy should be read in conjunction with the identified connecting policies, and in particular should be read with and seen as the foundation for the Prevention of Bullying and Harassment Policy and the Disability Policy.
- A4 This policy is applicable to all those who use our services, their relatives or carers, job applicants, employees, volunteers, members, and contractors.
- A5 The organisation is aware of its obligations and legal responsibilities in respect of harassment by a third party i.e. external contractors/service providers, and will ensure that external contractors and/or service providers are made aware of both the organisations Disability, and Equality & Diversity Policies, and the requirement for them to behaviour in a non-discriminatory manner, and that failure to do so will lead to their contract/services being terminated.
- A6 The policy forms part of the Contract of Employment and Volunteer Agreement. In addition, the policy underpins and is a key

component of the induction process, and will be the subject of on-going training (see Section D).

- A6 On-going monitoring will be carried out in order to ensure the effectiveness of this policy (see Section G), and the policy will be reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees (see Section I).

B Equal Opportunities & Diversity in our Work

B1 GFS is committed to the promotion of diversity, equality of opportunity and inclusion in all fields of its activity, i.e. in both service provision and employment. Its purpose is to make all those who are connected to, come into contact with, or use our services, aware of the organisation's commitment. These values empower the organisation and give it confidence when working with girls and young women, regardless of the backgrounds they come from. Appendix 3 offers a definition of these terms.

B2 GFS' work includes community projects, voluntary youth work and Head Office.

B3 GFS endeavours to provide equal opportunities for staff, volunteers and those who use our services alike by undertaking to ensure that no person or group of persons will be unlawfully discriminated against on the grounds of age, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or cultural origin, gender, religion or belief, marital status or civil partnership, sexual orientation, economic status, physical or mental disability, HIV status, their membership or non-membership of a trade union, their employment status (whether fixed term or part-time), their status as ex-offenders or their willingness to challenge bullying and/or harassment, leading to victimisation, or any other unjustifiable reason. This list is indicative but not exhaustive.

C Recruitment and Selection

C1 It is acknowledged that due to the nature of our services and the type of engagement and support that may be provided to some young women, where it can be evidenced as being appropriate under current legislation (the Equality Act 2010, GFS may restrict recruitment to vacancies to female only applicants, or applicants from other 'protected groups'. This requirement will be monitored and reviewed on an on-going basis. Furthermore, all appointments must satisfy the criteria set out in the GFS Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection policy and procedures.

C2 GFS will not impose restrictions or conditions under this policy that it is unable to justify.

C3 GFS has a Recruitment & Selection policy and procedure throughout which equality and diversity legislation and good

practice is reflected and adhered to (see GFS' Recruitment & Selection policy and procedure). The organisation will use objective, job related criteria, as outlined in the job description and person specifications when making decisions on recruitment, remuneration, training, promotion and termination of employment. The attendant processes and criteria will be subject to on-going review, and where possible, both potential and actual discriminatory practices, and any barriers to equality of opportunity will be identified, and action taken to address it. ,

- C4 Equality and diversity monitoring forms are used to ensure that GFS' recruitment of employees and volunteers is compatible with this policy and external requirements. For paid employees, these are completed at the point of application and appointment and are sent to Human Resources for recording purposes. For Project volunteers, these forms are completed at the point of registration and sent to Head Office for recording. For Branch volunteers, these forms are completed at the point of registration and kept by Branch Leaders for recording. This process will be reviewed regularly.

D Training

- D1 GFS has an on-going commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion training and information for all staff and volunteers. The organisation will work actively to raise awareness of equal opportunity, diversity and inclusion matters within all its branches and projects.
- D2 All Line Managers/Branch Leaders responsible for training and development of staff and volunteers should ensure that all opportunities for learning and development are allocated objectively, fairly and without prejudice. This includes applications for both in-house and external events, secondments, residencies and sponsored study.
- D3 GFS' community projects adhere to national legislation and local regulations. Staff are expected to attend relevant events such as local authority or partner updating sessions when offered, and to be active in ensuring that their equal opportunities knowledge is current and valid, by requesting additional training when necessary.
- D4 Managers and Branch Leaders will ensure that staff/volunteer induction includes the Equality and Diversity Policy. Staff/volunteers may be required to undertake further training where necessary. All staff/volunteers must be taken through this policy as a part of their induction.

- D4 GFS undertakes to provide access to current literature and information on equality, diversity and inclusion to all staff and service users as necessary.
- D5 GFS will deliver training on equality and diversity and inclusion through its series of regular meetings and conferences.
- D6 All staff, volunteers, service users, etc. will have the opportunity to update their knowledge and understanding of equal opportunities issues on a regular basis, and at least annually.

E Discrimination Harassment and Victimisation

- E1 GFS endeavours to promote equality and diversity and eliminate discrimination either direct or indirect or by way of victimisation, harassment or bullying.

E2 Definitions:

E2.1 Bullying

There is no legal definition of bullying, however, bullying may be defined as; "behaviour by an individual or group repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally".

GFS views bullying as; offensive, abusive, intimidating or insulting behaviour, which through the abuse of power, makes the recipient feel threatened, humiliated or vulnerable.

E2.2 Harassment

The Equality Act 2010 defines harassment as unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. GFS extends the use of this definition to include behaviour un-related to the protected characteristics e.g. harassment due to socio-economic status, parental status or any criteria that cannot be shown to be justified.

Included is Harassment by a Third Party i.e. the organisation is liable for harassment of staff by people we do not employ e.g. external contractors/service providers.

E2.3 Victimisation

Under the Equality Act 2010 this is when a person is subjected to a detriment because they have previously made or supported a complaint under the Act, or because they are suspected of doing so. Protection against victimisation is not

provided if the complaint is made maliciously or those supporting it know it to be untrue or malicious.

The forms that victimisation can take are varied, but may include the following.

- Verbal - innuendo, offensive language, slander, jokes, threats,
- and/or bullying.
- Written - notes, possibly anonymous.
- Visual - pictures, gestures, graffiti.
- Physical - ranging from brushing against someone to serious assault,
- Isolation or non-co-operation at work, exclusion from social activities.
- Intrusion - following, spying, and pestering.
- Coercion - such as intimidation or pressure for sexual favours.

E2.4 Direct Discrimination

Direct discrimination is treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic. GFS extends this further as outlined in paragraph B3.

E2.5 Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination is applying an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice that results in people in a particular protected characteristic being disadvantaged compared with others who do not share that characteristic, and applying the practice, provision, or criterion cannot be objectively justified.

E2.6 Discrimination by Association

This is discrimination against an individual who does not have a protected characteristic because of their association with someone who has a protected characteristic.

E2.7 Discrimination by Perception

This is discrimination against an individual because of a view or opinion that they have a protected characteristic.

For further information refer to A10 Prevention of Bullying & Harassment and A23 Disability Policy.

E3 GFS is committed to positive action by encouraging people from underrepresented groups to apply for training,

employment or use of our services, where appropriate and as provided for by the Equality Act 2010.

F Redress

F1 GFS is committed to providing clear guidance to staff, volunteers and service users in combating prejudice. We are active in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion throughout our work. GFS will not tolerate anti social behaviour.

F2 In the event that any member of staff, volunteer, service user, etc. feels that he/she has not been given fair and equal treatment, GFS is committed to supporting that person in accordance with this policy and the organisation's relevant established procedures.

Staff and volunteers have recourse to the respective Grievance Procedures, and the Prevention of Bullying & Harassment Policy. The Anti-Social Behaviour Policy will be invoked in respect of service users. External people have recourse via the Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy, which is available at all Projects and Branch's and at Head Office.

F3 Any member of staff, volunteer, service user, etc. who, it is alleged, has acted in breach of this policy will, subject to investigation, be taken through GFS' established disciplinary procedures.

F4 In all such instances the first priority is for the appropriate manager to instigate communication with and between the parties involved. To this end, managers and any other relevant persons will be supported through disciplinary or grievance procedures by Human Resources at Head Office.

F5 In all cases the normal channels of line management and communication should be followed.

G Monitoring and Evaluation

G1 GFS embraces the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion. This commitment is informed by clearly defined legal obligations and the requirements of the external agencies which regulate, partner or fund any aspects of the organisation's work.

G2 GFS aims to bring greater transparency, access and meaning to all policies, and invites scrutiny to ensure that policies are working as they should.

G3 Dedicated monitoring forms have been devised for service users to be compatible with this policy and external

requirements. These are for the purpose of ensuring that GFS offers services to young women and girls that are representative of the communities within which we work. It is the responsibility of each manager to ensure that these are completed. This process will be reviewed regularly.

- G4 All information is dealt with in confidence, even when used for external monitoring and to improve GFS' services.
- G5 In addition, the Equality and Diversity Policy will be monitored and reviewed to:
 - Assess the employment situation with regard to particular groups
 - Identify areas where change or improvement to policies or procedures may be needed
 - Identify training needs
- G6 Human Resources will provide such statistics/management information as required to comply with the above. Reports will be presented to the Board as required.
- G7 We will implement the intensions of this policy via an annual action plan.

H Responsibilities

H1 Board of Trustees

The GFS Board of Trustees has primary legal and moral responsibility for ensuring that discrimination, harassment or victimisation does not occur and that the organisation fulfils its moral and legal responsibilities. It seeks to discharge this responsibility by supporting the creation of an environment that recognises and values difference and by providing a working environment that promotes dignity and respect for all. The Board is responsible for the management and review of this Policy.

H2 Senior Management Team

The Director has overall responsibility for the implementation, management, monitoring and reviewing of this policy.

Branch Leaders and Project Managers must act as role models and take ownership of equality, diversity and inclusion issues. All managers/Branch Leaders must work to ensure that the principles of fairness, equality and inclusion are understood by their teams/volunteers and discrimination, harassment or victimisation does not occur in the provision of services or selection, promotion and training of staff/volunteers.

H3 **Staff and Volunteers**

All staff and volunteers must share responsibility for implementing this policy and actively demonstrate and practice the principles within their work environment by the following procedures:

H3.1 Co-operating with measures introduced to promote and ensure equality and diversity in the organisation and prevent discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

H3.2 Not harassing, abusing or intimidating fellow employees/volunteers, potential employees/volunteers or users, and not tolerating such behaviour in others.

H3.3 Not making remarks or committing acts of a discriminatory nature, and not tolerating such behaviour in others;

H3.4 Carry out their duties in accordance with this policy.

H4 Agencies, consultants, contractors and suppliers providing goods and services to GFS are required to act within the law, and must be made aware of the policy and the requirement for them to abide by this policy.

H5 All service users, members, job applicants, employees, volunteers, contractors, and all visitors to sites, offices and meetings are subject to and protected by the provisions set out in this policy.

I Review

I1 This policy has been revised to ensure that we meet our obligations both legal and ethical. This is in accordance with an established practice of reviewing all GFS' policies regularly and ensuring their compatibility with current legislation and perceived best practice.

I2 Comments and suggestions are welcomed and should be addressed to The Director, Unit 30 Angel Gate, 326 City Road, London EC1V 2PT, and will be considered at the next review.

END