Hockley Heath Parish Council

HH
PC

Equality and Diversity Policy

For Hockley Heath Parish Council

Version: 3.0

Dated: May 2026

Document Information

Title	Equality and Diversity Policy
Owner	Hockley Heath Parish Council
Policy Number	6
Version Number	3.0
Author	Clerk to Hockley Heath Parish Council
Authorised by	Cllr McDougall
Date	21 May 2026

Document History

Revision No	Date	Author	Issue Reason
1.0	22.04.2021	Clerk	Approved
2.0	18.07.2024	Clerk	Reviewed and Approved
3.0	21.05.2026	Clerk	Reviewed and Approved

1. Our commitment
2. The law
3. Types of unlawful discrimination
4. Equal opportunities in employment
5. Dignity at work
6. People not employed by the council
7. Training
8. Your responsibilities
9. Grievances
10. Monitoring and review

1. Our commitment

Hockley Heath Parish Council is committed to providing equal opportunities in employment, to avoid unlawful discrimination and to create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of staff members are recognised and valued.

This policy is intended to assist Hockley Heath Parish Council to put this commitment into practice. Compliance with this policy should also ensure that employees do not commit unlawful acts of discrimination.

Striving to ensure that the work environment is free of harassment and bullying and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect is an important aspect of ensuring equal opportunities in employment. Training, development and progression opportunities will be available to all staff. Equality in the workplace is good management practice and makes sound business sense.

2. The law

It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality, caste and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership. These are known as "protected characteristics".

Discrimination after employment may also be unlawful, e.g. refusing to give a reference for a reason related to one of the protected characteristics.

Hockley Heath Parish Council will not discriminate against or harass a member of the public in the provision of services or goods. It is unlawful to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to using services caused by disability. The duty to make reasonable adjustments includes the removal, adaptation or alteration of physical features, if the physical features make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of services. In addition, service providers have an obligation to think ahead and address any barriers that may impede disabled people from accessing a service.

3. Types of unlawful discrimination

Direct discrimination is where a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic.

In limited circumstances, employers can directly discriminate against an individual for a reason related to any of the protected characteristics where there is an

occupational requirement. The occupational requirement must be crucial to the post and a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Indirect discrimination is where a provision, criterion or practice is applied that is discriminatory in relation to individuals who have a relevant protected characteristic such that it would be to the detriment of people who share that protected characteristic compared with people who do not, and it cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Harassment is where there is unwanted conduct, related to one of the protected characteristics (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity) that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity; or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It does not matter whether or not this effect was intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

Associative discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.

Perceptive discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that he/she has a particular protected characteristic when he/she does not, in fact, have that protected characteristic.

Third-party harassment occurs where an employee is harassed and the harassment is related to a protected characteristic, by third parties.

Victimisation occurs where an employee is subjected to a detriment, such as being denied a training opportunity or a promotion because he/she made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because he/she is suspected of doing so. However, an employee is not protected from victimisation if he/she acted maliciously or made or supported an untrue complaint.

Failure to make reasonable adjustments is where a physical feature or a provision, criterion or practice puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared with someone who does not have that protected characteristic and the employer has failed to make reasonable adjustments to enable the disabled person to overcome the disadvantage.

4. Equal opportunities in employment

Hockley Heath Parish Council will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline and selection for redundancy.

Recruitment

Person and job specifications will be limited to those requirements that are necessary for the effective performance of the job. Candidates for employment or promotion will be assessed objectively against the requirements for the job, taking account of any reasonable adjustments that may be required for candidates with a disability. Disability and personal or home commitments will not form the basis of employment decisions except where necessary.

Working practices

Hockley Heath Parish Council will consider any possible indirectly discriminatory effect of its standard working practices, including the number of hours to be worked, the times at which these are to be worked and the place at which work is to be done, when considering requests for variations to these standard working practices and will refuse such requests only if the council considers it has good reasons, unrelated to any protected characteristic, for doing so. The council will comply with its obligations in relation to statutory requests for contract variations. The council will also make reasonable adjustments to its standard working practices to overcome barriers caused by disability.

Equal opportunity policy statements

AGE - Hockley Heath Parish Council will:
• ensure that people of all ages are treated with respect and dignity
• ensure that people of working age are given equal access to our employment, training, development and promotion opportunities
• challenge discriminatory assumptions about younger and older people.

DISABILITY - Hockley Heath Parish Council will:
• provide any reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled people have access to our services and employment opportunities
• challenge discriminatory assumptions about disabled people
• seek to continue to improve access to information through adaptations and technology

RACE - Hockley Heath Parish Council will:
• challenge racism wherever it occurs
• respond swiftly and sensitively to racist incidents
• actively promote race equality

GENDER - Hockley Heath Parish Council will:
• challenge discriminatory assumptions about women and men
• take positive action to redress the negative effects of discrimination against women and men

• offer equal access for women and men to representation, services, employment, training and pay and encourage other organisations to do the same
• provide support to prevent discrimination against transsexual people who have or who are about to undergo gender reassignment

SEXUAL ORIENTATION - Hockley Heath Parish Council will:
• ensure that we take account of the needs of lesbians and gay men
• promote positive images of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals

RELIGION OR BELIEF - Hockley Heath Parish Council will:
• ensure that employees' religion or beliefs and related observances are respected and accommodated wherever possible
• respect people's beliefs where the expression of those beliefs does not impinge on the legitimate rights of others

PREGNANCY OR MATERNITY - Hockley Heath Parish Council will:
• ensure that people are treated with respect and dignity and that a positive image is promoted regardless of pregnancy or maternity
• challenge discriminatory assumptions about the pregnancy or maternity of our employees
• ensure that no individual is disadvantaged and that we take account of the needs of our employees' pregnancy or maternity

MARRIAGE OR CIVIL PARTNERSHIP - Hockley Heath Parish Council will:
• ensure that people are treated with respect and dignity and that a positive image is promoted regardless of marriage or civil partnership
• challenge discriminatory assumptions about the marriage or civil partnership of our employees
• ensure that no individual is disadvantaged and that we take account of the needs of our employees' marriage or civil partnership

EX-OFFENDERS - Hockley Heath Parish Council will:
• prevent discrimination against our employees regardless of their offending background (except where there is a known risk to children or vulnerable adults)

EQUAL PAY - Hockley Heath Parish Council will:
• ensure that all employees, male or female, have the right to the same contractual pay and benefits for carrying out the same work, work rated as equivalent work or work of equal value

Equal opportunities monitoring

Hockley Heath Parish Council will monitor the ethnicity, gender and age composition of the existing workforce and of applicants for jobs (including promotion), and the number of people with disabilities within these groups and will consider and take any appropriate action to address any problems that may be identified as a result of the monitoring process.

Hockley Heath Parish Council treats personal data collected for reviewing equality and diversity in accordance with the data protection policy. Information about how data is used and the basis for processing is provided in the council's privacy notices.

5. Dignity at work

Hockley Heath Parish Council has a separate dignity at work policy concerning issues of bullying and harassment on any ground, and how complaints of this type will be dealt with.

6. People not employed by the council

Hockley Heath Parish Council will not discriminate unlawfully against those using or seeking to use the services provided by the council. We aim to provide services to which all clients are entitled regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, offending past, caring responsibilities, or social class. We will make sure that our services are delivered equitably and meet the diverse needs of our service users and clients by assessing and meeting the diverse needs of our clients.

You should report any bullying or harassment by suppliers, visitors or others to Hockley Heath Parish Council who will take appropriate action.

7. Training

Hockley Heath Parish Council will raise awareness of equal opportunities to those likely to be involved in recruitment or other decision making where equal opportunities issues are likely to arise and provide relevant training if required.

Hockley Heath Parish Council will raise awareness of all staff engaged to work at the council to help them understand their rights and responsibilities under the dignity at work policy and what they can do to help create a working environment free of bullying and harassment. The council will provide additional training to managers to enable them to deal more effectively with complaints of bullying and harassment.

8. Your responsibilities

Every employee is required to assist Hockley Heath Parish Council to meet its commitment to provide equal opportunities in employment and avoid unlawful discrimination. Employees can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, Hockley Heath Parish Council for any act of unlawful discrimination. Employees who commit serious acts of harassment may be guilty of a criminal offence.

Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against employees or customers are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under the council's disciplinary procedure. Discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal without notice.

9. Grievances

If you consider that you may have been unlawfully discriminated against, you should use the council's grievance procedure to make a complaint. If your complaint involves bullying or harassment, the grievance procedure is modified as set out in the dignity at work policy.

Hockley Heath Parish Council will take any complaint seriously and will seek to resolve any grievance that it upholds. You will not be penalised for raising a grievance, even if your grievance is not upheld, unless your complaint is both untrue and made in bad faith.

10. Monitoring and review

This policy will be monitored periodically by the council to judge its effectiveness and will be updated in accordance with changes in the law. In particular, the council will monitor the ethnic and gender composition of the existing workforce and of applicants for jobs (including promotion), and the number of people with disabilities within these groups and will review its equal opportunities policy in accordance with the results shown by the monitoring. If changes are required, Hockley Heath Parish Council will implement them.

Information provided by job applicants and employees for monitoring purposes will be used only for these purposes and will be dealt with in accordance with relevant data protection legislation.