



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Purpose

To ensure CCS employees, volunteers, Trustees, Members of the Adoption Panel or others involved with the organisation comply with the relevant legislation in the United Kingdom and in particular do not commit any act of discrimination rendered unlawful by the Equality Act 2010 which incorporated all previous legislation.

Responsibility

Trustees and delegated to CEO and Managers of CCS.

Policy

CCS employees, volunteers, Trustees, Members of the Adoption Panel or others involved with the organisation comply with the relevant legislation in the UK and will not commit any act of discrimination rendered unlawful by the Equality Act 2010.

Equal Opportunities Principles

CCS is committed to the principle of equal opportunity, both in employment and in all interactions with others in the discharge of its role.

To this end CCS acknowledges the following basic rights for all involved with the organisation;

- To be treated with respect and dignity
- To be treated fairly with regard to all procedures, assessments and choices
- To receive encouragement to reach their full potential

CCS strives to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and promote good relations between people of different ages, racial groups, religions, genders and sexual orientation.

CCS aims to ensure that no job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment, or is discriminated against on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, national origin, ethnic origin, age, gender, gender reassignment, marital status, disability, HIV status, sexual orientation or religion. Similarly, no person shall be disadvantaged by another condition or requirement, which cannot be shown to be justifiable.

More information about the CCS recruitment process can be found in the CCS Recruitment Policy.

Responsibilities of the CEO and Employees

The CEO, employees, volunteers, Trustees, Members of Adoption Panel or others involved with CCS have a particular responsibility for the practical application of the CCS Equal Opportunities Policy when involved in the recruitment, selection, induction and promotion and training of employees and must ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their skills and abilities in relation to their job purpose, and given the relevant opportunities and access to training and development to enable them to continuously improve their performance.

CCS complies with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 including the general duty to have due regard to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations with people who share a protected characteristic and those that do not.

Responsibilities of Staff and Employees

CCS or those commissioned to provide services have a personal and legal responsibility for the practical application of the CCS Equal Opportunities Policy and the Bullying & Harassment Policy, which extends to the treatment of colleagues, managers, CEO, trustees, volunteers, and to service users, including all parties to adoption.

They have a duty to report any incidents of discrimination against any individual or group of individuals to the CEO and/or Chair of Trustees. Any employee found to be discriminating will be subject to disciplinary procedures or if the person is commissioned to provide a service, CCS will review the contract.

The CEO, employees, volunteers, Trustees, Members of Adoption Panel or others involved with CCS will be made aware of this policy and if they believe they have been unfairly discriminated against, they should refer the matter immediately to their Manager/CEO/Chair and the Harassment and Complaints Procedures may be involved.

Recruitment

It is against the law, and against CCS policy, to discriminate either directly or indirectly against a person on the grounds of race, gender or marital status, or offending background that does not create risk to children or vulnerable

adults, CCS will recruit and appoint staff and volunteers (and also consultants and other self-employed people who contract to work for the Society) without discrimination, but solely on a person's ability to undertake and perform the required tasks to the desired standard.

Disability is not a bar to employment, and every effort will be made to adapt buildings and to obtain any necessary special equipment for a disabled person who is employed.

All publicity must state that CCS is an Equal Opportunities Employer. Job Descriptions and Person Specifications will be written so as to avoid gender – or other bias.

Disclosure & Barring Service:

When a DBS (Disclosure & Barring Service) check is required all application forms, job adverts and recruitment briefs will contain a statement that a Disclosure will be requested in the event of an individual being offered a position. A Policy Statement on the recruitment of ex-offenders will be provided to all job applicants and employees for whom a Disclosure is required. A candidate produced by "word of mouth" advertising must be treated fairly, along with all the other applicants. All applicants will be offered an opportunity to ask questions about the agency and the job, but this should not be regarded as an opportunity for the agency to make judgments concerning a person's suitability.

Shortlisting:

All applications are presented to the shortlisting panel anonymised. This process determines who shall/not be invited for interview and will be carried out by representatives of the interviewing panel (the constitution of which reflects as far as possible the spirit of the Equal Opportunities Policy) – the members at first working alone, and then meeting to reach a collective decision. Shortlisting will be carried out in a non-discriminatory manner; all the selection criteria used must be strictly job-related.

Questions are asked at shortlisting stage about criminal records in order to ensure that people with such records are not inadvertently placed in vulnerable positions within the organisation. Having a criminal record in itself, should not necessarily prevent a person from being appointed to any post, unless the offence debars a person. Where it is felt, however, that a person presents a risk to children or vulnerable adults then that person should not be appointed. Discrimination either in favour of or against those persons currently in employment is not permissible (unless the offence debars them), and such information is strictly confidential. All candidates shortlisted will be given the opportunity to meet informally with staff members.

Interviewing and Selection:

All candidates must be shown the same courtesies, and be asked the same questions. Supplementary questions may be asked, but these must be put

only in order to obtain clearer or more detailed answers. Questions must not be discriminatory, e.g. about childcare arrangements, marriage plans.

The views of those staff who have met candidates informally will be conveyed to the interviewing panel after the interviews have taken place. Panel members, before reaching a conclusion about who is the preferred candidate, will take these views into account as they see fit. The Panel Chairperson must satisfy her/himself that the Panel's work is carried out, and the preferred candidate is selected, according to the agency's Policy and Procedures. As soon as possible after the interviews, candidates should be informed by telephone of the decision(s) made. This communication should then be confirmed in writing.

Where a Disclosure is to form part of the recruitment process, we encourage all applicants called for interview to provide details of their criminal record at an early stage of the application process, by placing details in an envelope marked 'Confidential' for the attention of the Direct, and returning it with their application. We guarantee that this information will only be seen by those who need to see it as part of the recruitment process, which is the CEO and members of the Interview Panel.

We ensure that everyone involved in the recruitment process have been suitably trained to identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of offences. We also ensure that they have received appropriate guidance and training in the relevant legislation relating to the employers of ex-offenders, e.g. the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

At interview or in a separate discussion, we ensure that open and measured discussion takes place on the seriousness of any offences or other matter that might be relevant to the position. Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment.

In considering Disclosure information we will consider the following:

- Whether the conviction or other matter is relevant to this position in question.
- The seriousness of any offence or other matter revealed.
- The length of time since the offence or other matter has occurred.
- Whether the applicant has a pattern of offending behaviour or other relevant matters.
- Whether the applicant's circumstances have changed since the offending behaviour or other relevant matters.
- The circumstances surrounding the offence and the explanation(s) offered by the convicted persons.

We undertake to discuss any matter revealed in a Disclosure with the person seeking the position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.

More information about the CCS recruitment process can be found in the CCS Recruitment Policy.

Staff Training and Development

CCS is committed to providing all staff and volunteers with appropriate training and will include training about the Equal Opportunities Policy; all training offered will be without discrimination against staff who are employed part-time.

Career Development:

Even though opportunities for promotion within the Society are limited, the application of the Equal Opportunities Policy means that there will be no discrimination either for or against internal applicants.

Terms and Conditions of Employment

The agency's Terms and Conditions of Employment, which are broadly in line with NJC conditions, allow no discrimination with regard to benefits – including maternity and paternity leave and compassionate leave.

Service Provision

The principles which underlie the agency's Equal Opportunities Policy apply equally to the manner in which service to the general public is provided.

There is, therefore, to be no discrimination against members of the public who have been referred to the agency and part of the CEO's responsibility in monitoring the agency's provision of services is to consider whether or not there are any factors relating to the agency's services which discourage certain groups of people from using CCS. The agency's offices will be accessible to those with a disability.

Review

All CCS procedures are reviewed on a regular basis and audited against the requirements of the legislation.