

# **Equal Opportunities Policy**

Signature will at all times encourage and promote policies and practices which ensure equality of opportunity for its staff, its members and the consumers of its services irrespective of ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion and disability. The main aim of this policy is to ensure that no job applicant or employee should receive less favourable treatment on any grounds not relevant to good employment practice. Further, Signature will monitor the composition of the workforce and is committed to a programme of action to make this policy fully effective.

## **Responsibility**

Signature's Board of Trustees has a responsibility for the formulation of equal opportunities policies and procedures to support Signature's overall policy and for overseeing their implementation.

The Chief Executive has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that Signature's policy is fully implemented. The Chief Operating Officer has a specific delegated responsibility for the effective development and implementation of equal opportunities in employment.

Signature encourages all staff to understand and co-operate with the policy and provides training and information to ensure this happens.

## **Implementation**

Appropriate procedures are being developed and introduced to ensure that all members of staff are aware of Signature's policies concerning equal opportunities in employment and their responsibilities to implement them. The policy applies to the advertisement of jobs, recruitment and selection to them, training, conditions of work, pay and to every other aspect of employment.

The policy also applies equally to the treatment of Signature Sign Language Interpreters, Interpreters for Deafblind People, Lipspeakers, Speech to Text Reporters, Working Group/Advisory/Board of Trustees members and assessment centres and candidates.

All employees and job applicants will be asked to complete a form denoting their sex, race, ethnic origin and any disabilities. Signature guarantees that this form will only be used for the purpose of monitoring the effectiveness of its equal opportunities policy only.

## **Complaints**

Complaints of discrimination from job applicants must be referred to the Chief Operating Officer in the first instance, who will ensure they are investigated and that the complainant receives a written response.

Members of staff who believe that they have been discriminated against have the right to make use of the normal procedures i.e. grievance procedures, as outlined in Signature's Conditions of Employment.

Complaints against registered Sign Language Interpreters, Interpreters for Deafblind People, Lipspeakers and Speech to Text Reporters will be dealt with under the complaints and disciplinary procedures as outlined on the NRCPD website.

All complaints regarding Signature's assessment procedures are logged and follow set procedures. At the higher levels of assessment any candidate who disputes the assessors decision has the right of appeal. Details of complaints and appeal procedures for examinations are outlined in the Complaints and Appeals procedures.

## Positive Action

The composition of the workforce and of job applicants will be monitored on a regular basis. Should inequalities become apparent, positive action will be taken to reduce the imbalance including such measures as:

- advertising jobs in ethnic publications as appropriate;
- encouraging under-represented groups to apply for suitable posts;
- making contact with disabled people via the local Job Centre;
- informing member organisations of under-represented groups on Advisory/Management Committees;
- encouraging the employment of under-represented groups by Sign Language Interpreting
- Agencies or Communication Support Units (CSUs); encouraging training organisations to recruit students of under-represented groups to train as interpreters and other Language Service Professionals.