



Policy Statement

River Bourne Community Farm (RBCF) is committed to encouraging diversity and eliminating discrimination in both its role as an employer and as a provider of services. RBCF aims to create a culture that respects and values each others' differences, that promotes dignity, equality and diversity, and that encourages individuals to develop and maximise their true potential. We are committed wherever practicable to achieving and maintaining a workforce that broadly reflects the local community in which we operate.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide equality and fairness for all in our employment and in the provision of services and not to discriminate on the grounds of gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, colour, nationality, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, religion or age. RBCF opposes all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. All employees, trustees and volunteers, whether part-time, full-time or temporary, will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, training, volunteering or any other benefit will be on the basis of skills and ability.

Principles

RBCF's commitment to Equality and Diversity is:

- To create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all our employees, trustees and volunteers are recognised and valued.
- To create a working environment that promotes dignity and respect for all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.
- To ensure training, development and progression opportunities are available to all.
- To promote equality in the workplace, which it believes is good management practice and makes sound business sense.
- To regularly review all employment and volunteering practices and procedures to ensure that no job applicants, staff, trustees or volunteers are treated less favourably than others.
- To regularly review services to ensure they are accessible and appropriate to all groups within society.
- To treat breaches of the equality policy seriously and to take disciplinary action when required.
- To provide information and training to all employees, trustees and volunteers so that they are fully aware of the issues relating to Equality and Diversity and their responsibilities relating to it.
- To ensure the policy is fully supported by the Farm Committee.
- To monitor and review the policy annually.

Procedures

Positive action

- RBCF will act positively in using the Equality and Diversity Policy as a means of making public its commitment to provide equal opportunities to all present and future employees, trustees and volunteers.
- RBCF encourages all employees to apply for suitable opportunities and to seek training for promotion or in particular skills.
- The Equality and Diversity Policy forms part of the Staff Handbook and Contract of Employment. Training in Equality and Diversity is provided as part of the Induction Programme.
- Any form of discrimination by an employee, trustee or volunteer is treated very seriously and where appropriate will be dealt with using the Disciplinary Procedure.

Positive Discrimination

Positive discrimination is illegal and the recruitment of 'quotas' of particular groups is also illegal. Discrimination in selection to achieve or secure a balance of persons of different racial groups is also not allowed under the Race Relations Act 1976.

There is an exception, however, which may be appropriate for certain posts in RBCF, i.e. when a genuine occupational qualification (GOQ) is necessary or desirable for a particular group or sex. Both the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 allow these exceptions.

Recruitment

Job descriptions and person specifications

Job descriptions and Person Specifications are prepared for all posts. The job description indicates the responsibilities and tasks to be undertaken by the job holder. The Person Specification describes the qualifications, skills and abilities required. A list of preferred criteria may also be prepared. Care will be taken to ensure that neither the description nor the specification are discriminatory on the grounds quoted in the Policy Statement.

Advertising

RBCF will use a range of advertising methods in order to attract the widest pool of appropriate applicants. Vacancies for new and existing jobs will normally be advertised internally and externally. All our advertising will:

- Contain the statement River Bourne Community Farm is an 'Equal Opportunities Employer'.
- Ensure that we do not exclude, discriminate against, or discourage any particular group from applying nor make it difficult for any one from such a group to apply.
- Refer to the job description and person specification in order to give information about the requirements of the job.
- Give clear instructions about obtaining the application pack.

Applications and short listing

All applicants will be asked to fill out an application form which contains only information essential and relevant to the appointment. Different formats will be made available. Applications will be short listed by at least 2 people. Short listing will be performed on the basis of objective criteria and the extent to which candidates have shown, in the application form, that they meet the required Person Specification, and can carry out tasks and responsibilities required of the post-holder. Formal qualifications and standards of literacy and numeracy will only be taken into account when they are recognised as necessary for a particular job.

Short listed candidates will be invited to an interview. Staff and members of the Committee responsible for short-listing, interviewing and selection of candidates will be:

- Clearly informed of selection criteria and the need for their consistent application;
- Given guidance on the effects which generalised assumptions about people from groups quoted in the Policy Statement can have on selection decisions;
- Made aware of the possible misunderstandings that can occur between persons from different cultural backgrounds

Interviewing

- All interviews will be carried out by a minimum of 2 people, the names and gender of interviewees will be made available in advance.
- The questions asked will seek to gather objective evidence in support of the job description and person specification. The same questions will be asked of all candidates applying for the job.
- Disabled candidates will be asked if they need support during the interview process or adjustments should they be offered the position.
- Notes will be taken and evidence gathered against the job description and person specification.
- All candidates will be asked about their eligibility to work.

Selection

All candidates will be scored against the job description and person specification. The highest scoring applicants will be offered the position. Offers will be made to successful candidates, subject to satisfactory references and CRB check (where required). All unsuccessful candidates will be informed of the result of their application and offered brief feedback.

DBS Policy

For certain positions we will request enhanced disclosures for all employees, trustees and volunteers. This requirement will be clearly stated in the application pack.

Ex-Offenders

RBCF will not discriminate against ex offenders with unspent convictions, unless required to do so because of the nature of the post. All applications will be considered on an individual basis.

Induction and training

All employees, trustees and volunteers will be required to follow an appropriate induction process to ensure they are equipped to do the job. All employees, trustees and volunteers will receive training on the Equality and Diversity policy, procedures and action plan as part of their induction.

Recruitment Monitoring

All applicants will be asked to complete an anonymous monitoring form as part of the application pack (to be returned in a separate envelope). The 2001 Census categories will be used in order to monitor ethnicity of staff (as recommended by the Commission for Racial Equality). An additional category for Gypsy and Travellers will be included. The monitoring form will monitor age, race, ethnic origin, religion, gender, marital status, disability. Recruitment statistics will be produced on an annual basis and presented to the Committee.

Flexible working

- RBCF will consider all requests for flexible working arrangements constructively and creatively, taking account of the balancing the needs of the organisation with the needs of the individual employee.
- RBCF will offer a range of flexible working arrangements and will work collaboratively to identify solutions that suit both the individual and the organisation.

Training

- Training opportunities will be discussed during supervision sessions and selection for training will be made on the basis of both the needs of the business set out in the Business Plan and the personal development of the individual.
- Special needs and requirements for people with disabilities or caring responsibilities will be taken into account whenever practicable and methods sought to help them overcome disabilities in taking up training opportunities.
- Staff with management, recruitment and selection responsibilities will be given guidance in the implementation of the Equal and Diversity Policy to ensure that they understand their position in law and under the Organisation's policy.
- Induction training will include an explanation of the Equal Opportunities.

Terms and conditions

Annual Leave and Religious Holidays

RBCF will not ask about an employee's religion and will not discriminate against anyone wishing to celebrate their festivals. Employees are required to use part of their annual holiday entitlement to cover time off for these and must follow the normal holiday booking procedure.

Cultural and religious needs

Where employees, trustees or volunteers have particular cultural and religious needs, RBCF will consider whether it is reasonably practicable to meet these needs while maintaining the efficiency of the business.

People with disabilities

- RBCF will make genuine efforts to recruit people with disabilities and take reasonable steps to make the workplace and individual jobs accessible to people with disabilities.
- RBCF will regularly review its facilities for disabled employees, trustees and volunteers and will try to overcome any problems faced wherever practicable and within reasonable resources available.
- RBCF will ensure that people have maximum access to employment opportunities and to meetings and events, regardless of any disability.

Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures

RBCF will take seriously any complaints of discrimination and will not victimize people who make such complaints. Staff will be made aware as part of the induction process of their responsibilities in relation to:

Equality and Diversity and that discriminatory behaviour will be fully investigated and dealt with using the Disciplinary Procedure.

Bullying and Harassment

RBCF upholds the right of all employees and volunteers to be treated with respect and dignity and to work in an atmosphere free of bullying and harassment. All employees and volunteers are responsible for ensuring that their own behaviour is sensitive to others and for ensuring that they do not condone or support the bullying or harassing behaviour of others. All complaints of bullying and harassment will be investigated and where appropriate, the Disciplinary Procedures will be followed.

Service Provision

- RBCF will endeavour to ensure that its services to and for the voluntary sector are sensitive and appropriate to respond to the needs of all groups, whenever practicable, i.e. taking account of the needs of minority groups.
- RBCF will take care to avoid unintentionally discriminatory passages appearing in published, printed or spoken material.
- RBCF will continue to take a leading role in combating any form of discrimination.
- RBCF will work with others to ensure that the diversity of the population in Salisbury is recognised and celebrated.

Responsibility

It is the Farm Chairman's responsibility with the support of the Executive Committee to ensure the implementation of the Equality and Diversity Policy. Appropriate funds will be sought to implement approved aspects of the Policy which require special and additional resources.

All employees, trustees and volunteers have the individual responsibility to:

- Follow procedures introduced to ensure equal opportunity and non-discrimination;
- To draw the attention of management to suspected or alleged discriminatory practices;
- To refrain from harassing or intimidating other employees, trustees or volunteers, clients or visitors of RBCF on any of the grounds cited in the policy statement.