



Dignity, Equality & Diversity at Hugh's House

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1. What is this policy about?

We are committed to ensuring that everyone is treated equally, with dignity and respect and providing an environment that is free from discrimination, harassment and bullying.

It is important for us all that we feel valued and treated equally whilst in Hugh's House and that includes treatment by volunteers, guests and owners.

This policy highlights why we feel dignity, respect and equality at Hugh's House is important and the crucial role that we all have to play in taking responsibility for our behaviour.

2. Aims of this policy

Hugh's House recognises and values people's differences and will assist them to use their talents to reach their full potential.

The organisation will do all it can to ensure it recruits, trains and promotes people based on qualifications, experience and abilities for all roles within the organisation.

This policy is designed to ensure that Hugh's House complies with its obligations under equality legislation and demonstrates our commitment to treating people equally and fairly.

Hugh's House is unreservedly opposed to any form of discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation (defined as Protected Characteristics).

Using fair and objective employment practices, the organisation aims to ensure that

- All volunteers and residents are treated fairly and with respect at all stages of their employment.
- All employees/volunteers and guests have the right to be free from harassment and bullying of any description, or any other form of unwanted behaviour. Such behaviour may come from other employees or by people (third parties) who are not employees of Hugh's House, such as other service users.
- All employees/volunteers and guests have an equal chance to contribute and to achieve their potential, irrespective of any defining feature that may give rise to unfair discrimination.
- All employees/volunteers and guests have the right to be free from discrimination because they associate with another person who possesses a Protected Characteristic or because others perceive that they have a particular Protected Characteristic, even if they do not.



3 Definitions

Direct discrimination is when an employee or applicant is treated less favourably than someone else because of their:

- sex
- marriage or civil partnership
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity leave
- sexual orientation
- disability
- race/ethnicity
- religion or belief
- age
- Member of the travelling community: *The community of people who are commonly called travellers and who are identified as people with shared history, culture tradition including, historically, a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland.*

Indirect discrimination

This is where there is a working condition, practice or rule that disadvantages one group of people more than another. In other words it is more difficult for people from one group to comply with the requirement. Even if it is done accidentally indirect discrimination is unlawful. Indirect discrimination is only allowed if it is necessary for the way the business works, and there is no other way of achieving it.

Discrimination arising from disability

This is where a disabled person is treated unfavourably because of something connected to their disability where it cannot be objectively justified. This only applies where the organisation knew or could reasonably be expected to know that the person was disabled.

Associative Discrimination

This is where someone is treated worse than someone else because they are associated with someone with a protected characteristic.

Perceptive Discrimination

This is where someone is treated worse than someone else because there has been an incorrect assumption that they have a protected characteristic. This applies even if the person does not possess the characteristic.

Third Party Harassment

This is where an employee/volunteer/ service user is harassed by a third party who is not an employee e.g. volunteers or service users. The organisation becomes liable if it has happened on at least two occasions, that it is aware that it took place and have not taken steps to prevent it happening again.



4 Guiding principles

- We will not tolerate attitudes or behaviours that amount to discrimination, including harassment, victimisation and bullying through prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and/or stereotyping.
- We recognise the adverse effects that discrimination, harassment and bullying can have on individuals.
- Not all acts of discrimination, harassment or bullying are intentional. What is important is how the action is perceived.
- If we don't know then we can't help – we do not want any employee/volunteer or guest to suffer in silence.
- Any volunteer or guest found to be in breach of this policy may be subject to eviction from Hugh's House or discontinuation of volunteering duties.

5 Our commitment to you

- We are determined to actively create an environment that neither condones nor supports any kinds of discrimination, harassment or bullying.
- Whilst we would hope that for the vast majority of our volunteers and guests there would never be a situation where anyone would feel harassed, bullied or discriminated against, we will continue to ensure that we have the right mechanisms to deal with any issues that may arise.
- Any issues brought to our attention will be treated sensitively and fairly.

By doing all of the above, this allows us not only to fulfil our legal requirements but also stay true to our core values.

6 What are you responsible for?

You are responsible for:

- Being aware of your own conduct and the impact it may have on others.
- Being aware of the issues of discrimination, harassment and bullying, the forms it can take and the damage it can do to volunteers and guests.
- Not being afraid to stand up against inappropriate conduct to support a volunteer or guest who is being harassed or bullied.
- Supporting any volunteer or guest that you believe is being harassed and/or bullied by talking to them in confidence and informing them of this policy and the procedures to address these issues. You can encourage but you do need to be sensitive to their wishes.
- Understanding that a difference of opinion between you, volunteer or guest or owner of Hugh's House does not constitute bullying or harassment.
- Ensuring that your grievance is made in good faith. Malicious or knowingly false grievances may result in eviction from Hugh's House or discontinuation of volunteering duties.



7. What are Hugh's House responsible for?

- Promoting dignity, equality and diversity at Hugh's House through actively creating an environment that neither condones nor supports any kinds of discrimination, harassment or bullying.
- Ensuring any issues or concerns raised to them are acted upon and resolved as promptly as possible.
- Treating any complaint(s) seriously and supporting guests or volunteers to resolve any issues.
- Taking action and challenging wrong-doing, inappropriate behaviour and poor performance.
- Employees and volunteers (including trustees) of Hugh's House have a duty to act within this policy, ensure it is followed and to draw attention to any suspected discriminatory acts or practices.
- Responsibility for promoting awareness of this policy and monitoring that it is being followed rests with (The Board of Hugh's House).
- Breaches of this policy by employees may be dealt with in the employee handbook and contract of employment.
- **Breaches of the Equality and Diversity Policy by volunteers (including trustees)** are personally liable under equality legislation for any act of unlawful discrimination.

8. Why dignity, equality and diversity at Hugh's House is important

- We all spend a lot of our time at Hugh's House having dinner and living within the house.
- If we have volunteers or guests who feel they are being treated less favourably than others they can feel vulnerable and may suffer from fear, anxiety and stress which can have a knock on effect on their physical and mental well being as well as their happiness at Hugh's House.
- If we allow this within our charity we then contribute towards an environment which can be filled with tension and conflict, lead to low volunteer or guest engagement and an overall negative image on Hugh's house.
- To enable Hugh's House to always be a great place to be for new and existing volunteers and guests, we need to ensure that our attitudes and behaviours do not deliberately or inadvertently lead to groups or individuals being treated less favourably than others.
- By committing to this, it enables us to grow our charity and draw on the widest skills, knowledge and expertise available to us.



9. Equality Dignity & Diversity in Practice

In carrying out the policy, the organisation will carry out the following actions:

- Use of selection criteria that does not unlawfully discriminate in recruitment and promotion procedures.
- Requiring entry to employment /volunteering or progression within it to be based on merit.
- Not discriminating in opportunities for recruitment, training, promotion or transfer of employees or volunteers.
- Ensuring that every individual is assessed according to his or her personal capability to carry out a given job/role.
- Ensure that all employees are given equal treatment with regard to terms and conditions of employment, provided they do the same or broadly similar work, or work of equal value.
- Ensure equal opportunities and non-discrimination in the operation of grievance and disciplinary procedures.
- Ensure that all relevant requirements of the Equality Act in relation to disability are met and adhered to. This will include making reasonable adjustments to ensure access to employment or volunteering tasks and opportunities.
- Ensure that any amendments to any legislation relating to discrimination are met and adhered to.

10. Implementation of the policy

All trustees and volunteers will be involved in creating an equality environment and one that values diversity.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Making available a copy of the policy to prospective residents and volunteers on the notice board in the hall.
- Ensuring all new starters have the opportunity to discuss the policy with other volunteers including distributing to serve the city.
- Making use of board meetings to discuss the policy and defining areas where practice could be improved.
- Providing non-discrimination selection training for employees/directors who are recruiting in the future.
- Incorporating specific responsibilities into job/role descriptions.
- Communication of the policy to job applicants and employees/volunteers through our website at www.hughshouse.ie.

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

In selecting our partners we will consider their commitment to Equality dignity and Diversity by:

- Asking to see their policy
- Asking what they do in practice, including monitoring the policy



USERS OF OUR SERVICE

In order to ensure that our **services are accessible** we include:

- Considering formats for promotional material and promote the use of plain English.
- Appropriate use of language/ formats / fonts/ size.
- Considering whether information should be available in alternative formats e.g. other languages or pictorial video.
- Considering locations where the organisation's services are promoted /advertised including within the Hospital, Special needs groups, Jack and Jill Foundation.
- Considering accessibility of locations from which the service is provided.
- Considering the diverse make up of our staff/ volunteers in relation to your guests.
- Considering the impact of proposed new services on the user group.

MONITORING

A variety of methods are used to ensure accessibility of our service for potential users is maintained. Methods include:

- Information of location of guests.
- Information on how they heard of your service/ accessed your service.
- Elements of the service used by people.
- Equality Impact Assessments on their activities.

11 Reporting discrimination/potential discrimination within Hugh's House?

a) Informal procedure

If you believe you are being discriminated against, harassed or bullied you should:

- Tell someone about it. If you are feeling uncomfortable about a situation and are not sure if it is discrimination, bullying or harassment you should still try to talk to someone about it.
- Keep a written record of the offending behaviour or incident(s). Write down dates, times and places when events occurred and what was said or done. If anyone else was a witness make a note of their names as well.
- Make it clear to the person who you feel is harassing or bullying you that their behaviour is upsetting you. Be firm and calm and stick to the facts. In most cases, many people will be completely unaware of how they're behaviour is perceived so will stop as soon as it is brought to their attention.

To support you in managing the issue informally you could:

- Ask someone to be a mediator to be with you when you speak to the person.
- Ask Ade Stack to talk to the person who is harassing or bullying you about the effects their behaviour is having on you and ask for it to stop. You would be a part of this conversation but you don't have to be.



b) Formal procedure

Raising it formally

The below are examples of when you may feel it is necessary to raise a complaint as a formal grievance:

- Where you have tried to resolve the issues informally and/or using mediation and the situation has not improved.
- When the allegation is so serious and you do not feel comfortable raising it informally.

You will need to put your grievance in writing giving as much detail as possible. You can then send your grievance to info@hughshouse.ie, or post to the following address (via registered post):

Adrienne Stack
Unit 16,
Northern Cross Business Park,
North Road,
Finglas,
Dublin 11

What happens next?

- You will receive an acknowledgement letter within 5 working days or a phone call to confirm we have received your formal complaint.
- Your complaint will be reviewed by the board who will appoint an Investigation Manager to look into the issue in more detail.
- You will be contacted by the appointed Investigation Manager with an update.

Please be aware that if you make a claim of bullying or harassment towards another guest or volunteer they have the right to view your letter of complaint so they have an opportunity to defend themselves.

c) Mediation

As a standalone remedy or as part of an overall solution we may use mediation as a way to build relationships, especially between parties where there has been a breakdown in trust and communication.

Mediation can be appropriate under the following circumstances:

- Where the situation/issue is not so serious as to need a formal action and where both parties are happy for a mediator to help resolve issues.
- Where a formal procedure has taken place and it may be necessary to restore good and positive relationships between the volunteer(s) or guest(s) involved.



Mediation is a useful tool to use because:

- it can allow issues to be resolved as quickly as possible before they escalate and become more serious.
- it allows the person who made the complaint to be involved in the process and the solution.
- The mediator's role is not to punish or blame or to take sides, but to support both parties in coming to an amicable resolution. We would usually use someone as a mediator who has not been involved in the issues or who do not have a direct connection to one of the volunteers or guests concerned.

12 FAQs

What is the relationship between Equality Legislation in Ireland and Dignity at Hugh's House?

The Employment Equality Acts (1998 – 2008) protects against discrimination on the following grounds:

- Gender
- Civil status
- Family status
- Religion
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Disability
- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins) or
- Membership of the Traveller community.

The main objective behind the Equality Act for Ireland is to ensure equal treatment for all employees, guests and volunteers. This is also the intention and purpose of our Dignity and Equality at Hugh's House policy.

If we can all commit to creating an environment in which all volunteers or guests are treated fairly this also ensures that we comply as a matter of course with the Equality Act in Ireland.



Can you give me some examples of how individuals or groups may experience harassment so I can ensure I behave appropriately and can also spot inappropriate behaviour and report if necessary?

The below isn't an exhaustive list, they are just examples of ways in which groups and individuals may experience harassment:-

- a) **Gay, lesbian or transgender** volunteers or guests may suffer harassment in the form of hostility, ridicule, jokes, innuendos, teasing and insults relating to their sexuality and they may feel isolated because of this.
- b) **Men and women** may experience unwanted sexual attention and can suffer harassment by other guests or volunteers and their confidence knocked through threats and intimidation.
- c) **People with disabilities** may experience harassment through being ignored during discussions or where the focus is on their disability rather than their ability.
- d) **People whatever their ethnic origin** may experience racial harassment. For example black, white or people from an ethnic minority may suffer harassment, because of their race, ethnicity, nationality, perceived difference, and various prejudiced assumptions and stereotypes about them. It can range from physical abuse to racially abusive insults disguised as jokes. Harassment within an organisation can also take the form of being spoken to or treated in a dismissive, inferior or unequal way on the grounds of race.

I have a disability covered under the Employment Equality Act 1998 – 2004 (Ireland) and I think I need some support, what shall I do?

If you require an adjustment to your Hugh's House arrangements or environment, please speak to Ade Stack in the first instance or the referring medical social worker.

They may ask you some questions about your disability in order to establish the best course of action.

13 Useful links for Ireland based guests or volunteers

- Employment Equality Act 1998 – 2004
- Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act 2005
- Equality Act 2004

14 Review

This policy will be reviewed by Board of Directors every 2 years to ensure that it remains up to date and reflects the needs and practices of the organisation.

The policy may also be reviewed if legislation changes or if monitoring information suggests that policy or practices should be altered.

