

GOOD PRACTICE FOR ALL EMPLOYERS – General Guidance on Equal Opportunities¹

1. Equality of opportunity in employment makes good business sense. It broadens the recruitment base and widens the choice of personnel; it also enhances the probity of a company's personnel practices and improves corporate image. Even if you regard your concern as an entirely fair employer, it is necessary to check that you are carrying out the steps mentioned in this Code – discrimination and inequality of opportunity can occur in the absence of regular scrutiny and the adoption of sound practices.
2. To promote equality of opportunity you should:
 - a. draw up a clear policy to promote equality of opportunity in your recruitment, training and promotion practices – you are encouraged to consult the Fair Employment Commission in doing so;
 - b. allocate overall responsibility for policy and practice to a senior manager – in small undertakings this is likely to devolve on the owner or chief executive/plant manager;
 - c. consult with the appropriate recognised trade unions, employee representatives or the workforce on the implementation of your policy and any amendments to practice;
 - d. show that your policy and practice have the backing of management at all levels – the clear backing of the Chairman, Board and top management is of particular significance;
 - e. make it clear that breaches of policy and practice will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings;
 - f. provide training and guidance for persons in key decision making areas (e.g. senior executives), and for personnel, reception and supervisory staff (e.g. foremen), to ensure that they understand their position in law, and company policy and practice – the whole environment within the firm should reflect good practice and these staff should be made aware of the positive influence they can exert in promoting equality of opportunity;

¹ Taken from an excerpt of the Fair Employment Code of Practice 1989 available to download at www.equalityni.org

- g. highlight your policy and practice in a statement, works handbook or similar document, and issue it to all employees and job applicants;
 - h. take all available opportunities, especially when recruiting new staff, to ensure that your policy and practice are widely known;
 - i. promote a good and harmonious working environment and atmosphere in which no worker feels under threat or intimidated because of his or her religious belief or political opinion e.g. prohibit the display of flags, emblems, posters, graffiti, or the circulation of materials, or the deliberate articulation of slogans or songs, which are likely to give offence or cause apprehension among particular groups of employees.
3. It is accepted that small to medium sized employers in particular will wish to interpret the detailed advice in the Code of Practice in the light of their own individual circumstances. This is fully appreciated by the Equality Commission. Such employers should consult the Commission to ensure that their practices are in full conformity with the provisions of the Acts.

Resources

Model Equal Opportunities Policy

<http://www.equalityni.org/archive/pdf/FinalModelEqualOpp0307.pdf>

Model Harassment Policy and Procedure

<http://www.equalityni.org/archive/pdf/ModHarass0307RevisedF.pdf>

Equal Opportunities Posters for the Workplace

http://www.equalityni.org/archive/pdf/5165_commissions%20_poster.pdf
(available in several languages)

Promoting a Good & Harmonious Working Environment - Commission Guidance - A Guide for Employers and Employees

<http://www.equalityni.org/archive/pdf/Harmonyatwork.pdf>

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