Equal Opportunities Policy

Our commitment

We are committed to providing equal opportunities in employment and volunteering and to avoiding unlawful discrimination. This policy is intended to assist putting this commitment into practice. Our aim is that the environment for employees, members and volunteers is free of harassment and bullying and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect, which is an important aspect of ensuring equal opportunities. We have a separate anti-harassment and bullying policy, which deals with these issues.

Our policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders for employment positions or volunteering roles, which forms a part of our equal opportunities policy, is enclosed in Appendix A.

The law

It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of a 'protected characteristic'. The Equality Act defines the protected characteristics as being age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality, caste and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership.

Discrimination after employment may also be unlawful, eg refusing to give a reference for a reason related to one of the protected characteristics.

It is also unlawful to discriminate against or harass a member of the public or member or volunteer or service user in the provision of services or goods or to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to using services caused by disability.

The duty to make reasonable adjustments includes the removal, adaptation or alteration of physical features, if the physical features make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of services. In addition, service providers have an obligation to think ahead and address any barriers that may impede disabled people from accessing a service.

Types of unlawful discrimination

- **Direct discrimination** is where a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic. However, discrimination may be lawful if there is an occupational requirement which is core to a job role and a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

- **Indirect discrimination** means putting in place, a rule or policy or way of doing things that has a worse impact on someone with a protected characteristic than someone without one, when this cannot be objectively justified.

- **Harassment** is where there is unwanted behaviour related to a protected characteristic (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity) which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or which creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It does not matter whether or not this effect was intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

- **Associative discrimination** is where the individual treated less favourably does not have a protected characteristic but is discriminated against because of their association with someone who does, eg the parent of a disabled child.

- **Perceptive discrimination** is where the individual discriminated against or harassed does not have a protected characteristic but they are perceived to have a protected characteristic.

- **Third-party harassment** occurs where an employee is harassed by third parties such as service users, due to a protected characteristic.

- **Victimisation** is treating someone unfavourably because they have taken some form of action relating to the Equality Act, ie because they have supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because they are suspected of doing so. However, an employee is not protected from victimisation if they acted maliciously or made or supported an untrue complaint.

- **Failure to make reasonable adjustments** is where a rule or policy or way of doing things has a worse impact on someone with a protected characteristic compared with someone who does not have that protected characteristic and the employer has failed to make reasonable adjustments to enable the disabled person to overcome the disadvantage.

Equal opportunities in employment

We will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline and selection for redundancy. Job descriptions will avoid any unnecessary requirements (those unrelated to effective performance) that may otherwise have deterred applicants. We will base decisions on objective criteria. We will consider making reasonable adjustments in recruitment as well as in day-to-day employment.

Service users, suppliers and others

We will not discriminate unlawfully against service users using or seeking to use the services we provide. If you are bullied or harassed by a service user, suppliers, contractor, member, volunteer or others, or if you witness someone else being bullied of harassed, you are asked to report this to our Chief Executive (ceo@huk.org.uk) or Board of Trustees (trustees@huk.org.uk) who will take appropriate action.

Training

We will provide information and guidance to those involved in recruitment or other decision making where equal opportunities issues are likely to arise to help them understand their responsibilities and to avoid the risk of discrimination.

New staff will be briefed on this policy during their induction and all staff will be made aware of the content of the policy and their responsibilities under it.

Your Responsibilities

All staff and volunteers are responsible to support the organisation to meet its commitment and avoid unlawful discrimination. If you believe that you have been discriminated against you should report this to the chief executive. We take any complaint seriously and you will not be penalised for raising a grievance, even if your grievance is not upheld, unless your complaint is both untrue and made in bad faith. If you witness what you believe to be discrimination you should report this to the chief executive as soon as possible.

Employees can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, the organisation for any act of unlawful discrimination. Employees who commit serious acts of harassment may be guilty of a criminal offence. Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against employees or members or volunteers or customers are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure. Discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal without notice.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored periodically to judge its effectiveness and will be updated in accordance with changes in the law. We will report to the board of trustees on any actions or activities undertaken to improve equality of opportunity. Any information provided by job applicants and employees for monitoring purposes will be used only for these purposes and will be dealt with in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

Reviewed by the Trustees November 2025

Next review November 2027, or as required

Appendix A - Policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders

As an organisation assessing applicants' suitability for positions which are included in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order using criminal record checks processed through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), Haemochromatosis UK complies fully with the code of practice and undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly.

We undertake not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a criminal record check on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed. We can only ask an individual to provide details of convictions and cautions that we are legally entitled to know about.

Where a DBS certificate at either standard or enhanced level can legally be requested (where the position is one that is included in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 as amended, and where appropriate Police Act Regulations as amended). Haemochromatosis UK can only ask an individual about convictions and cautions that are not protected.

We are committed to the fair treatment of our staff, potential staff, volunteers or users of its services, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, responsibilities for dependants, age, physical/mental disability or offending background. We have a written policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders, which is made available to all DBS applicants at the start of the recruitment process. We actively promote equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential and welcome applications from a wide range of candidates, including those with criminal records. We will select all candidates for interview based on their skills, qualifications and experience. An application for a criminal record check is only submitted to DBS after a thorough risk assessment has indicated that one is both proportionate and relevant to the position concerned. For those positions where a criminal record check is identified as necessary, all application forms, job or volunteer adverts and recruitment briefs will contain a statement that an application for a DBS certificate will be submitted in the event of the individual being offered the position.

Haemochromatosis UK ensures that all those in the organisation who are 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 employment of ex-offenders, e.g. the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 at interview, or in a separate discussion, Haemochromatosis UK ensures that an open and measured discussion takes place on the subject 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. We make every subject of a criminal record check submitted to DBS aware of the existence of the code of practice and makes a copy available on request.

Haemochromatosis UK undertakes to discuss any matter revealed on a DBS certificate with the individual seeking the position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment or volunteering placement.

// ENDS.