

SLOUGH BAPTIST CHURCH POLICY	Equality Policy
POLICY NUMBER: SBCP-05	



Primary Responsibility:	Secretary
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DISTRIBUTION

Original	Slough Baptist Church Office
Copy	Website (PDF)

1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the Church meets its vision to be a place of welcome to all, to ensure that there is no discrimination in any area of church life, and to fulfil our obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

2. Policy

The Equality Act 2010 makes it illegal to discriminate against anyone based on any of the following 'protected characteristics':

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity

Slough Baptist Church is committed to a Biblical approach to Equality. This means our primary guide as to how we treat staff, members and visitors is the Bible, and secondarily, all applicable laws. In accordance with the Bible and the law, we will seek to prevent any discrimination by church staff, members or guests within the church against any person in any way, whether in our employment or treatment of individuals, based on any of the protected characteristics.

3. Types of Discrimination

Direct Discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic.

Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination can occur when you have a condition, rule, policy or even a practice that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic. Indirect discrimination can be justified if you can show that you acted reasonably in managing your business, i.e. that it is 'a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim'. A legitimate aim might be any lawful decision you make in running your business or organisation, but if there is a discriminatory effect, the sole aim of reducing costs is likely to be unlawful. Being proportionate really means being fair and reasonable, including showing that you've looked at 'less discriminatory' alternatives to any decision you make.

Discrimination by Association

This is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.

Perception Discrimination

This is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic.

Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when an employee is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act; or because they are suspected of doing so. An employee is not protected from victimisation if they have maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint. There is no longer a need to compare treatment of a complainant with that of a person who has not made or supported a complaint under the Act.

Harassment

Harassment is "unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual". Employees will now be able to complain of behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at them, and the complainant need not possess the relevant characteristic themselves. Employees are also protected from harassment because of perception and association.

4. Procedure

1. We will work with small group leaders to ensure they are aware of our desire to welcome and support all, and that they feel supported in putting this into practice. When necessary additional support would be considered for small groups to enable participation by all.
2. At least every three years we will undertake an audit of our groups and activities to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for involvement in church life.
3. If it is discovered that there is any form of discrimination based on one of the protected characteristics in any of the church's activities, this should be reported to the trustees who will investigate the cause and take reasonable measures to rectify the issue. The trustees will endeavour to prevent any negative repercussions against anyone suggesting unlawful discrimination has occurred and will create an atmosphere where concerns may be freely raised.
4. All church employees will be given equality training to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

5. At least every three years we will undertake an audit of our physical environment and main activities to:
 - identify areas where reasonable adjustments could enable greater participation;
 - assess the effectiveness of adjustments previously made.
6. When commissioning new or altered building works we will explore how they can meet best practice for inclusion.
7. We will seek to provide worship material in a variety of ways - for example in large print, on the website and through an induction loop.

5. Exceptions

In accordance with the law, there is an occupational requirement for all members and some staff positions to be able to demonstrate that they are practising Christians and adhere to the church's statement of faith, and for all staff and volunteers to speak and act in line with Christian values in the course of their duties.

A person may be excluded from certain roles on the basis of their faith, lifestyle or conduct, but may not be excluded solely on the basis of any of the protected characteristics.

Likewise, usage of church premises and resources will be limited to individuals and groups which can demonstrate they are in agreement with the church's statement of faith.