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### **1. Introduction**

1.1 AFL ENGLAND is the National Governing Body for the sport of Australian Rules Football in England.

1.2. AFL ENGLAND has a moral obligation and duty to represent the diverse membership it works with. In order to address inequalities in our sport and become truly representative of the membership we serve, we will promote equality of opportunity in all our activities.

1.3 AFL ENGLAND is fully committed to the principles of diversity and equality of opportunity and is responsible for ensuring that no one associated with the sport (including applicant, employee, volunteer, member or other) receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of any protected characteristics. These include age, gender, disability, race, ethnic origin, nationality, parental or marital status, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, socioeconomic status, caring responsibilities or sexual orientation, trade union membership or political belief.

1.4 The AFL ENGLAND Board of Directors will lead this commitment to develop an organisational culture which values not just people from all sections of the community, but the contribution each individual and diverse organisation can make to our work. We will ensure that our policies and practices are constantly monitored, reviewed and updated to achieve this.

1.5 This policy has been produced to prevent any direct or indirect discrimination or other unfair treatment, whether intentional or unintentional, against anyone associated with English Australian Rules Football.

### **2. Policy context**

2.1 Socio-economic and demographic trends in the UK show that the population is ageing, becoming more ethnically diverse and more mobile. Equality and diversity issues are high on the government agenda and form a key tenet of policy development.



2.2 National and regional research studies, reports and initiatives all continue to present a picture of under-representation in sport by these key equality strands. Furthermore, this agenda is supported by legislation, which introduces major responsibilities and rights for groups who commonly experience disadvantage.

2.3 AFL ENGLAND will abide by the letter of, and apply the spirit of The Equality Act (2010), which seeks to place all relevant equality legislation in one location and includes the aims of the following historic acts:

- Equal Pay Act 1970 (Amended)
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- Sex Discrimination Acts 1975, 1986 & Gender Re-assignment Regulations 1999
- Race Relations Act 1976 and Amendment Regulations 2003 and the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Amendments 2005
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Children Act 1998
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Religion and Belief) Regulations 2003
- Gender Recognition Act 2004
- Civil Partnership Act 2004
- The Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulations 2005
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulation 2006
- Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006

### **3. Strategic context**

3.1 AFL ENGLAND's mission is to maximise the contribution of volunteers to the development of the sport in England. With thousands of members representing players, coaches, referees, and volunteers, AFL ENGLAND exists to raise and maintain standards of Australian Rules Football through advice, education, training and publications. The diversity agenda presents opportunities to recognise and celebrate difference, provide products and services that respond to differing needs and preferences, and promote skilled and diverse workforces. As a representative organisation and a body that seeks to influence the policy agenda, AFL ENGLAND recognises the importance of embracing equality and diversity issues.

### **4. The AFL ENGLAND equity and diversity vision**

4.1 From an equality and diversity perspective, AFL ENGLAND will be a truly open, accessible and diverse organisation. AFL ENGLAND will become a body that everybody can embrace and participate in, regardless of their background.

4.2 Furthermore, our objective is to ensure that everyone is able to participate fully and contribute their best to the work of AFL ENGLAND, and do not feel excluded from being able to do so.



4.3 AFL ENGLAND is committed to ensuring that the sport in England is available to everyone without unfairness.

4.4 To achieve this we will ensure that:

- Our governance and representative structures are open and encourage participation from a wide range of people within the sport;
- We will identify and eliminate unnecessary barriers to entry and opportunities within our sport, save from any legal or regulatory impediment;
- Our education and membership policies provide access points for everyone;
- Our professional development and policy activities are accessible and relevant to everyone;
- AFL ENGLAND personnel understand the strategic vision and are equipped with the necessary skills and support to ensure we meet our objectives;
- We communicate our message effectively and appropriately so that people understand the AFL ENGLAND commitment to equality and diversity;
- We are accountable for our actions.

## **5. Actions**

5.1 Specifically, AFL ENGLAND is committed to the following actions:

- Producing, maintaining and progressing an action plan to ensure delivery of this policy;
- Ensuring the objectives of the Action Plan are owned by the AFL ENGLAND Directorate, and are written to 'SMARTER' standards – Specific; Measurable; Agreed; Realistic; Timed; Exciting; Reviewed;
- Ensuring that AFL ENGLAND's constituent directorates are included within the action plan, and that the plan is subject to constant assurance and review;
- Recognising that positive action to tackle under-representation is a key tool for delivery;
- Close adherence to The Equality Standard for Sport: A Framework for Sport (Sport England, 2004) to ensure that we can chart our continuous improvement against relevant standards. Additionally, AFL ENGLAND will measure and monitor performance in eliminating discrimination and in implementing good practice. AFL ENGLAND will monitor this policy annually and review it every two years. As a minimum AFL ENGLAND will collect equality profiling information against the criteria set out in the Equality Standard for Sport annually and conduct an equality impact assessment of this and other relevant policies every two years.

## **6. Discrimination, harassment and victimisation**

6.1 AFL ENGLAND is committed to ensuring that its employees, contractors, members, participants and volunteers are able to conduct their activities free from harassment or intimidation.



6.2 Decisions made about any individual, will be those that, as well as being consistent with relevant legislation, are necessary to the proper performance of the objective concerned.

6.3 AFL ENGLAND regards discrimination, harassment or victimisation as serious misconduct and any employee, volunteer or member who discriminates against, harasses or victimises any other person will be liable to appropriate disciplinary action within the parameters of the Disciplinary Code.

## **7. Responsibility and implementation**

The following responsibilities will apply:

7.1 The Board is responsible for ensuring that this Equality Policy is followed and to deal with any actual or potential breaches.

7.2 There will be a nominated 'Equality Champion' at Board level who has the overall responsibility for the implementation of the Equality Policy and for achieving the equality action plan (these responsibilities are clearly detailed within relevant job descriptions and work programmes).

7.3 All employees, volunteers, members and participants have responsibilities to respect, act in accordance with and thereby support and promote the spirit and intentions of the policy. Where appropriate, individual work programmes will be amended to include equality related tasks.

7.4 The new/amended policy will be implemented immediately following Board agreement. At a corporate level, it will result in the following

- A copy of this document will be available to all staff (both permanent and contract), members, coaches, referees and volunteers of AFL ENGLAND;
- AFL ENGLAND will ensure that its employment and selection practices are non-discriminatory;
- No applicant for any position within AFL ENGLAND or its associates will be placed at a disadvantage by requirements or conditions which are not necessary to the performance of the position;
- A planned approach will be adopted to eliminate discriminatory barriers;
- AFL ENGLAND will ensure that consultants and advisers demonstrate their commitment to the principles and practice of equality. This will also apply to contractors and procurement policies and practices.

## **8. Communication**

8.1 The new/revised policy will be communicated in the following ways:

- It will be part of a AFL ENGLAND Handbook (AFL ENGLAND Rules for Member Organisations) and reference will be made to it in the Disciplinary Code;



- It will be covered in all staff and volunteer induction training;
- All members will be made aware of the policy's existence when they join, and a summary of any revisions will be published in AFL ENGLAND newsletters;
- It will be available on the website of the Governing Body and, in particular, referenced within a section dedicated to diversity and equality on the AFL ENGLAND website;
- All AFL ENGLAND participants will be eligible to contribute to policy review procedures.

## **9. Monitoring and evaluation**

9.1 This policy will remain valid until a proposal or legislative change prompts a review or amendment. In the absence of this, a formal review will take place every two years.

9.2 The Board will be updated as to the progression of the policy, on a quarterly basis.

9.3 Policy impact evidence will be published bi-annually, and this analysis will be supported by statistics

## **10. Disciplinary and grievance procedures**

10.1 Anyone who believes that inequitable treatment has adversely affected them or another may raise the matter through the appropriate grievance procedure detailed within the respective foundation member documents; the AFL ENGLAND rule book or through enquiry from the designated Equality champion. They will not be penalised unless any grievance is untrue and not made in good faith.

10.2 Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against any employee, volunteer, member or organisation that violates AFL ENGLAND's Equality Policy.

10.3 As with all grievance procedures, the final point of appeal relating to this policy is a AFL ENGLAND Appeals Committee.

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