



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

POLICY / DOCUMENT PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the college complies with the Equality Act, fulfills its Public Sector Duty, and places EDI at the heart of its mission to promote climate and social justice.

APPLICATION

The policy applies to all students, staff, volunteers, governors, visitors and contractors.

INTERPRETATION

Further guidance on the use or interpretation of this policy may be obtained from the Vice Principal.

LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES / DOCUMENTS

Student Charter
Admissions Policy
Fitness to Study Policy
Complaints and Compliments
Safeguarding Policy
Prevent Policy
Recruitment and Selection of Employees
Professional Code of Standards
Disciplinary policies (for staff and for students)
Grievance Policy
Prevention of Harassment and Bullying
Freedom of Expression Policy

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Owner / Area	Principal
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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion are central to Fircroft's mission:

To promote social and climate justice by providing adults with an excellent learning environment for personal, professional and political development

The college has been creating opportunity, making people feel welcome and valuing difference since 1909. This is recognised in a framework for transformational learning, our College of Sanctuary status, and our values which include Anti-Racist. Our approach to EDI is an embedded one.

- 1.2. Fircroft is covered by the Public Sector Duty 2011 as well as the Equality Act 2010. The purpose of this policy is to ensure we comply with those and then go further. Governors have signed up to the Association of College's EDI Charter which recognises our responsibility to prepare learners to live and work in a world which is diverse.
- 1.3. The policy applies to all aspects of employment and learning, in relation to existing and also potential employees and learners. Governors, visitors, agency staff, volunteers and contractors are also expected with operate within the terms of this EDI policy.
- 1.4. Progress against our EDI objectives will be reviewed and publicised on an annual basis, and the policy revised at least every 3 years.

2. Responsibility for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

- 2.1. The college will make sure that everyone at Fircroft is aware of this EDI policy at induction and throughout their time of employment or study. Appropriate training will be provided. Under legislation and this policy, everyone at Fircroft has a responsibility to:
- Understand the responsibilities which EDI legislation and this policy place on them
 - Embed EDI values in their work and behaviour
 - Be alert to unequal treatment or outcomes at the college
 - Challenge and report inappropriate behaviour, particularly harassment or victimisation
- 2.2 Named responsibilities:
- 2.2.1 The College's **Governing Body** is accountable under law for ensuring that Fircroft fulfils its Public Sector Duty. They approve the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion policy and monitor its implementation through reports.

2.2.2 The Governing Body delegates overall responsibility for EDI and this policy to the **Principal and CEO**. This includes agreeing equality objectives and ensuring the college demonstrates our compliance with the Public Sector Duty

2.2.3 **Managers** are responsible for ensuring EDI is embedded in the culture and every area of the college. Between them they cover our curriculum, teaching and learning, student services, HR, facilities, accommodation, catering, marketing, finance and partners. They manage the college's resources and have control the data processes needed to measure impact. Individually and collectively they will:

- Ensure the college meets the statutory requirements relating to EDI
- Seek the active involvement of key EDI stakeholders, including those with protected characteristics, to understand how our services are accessed and experienced and what inequalities need addressing.
- Check the EDI implications of policy-making and strategic and operational decisions. Notes of meetings will evidence due regard to the impact of these on different equality group
- Identify areas where adjustments need to be made and lead on initiatives to increase equity, inclusion and diversity
- Act if an incident comes to their attention, in order to protect any members of staff or learners or third parties at the college
- Monitor progress and report annually on the college's compliance with the general Public Sector Equality Duty

3. Legislation, duties and definitions

3.1. The Equality Act 2010 covers employment, facilities, goods and services, and education, including the admission and treatment of students.

3.2. The Equality Act defines unlawful **discrimination** as:

- Direct discrimination (including discrimination based on perception or association).
- Combined discrimination.
- Indirect discrimination.
- Discrimination arising from disability.

3.3 The Equality Act's **Public Sector Duty** requires colleges like Fircroft to

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity.
- Foster good relations between specific groups

3.3. These duties apply across all the **protected characteristics**, which are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage or civil partnership (in relation to employment)
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

3.4. **Harassment** is defined as unwanted conduct, related to one of the protected characteristics that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity; or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It does not matter whether or not this effect was intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

3.5. **Victimisation** is defined as treating someone badly because they have done a 'protected act' (or because the institution believes that a person has or is going to do a protected act). A 'protected act' is:

- Making a claim or complaint of discrimination (under the Equality Act).
- Helping someone else to make a claim by giving evidence or information.
- Alleging that the college or someone else has breached the Act
- Doing anything else in connection with the Act.

3.6 The **Prevent Duty**, introduced in 2015, includes encouraging learners to respect other people, with particular regard to the protected characteristics in the Equality Act

3.7 The 2023 "**non-statutory Public Sector Equality Duty: guidance for public authorities**" emphasised the need for us to have due regard to certain equality considerations. These are reflected in the responsibilities of managers at 2.2.3 above:

- The need for decision-makers to consider the impact of their actions on people with different protected characteristics
- Actively monitor the impact of policies and services
- Regularly evaluate and identify areas where adjustments are needed to promote equality
- Strike a balance between fulfilling the Public Section Duty and avoiding excessive bureaucracy

3.8 With 50 staff Fircroft has a duty to publish equality objectives at least every 4 years and publish information on general duty compliance with regard to people affected by our policies and practices every year.

4. Fircroft's EDI objectives

For the lifetime of this policy (3 years to 2027), this is how the college intends to fulfil our public sector duty:

4.1. To eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.

Our specific objectives are:

- Realise our Anti-Racist value through the active work of our Race4 Justice group
- Ensure that the language we use exposes and challenges injustice

4.2. To advance equality of opportunity.

Our specific objectives are:

- Engage groups under-represented within the college and the wider FE and Skills sector
- Support the health and wellbeing of economically inactive learners
- With partners create progression routes which achieve more equal outcomes for learners facing discrimination
- Increase the diversity of management at the college
- Increase the college's understanding of and response to the menopause

4.3. To foster good relations between specific groups.

Our specific objectives are:

- Encourage freedom of speech by opening up debate to maximise learning
- Embed EDI in our learner enrichment programme

4.4 Fircroft has a social and climate justice mission which we intend to realise through these additional EDI objectives:

- Make explicit the links between social and climate inequalities
- Retain and further develop our status as a College of Sanctuary
- Reach out to education cold spots and areas with the lowest Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) score

5. Complaints

5.1. Concerns about the approach of the college or individuals in relation to equity, inclusion and diversity should be raised using through existing processes:

- For staff through our Grievance process.
- For students and other stakeholders through our Complaints process.

5.2 These processes begin at an informal stage to encourage the discussion and timely resolution of any issues. Given the importance of EDI the college will take concerns seriously and escalate them quickly where appropriate. Because of power imbalances this may mean the college takes formal action even when the victim chooses not to.

5.3 No-one will face less favourable treatment for raising a genuine concern. In recognition of the distress and stress which can be caused by breaches relating to EDI, particularly in cases relating to harassment and victimisation, managers will remain supportive of all parties involved. This may include external support, and then training and development after the situation has been resolved.

5.4 Serious breaches of this policy, e.g. a legal offence or gross misconduct as defined in the College's Procedures and Codes of Conduct, may lead to suspension, dismissal (for staff) or exclusion (for learners).