



Equal Opportunities Policy

AIMS:

The aim of this policy is to communicate the commitment of the members of Baillies Mills Accordion Band to the promotion of equality of opportunity.

It is our policy to provide equality of membership to all, irrespective of:

- gender, including gender reassignment
- marital or civil partnership status
- having or not having dependents
- religious belief or political opinion
- race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, being an Irish traveller)
- disability
- sexual orientation
- age

We are opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. All members of Baillies Mills Accordion Band will be treated fairly, and will not be discriminated against on any of the above grounds. Decisions on membership, selection for office, training or any other benefit will be made objectively, without unlawful discrimination, and will be based on aptitude and ability.

We recognise that the provision of equal opportunities in all our activities will benefit all members of Baillies Mills Accordion Band. This policy will help members to develop their full potential, and the talents and resources of the members will be utilised fully to maximise the effectiveness of the band.

Baillies Mills Accordion Band recognises that there is a statutory duty under the NI Act 1998, to implement an Equal Opportunities Policy. This policy applies to all members of the band.

Baillies Mills Accordion Band is committed to the principles and practice of Equality, and we value the diversity of the local population. We would like our services, and resources to be accessible and useful to every citizen regardless of gender, age, ethnic origin, religious belief, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or any other individual characteristic which may unfairly affect a person's opportunities in life.

EQUALITY COMMITMENTS:

We are committed to:

- promoting equality of opportunity for all band members
- promoting a good and harmonious social environment in which all band members are treated with respect and dignity, and in which no form of discrimination is tolerated
- preventing occurrences of unlawful direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- fulfilling all our legal obligations under the equality legislation and associated codes of practice
- complying with our own equal opportunities policy and associated policies
- taking lawful affirmative or positive action, where appropriate
- breaches of our equal opportunities policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to termination of band membership

IMPLEMENTATION:

The Chair of the band has specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy. We expect all members to abide by the policy, and help to create the equality environment which is its aim.

In order to implement this policy we shall:

- Communicate the policy to members by issuing an induction pamphlet to all existing, and new members
- Baillies Mills Accordion Band will endeavour, through appropriate training, to ensure that it does not consciously, or unconsciously discriminate in the selection or recruitment of applicants for membership of the band, or its offices
- Incorporate specific and appropriate duties in respect of implementing the equal opportunities policy into roles and responsibilities of members

- Incorporate equal opportunities notices into general communications practices (e.g. announcements, annual report at annual general meeting, notices and newsletters). This policy will be read out to all members at each annual general meeting
- Ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfil the aims of the policy

MONITORING AND REVIEW:

Baillies Mills Accordion Band will establish appropriate information and monitoring systems to assist the effective implementation of their Equal Opportunities Policy. The effectiveness of the Equal Opportunities Policy will be reviewed regularly (at least annually), and action taken as necessary.

COMPLAINTS:

Band members who believe that they have suffered any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation are entitled to raise the matter through the agreed procedures (See below). A copy of these procedures is available from the band Secretary. All complaints of discrimination will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially.

PROCEDURE FOR MAKING AND DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS:

The band's approach to complaints is to attempt to resolve them as quickly and informally as possible, and at the level at which they occur. The informal procedure set out below reflects this approach, while the formal stage consists of recourse to the appropriate outside agencies.

If an individual thinks that he/she is being subjected to discrimination in any form, they should not feel that it is their fault, or that they have to tolerate it without question.

In the first instance, the band member should consider how best to deal with the situation, and might seek advice from the following:

- the band's Chairperson
- the band's Secretary
- another band member

The band member should then consider an approach to the band member concerned to explain that his/her behaviour is unwanted, or is causing distress, asking that it should cease. This could be done by the person alone, or in the presence of one of those listed above. At this initial, informal stage, there may be no need to 'document' proceedings.

If/when the matter moves to a point where a third party becomes involved e.g. a Solicitor etc. then there is a need for the band to document and record communication/proceedings following the engagement of the third party.

If the matter remains unresolved through this informal approach, or if the problem continues after an agreed resolution, then the band may need to consider some form of mediation.

GUIDANCE NOTES - FOR A BAND MEMBER ACCUSED OF BREACHING THIS POLICY:

If a band member makes a complaint against you, you should consider the following:

- Read this Code of Practice in full, and note the obligations of all members under the band's policy on discrimination.
- Differences of attitude, background and culture or misinterpretation of social signals mean that what is perceived as discrimination by one band member may not be or seem so to another. Even though your behaviour may seem harmless to you, the other person's reasonable reaction to your behaviour is important.
- Listen carefully to the complaint, and the particular concerns expressed, and consider whether the complaint can be justified in any way, and whether it would be advisable, and appropriate to modify your behaviour.
- The first indication you may have that there is a problem may be when another band member tells you that he/she is offended or upset by certain aspects of your behaviour, and he/she asks you to stop behaving towards them in a particular manner.
- Alternatively, you may first be made aware that there is a problem when approached by one of the designated members of the band attempting to resolve the issue, or informing you that a formal complaint has been made.

If you are accused of discrimination, you may wish to consult a Solicitor, Mediator, etc.

Date:

Signature: Chair of Band