**Policy Name: Equal Opportunities**

**[Author]:**

**Approved by:**

**[Date]:**

 **[insert name Local Optical Committee]:**

### Equal Opportunities Policy

1. **Introduction and Scope**The LOC fully subscribes to equal opportunities for all. The Committee believes that diversity is a strength and practises inclusion and opportunities for all.

This Policy outlines the LOC’s best intentions with good faith to promote Equal Opportunities but does not constitute a legal document.

1. **Equality Act 2010**

The LOC recognises section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998. We will do everything possible to:

* Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010.
* Permit no discrimination from any party.
* Advance equality of opportunities between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
* Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The Company recognises protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010 to be:

* Age
* Disability
* Gender reassignment
* Pregnancy and maternity
* Race, religion or belief
* Sex and sexual orientation.
1. **Requirements for members**

We require our members to have a duty to:

* Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
* Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.
* Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in LOC activities.
* Observe as far as possible and where relevant the Equality and Human Rights Commission’s Codes of Practice for Employment, Equal Pay, and Services, Public Functions and Associations.
1. **Potential breaches and Complaints**

In the event of a person, whether on the committee or a local contractor or performer believing that a committee member has breached this Policy, they may raise a complaint.

1. **Complaints Procedure**

The complaint should be directed in the first instance to the Chairman or Secretary or another officer of the Committee, as appropriate. The officer should consider whether the local NHS team should be informed of the complaint. As below, LOCSU can arbitrate and/or advise as requested. Nothing in this Policy should affect the legal rights of the Committee or a person making a complaint.

All complaints are acknowledged by the LOC within 3 working days. When acknowledging receipt of a complaint, the LOC offers to discuss with the complainant how and when the LOC intends to investigate and resolve the complaint. If the complainant refuses this offer, the LOC will advise the complainant in writing how long it is likely to take them to respond concerning the substance of the complaint (the ‘response period’).

The LOC endeavours to keep the complainant informed of the progress of the investigation. As soon as possible after completing the investigation, the LOC considers the complaint and what it proposes to do to resolve the complaint and any consequent action. This will be done within 10 working days where possible. The LOC endeavours to resolve the complaint within 6 months after receiving the complaint or, if it cannot be resolved, the LOC informs the complainant why they have not managed to do so.

The Company keeps a record of each complaint received, the subject matter and outcome of each complaint, each response period where applicable, and, in the cases of a response period being applicable, whether the complainant was informed of the outcome of the investigation.

1. **External mediation**

If the officer of the Committee, to whom the complaint has been directed, believes that it is not appropriate to deal with the complaint, the complaint should be directed to LOCSU or, if that is inappropriate, to the national representative bodies. They will then will investigate the complaint and make recommendations on the resolution of the complaint. LOCSU or the national representative bodies should notify the LOC and the complainant of the outcome of the investigation and the recommendations. The LOC must either follow the recommendations or refer to an Extraordinary General Meeting.

1. **Confirmed breaches of this Equal Opportunities Policy**

The outcome of a breach of this Equal Opportunities being uphold from a complaint may be that (note, the outcomes below are not exclusive):

* the member or officer who has breached the Policy offers an apology to the person who has had their equal opportunities breached
* the Committee provides remedial training to the member or officer
* or where his/her position is untenable the Committee disqualifies them from the committee/their position.