



Rotary International  
in Great Britain & Ireland

# Equality and Diversity Policy

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NOTE: This policy applies to all activities performed by or on behalf of RIBI at national or district level and references to Rotary Clubs are so worded as each Rotary Club is autonomous subject to compliance with RI, RIBI and Club Constitutions.

# 1. Purpose

## 1.1 Statement of Intent

RIBI is committed to promoting equality, fairness and respect. We aim to create an environment where diversity is recognised, valued and celebrated. We will provide opportunities for all Rotarians to develop and to fulfil their potential. We will engage fully with our diverse society. We will take care to assess the impact of our policies and their implementation on race, religion and belief, gender, gender realignment, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity and age equality. These are the 'Protected Characteristics' contained in the Equality Act 2010, and they also correspond broadly with the headings under which citizens are legally protected from discrimination in employment and other aspects of participation in society in equality legislation in the Republic of Ireland, namely the Equal Status Act 2000 as amended by the Equality Act 2004.

## 1.2 What is Diversity?

When people think of diversity, they may think first of ethnicity and race and then gender. However, diversity is much broader than that. Diversity includes, but is not limited to: age, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, physical abilities or qualities, race, sexual orientation, educational background, geographic location, income, marital status, partnership status, religion or belief, parental status, caring responsibilities and work experience.

Diversity management can be broadly defined as accepting, valuing and getting the best from all individuals whatever their group or individual differences such as communications style, career or vocational experiences and other factors.

*"Every Rotarian, whatever they look like and however they operate, maximises their potential and value to the team. Everyone is valued as an individual as well as a member of the team. Everyone is themselves and seeks to be successful as themselves rather than conforming to a mould."*

In short, every individual has a right to their own success and a responsibility to the success of the team. They have a right to celebrate individuality and a responsibility to conform to the team's policies, ethos and codes of behaviour.

# 2. Policy

RIBI is committed to providing excellent diversity and equality of opportunity. RIBI objectives are to promote and develop diversity initiatives with a view to matching and, if possible, improving on best practice. It actively endorses relevant programmes of action and codes of practice on all aspects of diversity.

RIBI aims to provide an environment where we will:

- Encourage Rotary Clubs to recruit membership that reflects, at all levels, the diversity of the communities where they operate and of society as a whole.
- Treat all our members and outside contacts with dignity and respect.
- Provide Rotarians with the opportunity to develop and realise their full potential.
- Take positive action to secure equality of opportunity.
- Ensure that our recruitment, selection, and Rotary career progression processes are fair, objective and free from bias or stereotyping.
- Endeavour to ensure that Rotary Clubs deliver excellent service to their respective diverse communities.

## 2.1 Objectives

Our diversity and equality objectives are focused on three key areas:

### 2.1.1 Service - we will:

- ~ Strive to review all RIBI services from the perspective of the RIBI diversity principles to ensure they meet the differing needs of individuals and groups.
- ~ Provide clear information about RIBI services in ways that are accessible and meet the community needs.
- ~ Consult with different groups on service needs and provision.
- ~ Monitor and evaluate services to ensure that they do not unfairly discriminate.
- ~ Ensure equal access to RIBI complaints procedure.
- ~ Assess our policies, functions and practices to consider their impact on equality in line with legal requirements and best practice policy.

### 2.1.2 Recruitment and Retention – we will:

- ~ Encourage Rotary Clubs to recruit members that represent the makeup of the regional population in terms of race, gender and disability.
- ~ Monitor the selection process to ensure it is free from discrimination and openly accountable.
- ~ Review and monitor all other policies and procedures to ensure that they do not inadvertently allow unfair discrimination to occur.
- ~ Ensure that access to information, procedures and records is as open and transparent as possible.
- ~ Provide and encourage Rotary Clubs to provide a safe and accessible environment, which values and respects individuals' identities and cultures.
- ~ Encourage a culture and environment free from discrimination and harassment.
- ~ Develop a culture which encourages Rotary networks to share best practice and provide specific support to diverse groups.
- ~ Encourage and help Rotarians to reach their full potential.
- ~ Assess our policies, functions and practices to consider their impact on equality in line with legal requirements and best practice policy.

### 2.1.3 Working in Partnership – we will:

- ~ Work with others in partnership to endeavour to provide an environment free from unfair discrimination and harassment.
- ~ Encourage others to adopt this policy.

## 3. Procedures

### 3.1 Principles

RIBI aims to achieve its objectives by adhering to the following principles:

- Reviewing and encouraging Rotary Clubs to review all policies and procedures from the perspective of RIBI diversity policy to ensure they comply with legislation, best practice policy and meet the differing needs of individuals and groups, without unfair discrimination.
- Working together and encouraging Rotary Clubs to work together to understand and accommodate the diversity of our contacts in the development, access and provision of our services.

- Providing clear information about RIBI services in ways that are accessible and meet community needs.
- Monitoring and evaluating RIBI services and encouraging Rotary Clubs to monitor and evaluate services to ensure that they do not unfairly discriminate against particular groups.
- Ensuring equal access for all Rotarians to RIBI complaints procedures.
- Employing and encouraging Rotary Clubs to employ recruitment practices that are representative of the population.
- Monitoring and encouraging Rotary Clubs to monitor the recruitment and selection process to ensure it is free from unfair and unlawful discrimination and openly accountable.
- Providing and encouraging Rotary Clubs to provide a safe and accessible environment, in which all individuals’ values, identities and cultures are respected.
- Ensuring and encouraging Rotary Clubs to ensure access to learning and development activities to ensure equality of opportunity in career development.

### 3.2 Discrimination

Direct discrimination is defined as less favourable treatment ‘because of’ a protected characteristic, such as:

- Age;
- Disability;
- Gender reassignment;
- Marriage or civil partnership;
- Pregnancy and maternity;
- Race;
- Religion or belief;
- Sex;
- Sexual orientation.

or any other factor that distinguishes them.

Discrimination in the context of the law may take a number of forms:

<b>Direct Discrimination</b>	<b>Indirect Discrimination</b>
<p>Direct discrimination is defined as less favourable treatment ‘because of’ a protected characteristic.</p> <p>Direct discrimination occurs when individuals experience negative beliefs, attitudes and assumptions from others and are treated less favourably as a result.</p>	<p>Indirect discrimination occurs when a policy or practice that applies in the same way for everybody has an effect which particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic.</p> <p>This kind of discrimination is unlawful unless we can show that it is justified i.e. a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.</p> <p>As is already the case, unjustified indirect discrimination will continue to be unlawful in relation to the protected characteristics of age, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation but not pregnancy and maternity.</p>

<b>Discrimination by association</b>	<b>Discrimination by perception</b>
<p>The Equality Act 2010 makes it clear that discrimination occurs if one person treats another less favourably because of a protected characteristic, whether or not the person him or herself possesses that protected characteristic.</p> <p>This means, for example, that it will be unlawful to discriminate against someone because they associate with a third person who possesses a protected characteristic.</p>	<p>The way the Equality Act 2010 is worded means that it will also be unlawful to discriminate against someone because they are perceived to possess a particular protected characteristic, even mistaken.</p> <p>This kind of discrimination by perception is already prohibited where discrimination is on grounds of sexual orientation, age or on racial grounds.</p> <p>The Equality Act 2010 puts it beyond doubt that the same principle will also apply to sex, pregnancy, gender reassignment, age and disability discrimination by perception (at least if the legislation is taken at face value).</p> <p>As with associative discrimination, the protected characteristic of marital status/civil partnership is not covered by perception discrimination.</p>
<b>Combined discrimination</b>	<b>Harassment</b>
<p>Individuals who consider that they have been discriminated against because of a combination of protected characteristics (as opposed to a single characteristic) will be able to bring claims of dual discrimination. The new concept only applies to claims brought based on two combined protected characteristics (excluding pregnancy and maternity, or marriage and civil partnerships).</p>	<p>The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful for a person to engage in unwanted conduct in relation to a protected characteristic which has the effect of violating another person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or otherwise environment for that person.</p> <p>There are further specific provisions relating to sexual harassment or harassment related to gender reassignment or sex.</p>
<b>Victimisation</b>	
<p>The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful for an individual to be subjected to any detriment because they have, or are believed to have, done a protected act.</p> <p>The protected acts referred to are bringing proceedings under the Equality Act 2010, giving evidence or information in connection with such proceedings, doing any other thing for the purpose of or in connection with the Equality Act 2010 or making an allegation that another person has contravened Act.</p>	

Similar provisions in relation to discrimination are contained in the Republic of Ireland's Equal Status Act 2000 as amended by the Equality Act 2004.

### 3.3 The Law

RIBI is required to comply with legislation concerning diversity and equality, in the delivery of services and in the provision of employment opportunities. RIBI will comply with current and emerging anti-discrimination legislation, as defined in the following Acts:

- The Equality Act 2010, and, in the Republic of Ireland, the Equal Status Act 2000 as amended by the Equality Act 2004.

RIBI recognises that legal obligations in relation to discrimination may overlap between the different groups. There are also diverse groups that are not explicitly protected by the law, but it is RIBI policy to ensure good practice in diversity and equality to all members and communities.

### 3.4 Language

Prejudice can be formed and reinforced by the language we use. Language, however, is constantly evolving and it may be difficult to always know what terminology is considered correct at any given time. What is important is that we all take care not to use words or expressions that we know, or should reasonably be expected to know, might cause offence or serve to patronise, stereotype, exclude or make fun of individuals or groups.

It is equally inappropriate to discriminate against someone else because of an accent or dialect.

### 3.5 Race

Whilst ‘*race*’ has no exact legal definition, ‘*ethnic group*’ is defined as a group that regards itself, or is regarded by others, as a distinct community by virtue of certain characteristics that distinguish the group from the surrounding community. This includes a long shared history and a cultural tradition of its own including family and social customs. A group of people with shared ethnic origin, which is numerically small, compared to the majority of the population within the community or who may be or feel oppressed because of their lack of power are referred to in this policy as Black or Minority Ethnic (BME).

Racial discrimination arises when a person or group is treated less favourably than another on ‘racial grounds’, such as colour, race, nationality (including citizenship), or ethnic or national origins.

#### 3.5.1 Racism and Institutional Racism

Racism can be defined as a mistaken belief that one’s own culture and values are superior. This leads to oppression of people, who are different because of their race, colour, culture, nationality, and/or ethnic origin.

- ~ Racism in general terms consists of conduct, words or practices which may advantage or disadvantage people because of their race, colour, culture or ethnic origin. It is just as damaging in its more subtle form as in its open, verbal or physical form.
- ~ Institutional racism is a term used to describe the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantage BME people.

#### 3.5.2 RIBI Policy

RIBI recognises the harmful effect that racism has on BME people both in service delivery and employment. RIBI will acknowledge and value diversity as an asset to be built upon. In service delivery RIBI will recognise diversity, in terms of, for example, language, dress or faith, and will

respond sensitively to the different needs of different groups of people. RIBI recognises that there is still under representation of BME Rotarians in senior positions. RIBI will examine why this is the case and, where appropriate, take and encourage Rotary Clubs to take action to remove bias and barriers to success.

## 3.6 Gender

### 3.6.1 Sexism

Sexism is unfair discrimination on the basis of gender, which stems from the false belief that one gender is superior to the other. Sexism can manifest as attitudes, words or behaviour that treat one gender less favourably than the other. This behaviour, if unchallenged can become embedded in institutional power structures, systems and practices and be used to oppress one gender, generally women.

### 3.6.2 Gender Identity

It is unlawful to discriminate against transsexual people. It is also unlawful to disclose the gender history of a transsexual person who is legally recognised in their acquired gender (i.e. they hold a Gender Recognition Certificate). It is RIBI policy to afford a similar degree of privacy to all transsexual people irrespective of whether a GRC is held or not.

Transsexual people are people who have been diagnosed with gender dysphoria, and undergo gender reassignment - the medical process that transsexual people undergo to bring their body into line with their gender identity.

Transgender is an alternative broader term related to gender identity. A transgender person may not necessarily intend to undergo complete gender reassignment. Unlike transsexual, transgender is not a legal definition.

Unfavourable treatment means treating a person less favourably on gender identity grounds than you treat, or would treat, a person for whom no gender identity grounds exist. Negative attitudes and prejudices can lead to unfair treatment, disadvantage and harassment, both in service delivery and employment.

### 3.6.3 RIBI Policy

RIBI recognises the harmful effects of sexism and unfair discrimination on the grounds of gender and gender identity and will not tolerate it. Negative attitudes and prejudices lead to sexual harassment and unfair treatment in service delivery.

RIBI will ensure that transsexual employees and customers can expect privacy and their gender histories remain confidential in line with legislation.

## 3.7 Disability

People are disabled by physical barriers in the environment and by attitudinal barriers in society, rather than by their own impairment. Disability can be defined as:

*'Physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term adverse effect on an individual's ability to carry out normal day to day activities'*

This definition includes physical or sensory impairments, learning disabilities and mental or emotional distress.

These may not always be visible to others. RIBI recognises the many damaging effects of unfair discrimination against disabled people and will not tolerate it. Negative attitudes, prejudices and

physical barriers can lead to unfair treatment, disadvantage and harassment, both in service delivery and membership.

### 3.7.1 Disability Discrimination

The Equality Act 2010 introduces a new type of disability discrimination - '*discrimination arising from disability*'. The inference that disability represents a lack of personal ability can distort the way in which an individual person is perceived, leading to prejudice and unfair discrimination. People with disabilities are sometimes believed to be unsuitable.

### 3.7.2 RIBI Policy

RIBI will recognise the unique needs of disabled people and make appropriate, reasonable adjustments to environment to remove substantial disadvantage, as required under current legislation. This includes both physical access and access to information.

## 3.8 Age

### 3.8.1 Ageism

Negative assumptions leading to prejudice and unfair discrimination are ascribed to people because of their age and often intensifies the older people become. It is often assumed that young people lack maturity or are unable to take responsibility and that older people are less flexible and lack the ability to learn. Ageism has often been embedded in the policies, practices and procedures of organisations. The various exceptions contained in the Age Discrimination Regulations are repeated in the Equality Act 2010. Exceptions are also provided in the corresponding legislation in the Republic of Ireland.

### 3.8.2 RIBI Policy

RIBI recognises that ageism has harmful effects in terms of behaviour and treatment and believes that it devalues both older and younger people, as well as giving an unfair advantage to certain age groups. While the skills and needs of people may vary according to age, it is wrong to make assumptions.

Equally, in both service delivery and communication processes it is important to consult with people of all ages and to adopt different approaches where justifiable and necessary.

RIBI is committed to a membership policy that does not take age into consideration in recruitment.

## 3.9 Sexuality

### 3.9.1 Hetero-sexism and Homophobia

Hetero-sexism refers to discrimination beyond homophobia against bisexuals, gay and lesbian people, in fact, anyone who isn't heterosexual.

Hetero-sexism and homophobia can often be embedded in institutional power structures, systems and practices and can lead to discrimination against lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals or even those who are presumed, by others, to be of one of these groups.

### 3.9.2 RIBI Policy

RIBI recognises that institutional hetero-sexism and homophobia within society can result in negative attitudes and prejudice leading to harassment and unfair discrimination.

Stereotypical conventions and attitudes to relationships and domestic arrangements can serve to reinforce collective, indirect acts of unfair discrimination. This can take place both in service delivery and in employment.

In service delivery, RIBI will respect the right of individuals to be open about their sexuality and respectful of civil partnership status of lesbian and gay couples. RIBI also recognises that gay, lesbian and bisexual people have a right to private and family life

### 3.10 Religion and Belief

People from minority faith groups within the UK may face deliberate or inadvertent discrimination as a result of misunderstanding and adverse stereotypes concerning their beliefs and culture. They may find it difficult to create a balance between the demands of society and the requirements of their faith, such as religious observance of holy days and festivals.

#### 3.10.1 RIBI Policy

In service delivery, RIBI will consult and will encourage Rotary Clubs to consult with the community to identify the specific needs of minority faith groups. We will always endeavour to deal with sensitivity with the often complex issues surrounding religious observance and other faith cultures.

#### 3.10.2 Maternity and Paternity Leave and Flexible Working

RIBI has in place flexible policies that in every case meet the minimum requirements of the law and in most areas exceed those requirements.

## 4. Turning Policy into Practice - RIBI Diversity Framework

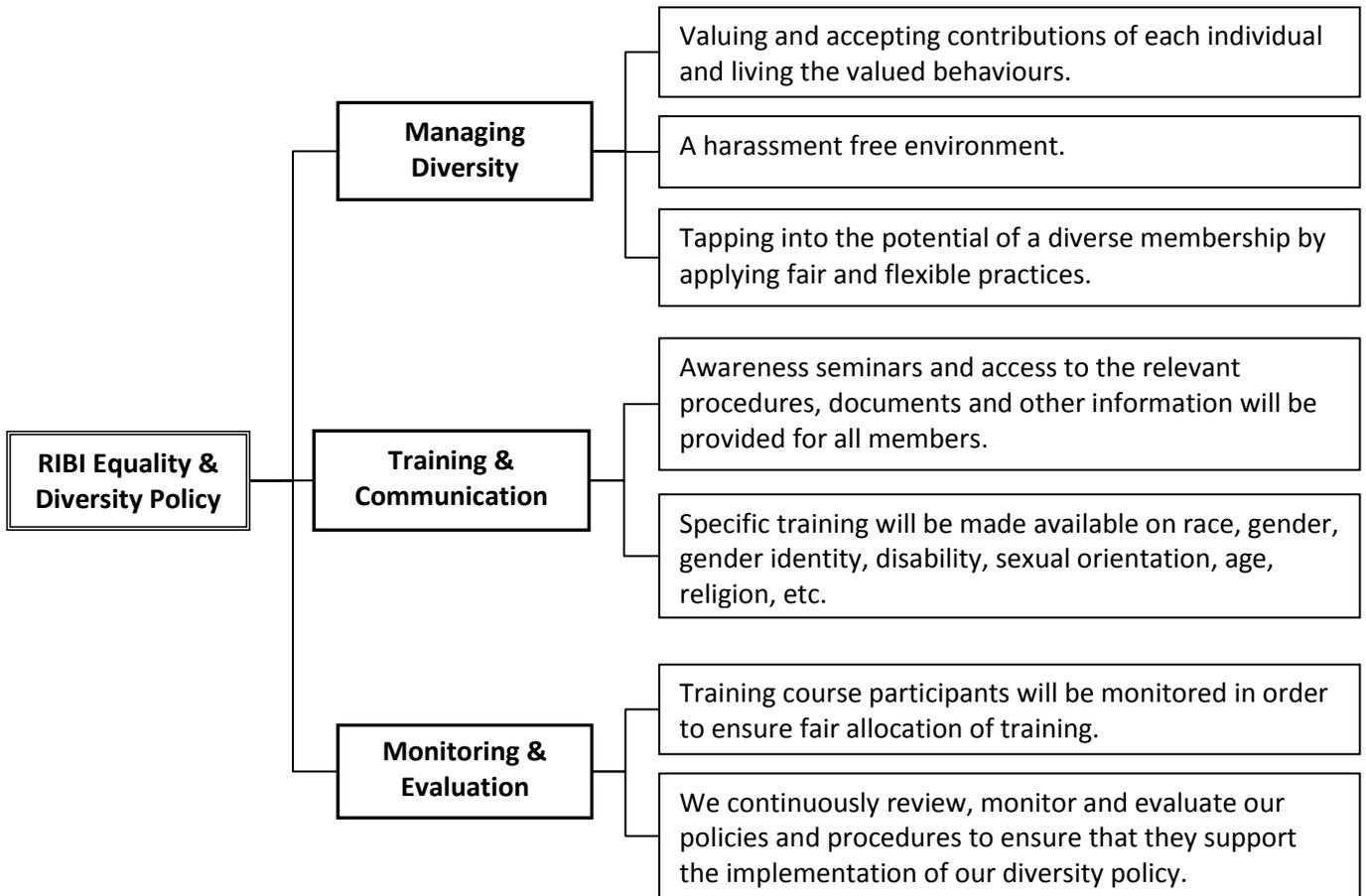
### 4.1 Aims

The aim of RIBI Diversity and Equality Framework is to:

- Ensure and encourage Rotary Clubs to ensure that consideration for diversity and equality issues become an integral part of our service delivery.
- Develop and encourage Rotary Clubs to develop a membership and leadership profile in RIBI that reflects diversity by delivering genuine equality of opportunity through best practice.
- Ensure all members understand RIBI policy, carry responsibility for putting it into practice and challenge inappropriate or discriminatory behaviour.

## 4.2 RIBI Diversity Framework

### 4.2.1 RIBI Diversity Framework



### 4.3 Ownership and Responsibility

The RIBI national President and RIBI Executive are ultimately responsible for the delivery of effective diversity and the provision of equality and compliance by RIBI with all relevant legislation. They are also responsible for the provision of overall direction and for ownership of the policy. RIBI will also encourage Rotary Clubs to take similar responsibility in respect of their respective clubs. RIBI Executive members are now diversity champions, setting an example to all members and demonstrating their own commitment to the policy through their behaviour and attitude.

RIBI will endeavour to ensure that all partners, and other organisations working with or in partnership with RIBI, are aware of, understand and comply with this policy.

### 4.4 Conclusion

RIBI recognises the benefits of effective diversity and equality. RIBI recognises that if it fully understands the different perspectives and characteristics of its members, then it can harness those differences for the benefit of the individual, their colleagues and the wider community.

## 5. RIBI's protocol for dealing with equality and diversity complaints

Once the complainant has exhausted any complaints procedure available under that Rotarian's club or district procedures respectively, RIBI's protocol for dealing with equality and diversity complaints is set out on page 14.

## 6. Roles and Responsibilities

### 6.1 Equality and Diversity Roles and Responsibilities.

All Rotarians are responsible for:

- Maintaining an environment that is free from discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation.
- Ensuring that behaviour complies with equality and diversity legislation.
- Respecting the dignity of others.
- Speaking out against discrimination, harassment and bullying they are subject to or witness taking place.
- Demonstrating valued behaviours.
- Maintaining confidentiality on issues raised.

#### 6.1.1 Informal approach: Challenge Technique.

There may be situations where complaints can be resolved informally. Sometimes people may not be aware that their behaviour is unwelcome and an informal discussion can lead to greater understanding and an agreement that the behaviour will stop. The individual can choose to initiate this action by themselves or seek support from someone else. In some cases the individuals may not feel comfortable with facing the person face to face and therefore they may choose to write a letter to the person asking them to stop. This is known as the 'Challenge Technique'.

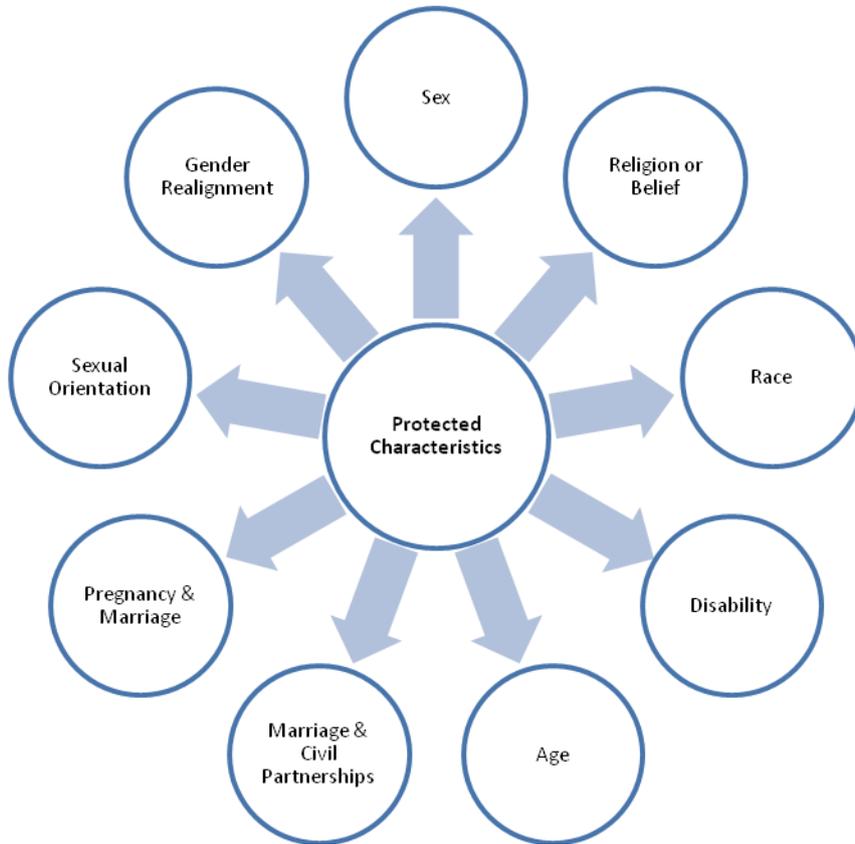
RIBI will strive to adopt this process in the first instance regarding any complaint that is received. *[This protocol, does not affect an individual's right to seek legal advice should they wish to do so. It is hoped however that this protocol may be adopted in the first instance]*

**Direct Discrimination**

Direct discrimination occurs when individuals experience negative beliefs, attitudes and assumptions from others and are treated less favourably as a result.

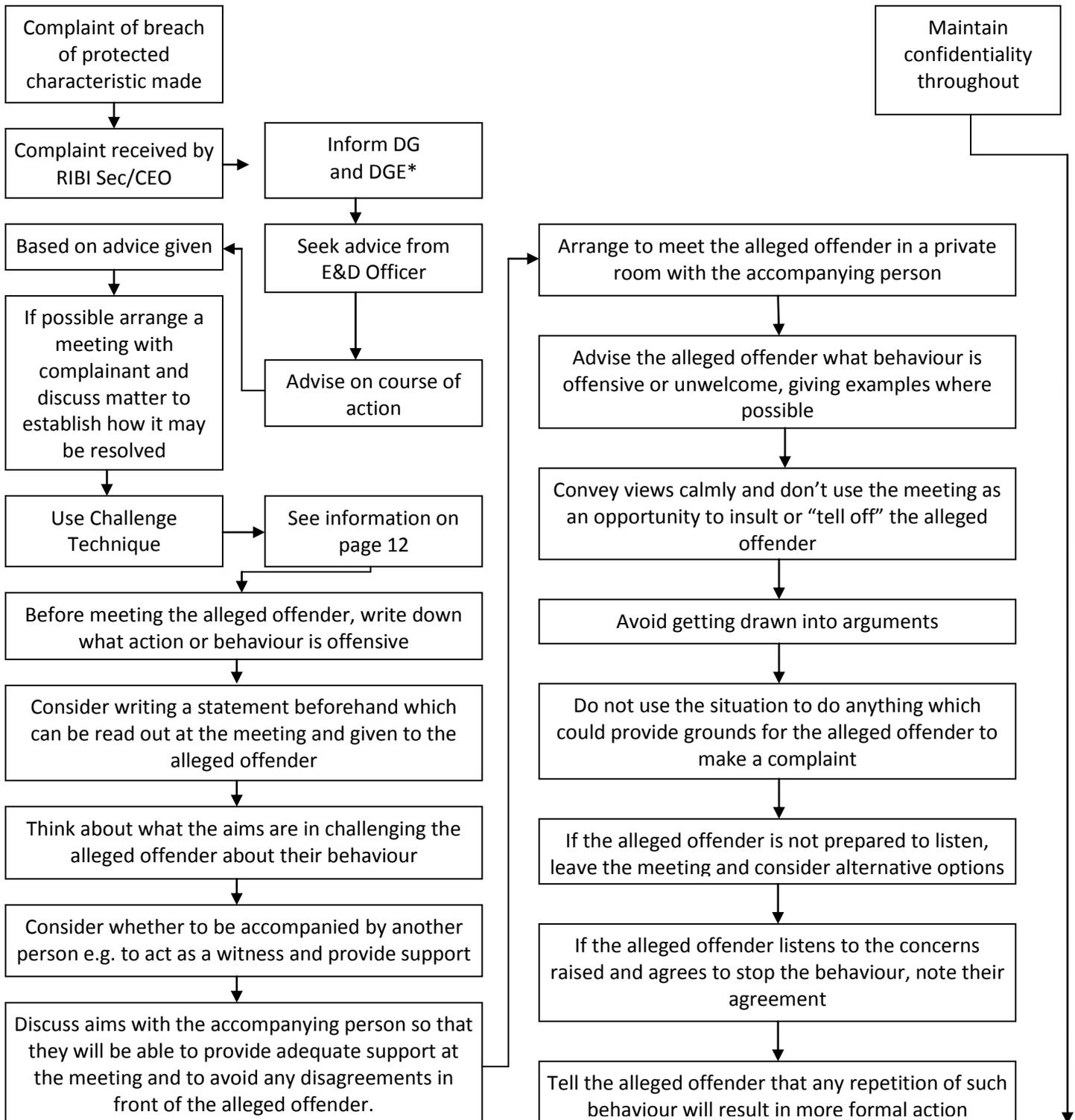
**Indirect Discrimination**

Indirect discrimination occurs when a requirement of membership is made which is less favourable, affects or favours one group more than another and cannot be explained by the needs of membership.



## 6.1.2 Protocol for Dealing with Equality & Diversity Complaints

RIBI Challenge Technique for dealing with Discrimination, Harassment, Bullying or Victimisation Complaints



In the case of an employee of RIBI, any such formal action shall be pursued in accordance with the relevant disciplinary procedures and possible sanctions may include verbal or written warnings, demotion (if in a

position of authority) or even dismissal. The sanction imposed will be based upon the seriousness of any offence committed.

\*If the complaint is concerning the DG or DGE, the District Secretary/District Officer will seek advice of the RIBI E&D Officer or the RIBI Secretary/CEO.

In the case of members of RIBI any such formal action may result in the suspension, restriction or revocation of membership and / or membership rights. Reference herein to "members" shall refer to both clubs within RIBI and individual club members.

Should any person, whether it be the victim or the offender, wish to appeal against the outcome resulting from the implementation of the Challenge Technique they shall have the right to do so and, in the first instance, any such appeal should be addressed to the RIBI Secretary/CEO. Upon receipt of an appeal a further meeting shall be arranged at which the issue shall be given additional consideration. The outcome of any appeal shall, however, be final.