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<i>Approved by:</i>	<i>Patricia Fitzgerald</i>

2.14 Disability Awareness Policy

2.14.1 Purpose and Scope

As part of its commitment to equality of opportunity, **safefood** wishes to provide clear guidelines and statements in relation to the provision of services and employment of disabled people to ensure that discrimination does not take place.

In all our activities, we will seek to:

- Provide disabled people with access to the full range of career opportunities within **safefood**.
- Remove unnecessary obstacles that can be placed in the way of disabled people applying for posts or availing of services provided by **safefood**.
- Provide an environment free from assumptions and stereotyping that will provide dignity and respect by ensuring regular training programmes are carried out.
- Promote positive action initiatives where appropriate.
- Examine and make, where appropriate, any reasonable adjustments.

This policy will apply to all current and potential staff members, Advisory Board and Advisory Committee, contractors, service providers and consumers of **safefood**. It is supported and underpinned by other policies such as Equality and Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment.

2.14.2 Legislative Framework

Within the island of Ireland, it is recognised that barriers exist within society which present practical difficulties for disabled people seeking employment, who are currently in employment and/or accessing goods, facilities, services or premises. Each jurisdiction has its own legislation:

2.14.2.1 Republic of Ireland

- The Disability Act 2005
- The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015
- The Equal Status Acts 2000-2018

2.14.2.2 Northern Ireland

The main Acts are:

- The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 as amended.
- The Disability Discrimination (NI) Order (DDO) 2006

There are also Codes of Practice in both jurisdictions that deal with accessibility of services and information for disabled people.

safefood has different obligations as to each jurisdiction but the ultimate goal for **safefood** is to ensure positive steps are taken to remove barriers insofar as practicable.

2.14.3 Definitions

Discrimination is fully defined in our Equality Policy. In summary, discrimination will have deemed to occur when a disabled person is treated less favourably than an able-bodied person. The definition of disability is slightly different within the two jurisdictions in that the legislation in Northern Ireland specifically defines some conditions that are regarded as disability.

2.14.3.1 Republic of Ireland

Under the Disability Act 2005, disability is defined as:

‘disability, in relation to a person, means a substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the State by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment.’

Therefore, it must be a long-term condition (continued or expected to last for more than 12 months or so) which includes long lasting effects where people experience intermittent difficulties. It does not include temporary incapacity e.g. broken leg. It must also be a condition that could substantially restrict the capacity to participate in work, social life or leisure activities like watching TV, going to a match. This does not include minor problems such as mild diabetes or wearing glasses.

There is not a definitive list of conditions that constitute ‘disability’ under this piece of legislation. The test is whether the condition substantially restricts a person’s capacity to participate in areas of everyday life.

2.14.3.2 Northern Ireland

The Disability Discrimination (DDA) Act 1995 states that a disabled person is anyone with:

‘a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities’.

This means that the effect of the physical or mental impairment on ability to carry out normal day to day activities e.g. washing or catching a bus is more than minor or trivial. It does not mean to be severe. The effect has to have lasted or be likely to last overall for at least 12 months and the effect must be a detrimental one.

The test of whether impairment affects normal day to day activities is whether it affects one of the broad activities listed in the Act. These are mobility; manual dexterity; physical co-ordination; continence; ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects; speech, hearing or eyesight; memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand or perception of the risk of physical danger. There is no requirement that a mental health condition is 'clinically well recognised' before being counted as an impairment.

Also, people who develop cancer, HIV or multiple sclerosis are protected by disability discrimination from the point of diagnosis, not from the point of where the condition affects their ability to carry out day to day activities.

The following conditions specifically do not count as impairments:

- Addiction to/dependency on alcohol, nicotine or any other substance (unless resulting from substance being medically prescribed).
- Seasonal allergic rhinitis (e.g. hay fever) unless it aggravates the effect of another condition.
- Tendency to set fires, steal or physically/sexually abuse others.
- Exhibitionism and voyeurism.
- Disfigurements such as tattoos, non-medical body piercing or attachments to such piercing.

2.14.4 ***safefood* policy**

It is recognised that disabled people may encounter greater barriers than other people in society and ***safefood*** is committed to providing equality of opportunity. The two main areas for ***safefood*** are in employment and accessibility of services.

2.14.4.1 Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment and selection will be based solely on the basis of abilities, qualifications and suitability. We will need to ensure that the person selected for appointment is free from any impairment that would prevent them from carrying out the role properly. This decision will be based solely on medical advice rather than on assumptions. The following guidelines will apply:

- All recruitment material will be reviewed and monitored to ensure that there are no unnecessary or irrelevant obstacles placed in the way of disabled people applying for posts.
- All reasonable efforts will be made to provide special facilities and equipment to enable disabled people to participate in the recruitment process.
- Ensure that all interview boards are briefed on disability awareness and the Equality Policy.

2.14.4.2 In Employment

Disabled people may encounter greater difficulties than other members of staff in adjusting to a new work environment. Good communications will be key to overcoming this but it is an often overlooked

fact, that the best source of information about the disability will be the disabled person themselves. They are the experts in their own life and initial integration for new staff members should include a meeting to discuss any potential problems and to see if any reasonable accommodations can be made. Whilst respecting medical confidentiality, it will be important to include the staff member's manager. All arrangements will need to be reviewed to assess their effectiveness.

It is important to note that people can acquire a disability at any stage during their working life or have a disability that is progressive in nature. **safefood** will ensure that all reasonable accommodations are made to facilitate the staff member's continuous employment. Disabled staff will be given the same opportunity and encouragement to develop their careers through the Performance Management Development System.

2.14.4.3 Accessibility of Services

safefood has a duty to ensure that people with disabilities are able to access the services that we provide. Therefore, insofar as reasonably practicable, **safefood** will continually assess accessibility in the following areas:

- **safefood** will seek to ensure that all **safefood** hosted events are accessible and removed of barriers that prevent attendance by disabled people.
- Material will be provided in a relevant and accessible manner.
- Our website will be regularly reviewed to ensure compliance with accessibility standards.
- We have appointed an Advisory/Disability officer who will be responsible for assisting and facilitating all requests from disabled people and to advise management on requirements.
- Regular disability training will be provided for staff.
- We will review policies and procedures on a regular basis.
- We will use written and electronic communications such as Frequently Asked Questions and texting to assist people who are deaf or have a hearing loss.
- We will provide material in large print, audio tapes and other forms to assist blind people or people with visual impairments.

2.14.5 Implementing this Policy

Everyone at **safefood** has a role in ensuring that the provisions of this policy are adhered to. Special responsibility attaches to the management team of **safefood**, particularly the Director of Corporate Operations. **safefood** will require advice and assistance on a wide range of issues and will consult with various bodies, government departments and organisations when necessary. At all times, **safefood** will take effective and practical measures to provide services and equipment, unless this causes a disproportionate burden, having regard for the following:

- The finances involved.
- The number of people who would benefit from the measures.
- Any disruption that would be caused by the measures.
- The nature of any benefit or detriment that would accrue to any person likely to be affected by them.
- The possibility of any funding.
- The benefits that would accrue to **safefood**.