

# Equal Opportunities and Diversity



## What this policy covers

The Company recognises the benefits of a diverse workforce and is committed to providing a working environment that is free from discrimination.

The Company will seek to promote the principles of equality and diversity in all its dealings with employees, workers, job applicants, clients, customers, suppliers, contractors, recruitment agencies and the public.

The policy's purpose is to provide equality, fairness and respect for all in our employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time. To not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation.

Oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other development opportunities.

All employees and those who act on the Company's behalf are required to adhere to this policy when undertaking their duties or when representing the Company in any other guise.

## Equality and Diversity Statement

The organisation commits to:

- Encourage quality and diversity in the workplace as they are good practice and make business sense.
- Create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.
- Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities.
- Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
- Base all decisions concerning staff on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
- Review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.
- Monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality and diversity, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality policy.

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This commitment includes training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the equality policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

Any monitoring undertaken will also include assessing how the equality policy, and any supporting action plan(s) contained within other company documents and policies, which link back to the Equality and Diversity Policy, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

## **Responsibilities under this Policy**

All staff should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, customers, suppliers and the public.

Any acts of unlawful discrimination will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and any appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

Acts of sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

## **Recruitment of ex-offenders**

The Company actively promotes equality of opportunity for all candidates, including those with criminal records where appropriate.

The Company requires you to provide details of any criminal record at an early stage in the application process. Any such information should be sent in a separate confidential letter to the designated person. Only those who need to see it as a formal part of the recruitment process will have access to this information.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily prevent you from being appointed.

Any recruitment decision will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of the offence(s). The Company will discuss with you the relevance of any offence to the job in question.

If you fail to reveal any information relating to disclosures in accordance with the Company's Disclosures Policy, this may lead to the withdrawal of an offer of employment.

## **Career development**

While positive measures may be taken to encourage under-represented groups to apply for employment opportunities, recruitment or promotion to all jobs will be based solely on merit.

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All employees will have equal access to training and other career-development opportunities appropriate to their experience and abilities.

However, the Company will take appropriate positive action measures (as permitted by equal opportunities legislation) to provide specialist training and support for groups that are under-represented in the workforce and encourage them to take up training and career-development opportunities.

## **Procedure**

### **Complaints of discrimination**

The Company will treat seriously all complaints of discrimination made by employees, clients, customers, suppliers, contractors or other third parties and will take action where appropriate.

If you believe that you have been discriminated against, you are encouraged to raise the matter as soon as possible with your manager or other senior employee using the Company's Grievance Procedure (outlined elsewhere in the Employee Handbook and within the Company Document's section of the online HR System).

Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated thoroughly. If you make an allegation of discrimination, the Company is committed to ensuring that you are protected from victimisation, harassment or less favourable treatment.

Any such incidents will be dealt with under the Company's Disciplinary Procedures.

Use of the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures does not affect an employee's right to make a claim to an employment tribunal within three months of the alleged discrimination.

### **Investigating accusations of unlawful discrimination**

If you are accused of unlawful discrimination, the Company will investigate the matter fully.

During the course of the investigation, you will be given the opportunity to respond to the allegation and provide an explanation of your actions.

If the investigation concludes that the claim is false or malicious, the complainant may be subject to disciplinary action.

If the investigation concludes that your actions amount to unlawful discrimination, you will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal without notice for gross misconduct.

The Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy is fully supported by senior management.

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| <b>Policy:</b>  | <b>Equal Opportunities and Diversity</b> |
| <b>Approved by Chief Executive:</b>   | November 2017                            |
| <b>Policy Review (12 months or earlier depending on legislative changes):</b> | November 2018                            |