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Equality Diversity & Inclusion Policy

1. Introduction

The Company recognises the value of having an inclusive and diverse workforce and the benefits this can bring to our employees and achieving our objectives. Employees from different cultural and professional experiences often create an environment which generates new ideas, different perspectives and inventive solutions which directly boosts business success. The company values contributions from all employees regardless of status and promotes equality of fairness and opportunity.

This policy is not contractual, and the company reserve the right to amend the policy from time to time as deemed necessary and to ensure new legislative requirements are incorporated into the Company policy.

2. Aims of the Policy


We are an equal opportunities employer. We are committed to equality of opportunity and to providing a service and follow practices which are free from unfair and unlawful discrimination. The aim of this policy is to ensure that no applicant or member of staff receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be relevant to performance. It seeks also to ensure that no person is victimised or subjected to any form of bullying or harassment.

We value people as individuals with diverse opinions, cultures, lifestyles and circumstances. All employees are covered by this policy, and it applies to all areas of employment including recruitment, selection, training, deployment, career development, and promotion. These areas are monitored, and policies and practices are amended if necessary to ensure that no unfair or unlawful discrimination, intentional, unintentional, direct or indirect, overt or latent exists.

3. Our commitments:

As an employer the Company is committed to:

- creating an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of our staff are recognised and valued
- entitling every employee, worker or self-employed contractor to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated
- providing training, development and progression opportunities to all staff
- understanding equality in the workplace is good management practice and makes sound business sense
- reviewing all our employment practices and procedures to ensure fairness.

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As a service provider the Company is committed to:

- providing services to which all clients are entitled regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, offending past, caring responsibilities or social class
- making sure our services are delivered equally and meet the diverse needs of our service users and clients by assessing and meeting the diverse needs of our clients
- fully supporting this policy by senior management and ensuring our employee representatives are fully informed of the drafting of this policy
- selecting those for employment, promotion, training, or any other benefit purely on the basis of aptitude and ability
- monitoring and reviewing this policy annually
- having clear procedures that enable our clients, candidates for jobs and employees to raise a grievance or make a complaint if they feel they have been unfairly treated
- treating breaches of our equality and diversity policy as misconduct which could lead to disciplinary proceedings
- encouraging all staff to come forward with any issues they need Company assistance and understanding with, no matter their background, identity or circumstances, such as if they are victims of domestic abuse or have caring commitments.

4. **Definition of Discrimination**

Discrimination is unequal or differential treatment which leads to one person being treated more or less favourably than others are, or would be, treated in the same or similar circumstances on the grounds of race, sex, pregnancy and maternity, marital or civil partnership status, gender reassignment, disability, religion or beliefs, age or sexual orientation. Discrimination may be direct or indirect and includes discrimination by perception and association.

5. **Types of Discrimination**


5.1 **Direct Discrimination**

This occurs when a person or a policy intentionally treats a person less favourably than another on the grounds of race, sex, pregnancy and maternity, marital or civil partnership status, gender reassignment, disability, religion or beliefs, age or sexual orientation.

5.2 **Indirect Discrimination**

This is the application of a policy, criterion or practice which the employer applies to all employees, but which is such that:

- It is detrimental to a considerably larger proportion of people from the group that the person the employer is applying it to represents;
- The employer cannot justify the need for the application of the policy on a neutral basis; and
- The person to whom the employer is applying it suffers detriment from the application of the policy.

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Example:

A job advert for a salesperson says applicants must have spent 10 years working in retail. By doing this the business could be discriminating indirectly based on age. This is because the advert excludes young people who may still have the skills and qualifications needed.

Employees are required to do night shifts according to company policy. This rule applies to everyone in the workplace but a person who needs nightly dialysis for kidney failure is discriminated by this rule (indirect disability discrimination).

Refusing a Flexible Working Application for reduced hours from an employee who has been on maternity leave, on the general basis that all staff doing that job must work full-time could be indirect discrimination as having a policy that requires all staff to work full-time is likely to have a worse effect on women than men, since they are more likely to care for their children.

5.3 Harassment

This occurs when a person is subjected to unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating their dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

5.4 Victimisation

This occurs when a person is treated less favourably because they have brought or intend to bring proceedings, or they have given or intend to give evidence.

Please refer to the Company Anti-harassment and bullying policy for more details.

6. Unlawful Reasons for Discrimination

6.1 Sex

It is not permissible to treat a person less favourably on the grounds of sex, marital status, civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, gender reassignment or transgender status. This applies to men, women and those undergoing or intending to undergo gender reassignment. Sexual harassment of men and women can be found to constitute sex discrimination.

Example:


Asking a woman during an interview if she is planning to have any (more) children constitutes discrimination on the ground of gender.

6.2 Age

It is not permissible to treat a person less favourably because of their age. This applies to people of all ages. This does not currently apply to the calculation of redundancy payments.

Example:

Choosing not to promote someone because you decide that they are too young to lead a team or refusing an employee to do a training course because they are too old (but allows younger colleagues to do the training).

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6.3 Disability

It is not permissible to treat a disabled person less favourably than a non-disabled person. Reasonable adjustments must be made to give the disabled person as much access to any services and ability to be employed, trained, or promoted as a non-disabled person.

Example:

A business is looking to hire a personal assistant. One of the questions on the application form asks if the candidate has any disabilities that they believe will make any elements of the role difficult to complete. As disability is a protected characteristic, asking a candidate the above question is against UK employment law. Employers may ask in the application form if any reasonable adjustments need to be. An employer must not ask questions about any protected characteristics when hiring new employees.

6.4 Race

It is not permissible to treat a person less favourably because of their race, the colour of their skin, their nationality or their ethnic origin.

Example:

Saira, a person of Asian ethnicity, applies to work as a receptionist at a car dealership in a predominantly white area. She meets all of the job requirements but following an interview the employer tells Saira “you wouldn’t fit in here.” A white person with similar skills and experience is hired instead.

6.5 Sexual Orientation

It is not permissible to treat a person less favourably because of their sexual orientation. For example, an employer cannot refuse to employ a person because s/he is homosexual, heterosexual or bisexual.

Example:


A colleague—who identifies as bisexual—expresses interest in taking a course on relationship management in their one-to-one with their line manager. The manager says there is no budget available for learning and development. However, the next week, a heterosexual worker in the team enquires about a training course. They are accepted for the course, with no questions asked.

6.6 Religion or Belief

It is not permissible to treat a person less favourably because of their religious beliefs or their religion or their lack of any religion or belief.

Example:

A man who was Muslim needed to pray five times a day so he asked his supervisor to schedule his breaks so that he could pray. His supervisor said “We pay you to work, not to pray. Leave the religious observances for your own time.”

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6.7 Discrimination by Association and Perception

You do not need to have a protective characteristic to be directly discriminated against because of it.

This applies to two forms of discrimination:

- Discrimination by association (or 'associative discrimination'); and
- Discrimination by perception (or 'perceptive discrimination')

6.8 Associative Discrimination

Direct discrimination can occur when an employer treats an employee less favourably because they are linked or associated with a protected characteristic, or they suffer harassment related to someone else's disability. This is commonly known as 'discrimination by association'. This type of discrimination could occur where an employee has a relationship with a parent, child, partner, carer or friend who has a protected characteristic.

Example:

A father with sole carer responsibility for his disabled son needs time off work whenever his son has medical appointments. The employer appears to resent the fact that the employee needs to care for his son and takes him through a process resulting in his dismissal. The dismissal may amount to direct discrimination against the employee by association with his disabled son.

Discrimination by association does not apply to all protected characteristics. Associative discrimination does not apply to marriage and civil partnership, or to pregnancy and maternity. However, in the case of pregnancy and maternity, a worker treated less favourably because of association with a pregnant woman, or a woman who has recently given birth, may instead have a claim for sex discrimination.

6.9 Perceptive Discrimination

This is when someone is treated less favourably because others believe they have a certain protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2021, whether or not it is true.

Example:


A member of staff refuses to supervise a student because they believe that he or she is transsexual.

An employer decides not to promote a member of staff because they believe they have a disability.

7.1 Age

We will:

- ensure that people of all ages are treated with respect and dignity
- ensure that people of working age are given equal access to our employment, training, development and promotion opportunities and
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about younger and older people.

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7.2 Disability

We will:

- provide any reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled people have access to our services and employment opportunities
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about disabled people and
- seek to continue to improve access to information by ensuring availability of loop systems, braille facilities, alternative formatting and sign language interpretation.

7.3 Race

We will:

- challenge racism wherever it occurs
- respond swiftly and sensitively to racists incidents and
- actively promote race equality in the Company.

7.4 Sex

We will:

- challenge discriminatory assumptions about women and men
- take positive action to redress the negative effects of discrimination against women and men
- offer equal access for women and men to representation, services, employment, training and pay and encourage other organisations to do the same.

7.5 Gender reassignment

We will:

- provide support to prevent discrimination against transsexual people who have or who are about to undergo gender reassignment
- prohibit and respond to all instances of discrimination, both from colleagues and externally.

7.6 Sexual orientation


We will:

- ensure that we take account of the needs of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals and
- promote positive images of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals.

7.7 Religion or belief

We will:

- ensure that employees' religion or beliefs and related observances are respected and accommodated wherever possible and
- respect people's beliefs where the expression of those beliefs does not impinge on the legitimate rights of others.

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7.8 **Pregnancy or maternity**

We will:

- ensure that people are treated with respect and dignity and that a positive image is promoted regardless of pregnancy or maternity
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about the pregnancy or maternity of our employees and
- ensure that no individual is disadvantaged and that we take account of the needs of our employees' pregnancy or maternity.

7.9 **Marriage or civil partnership**

We will:

- ensure that people are treated with respect and dignity and that a positive image is promoted regardless of marriage or civil partnership;
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about the marriage or civil partnership of our employees and
- ensure that no individual is disadvantaged and that we take account the needs of our employees' marriage or civil partnership.

7.10 **Ex-offenders**

We will prevent discrimination against our employees regardless of their offending background (except where there is a known risk to children or vulnerable adults).

7.11 **Equal pay**


We will ensure that all employees, male or female, have the right to the same contractual pay and benefits for carrying out the same work, work rated as equivalent work or work of equal value.

7.12 **Unconscious bias**

The Company recognises the dangers of unconscious bias arising at work, which is where an opinion is formed on an individual by a manager or colleague without them necessarily being aware they have formed it. Employees should be aware that workplace banter remarks meant as a joke can be discriminatory if it offends an individual.

There are many different forms of unconscious bias, ranging from an affinity towards those of a similar background to placing too much significance on what has been identified as a negative trait.

The organisation will work against forms of unconscious bias in all decisions taken for employment, including recruitment, promotion and training opportunities, with a focus on promoting diversity and inclusion.

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In particular, the Company will implement the following:

- Omitting all personal questions from job interviews
- Maintaining a diverse panel to make decisions
- Referring to specific job criteria when making recruitment decisions
- Discounting any favourable personal relationships with staff.
- Making decisions collectively between HR and management.

8. Reasonable Adjustments


The Company has a duty to make reasonable adjustments to facilitate the employment of a disabled person. These include:

- Making adjustments to premises;
- Consider redeployment to an alternative role;
- Re-allocating some or all of a disabled employee's duties;
- Relocating a disabled employee to a more suitable sedentary role where possible;
- Giving consideration to allowing a disabled employee time off work for medical treatment or rehabilitation;
- Providing training or mentoring for a disabled employee;
- Supplying or modifying equipment, instruction and training manuals for disabled employees; or
- Any other reasonable adjustments the Company considers feasible and necessary providing such adjustments are within the financial means of the Company.

The company will explore all potential options to implement adjustments which are reasonable to the Company which should be a collaborative and co-operative exercise based on the employee's disability and can be practically implemented. The Company will do their utmost to support adjustments but may not be able to create a new role to accommodate such adjustments.

9. Allegations of Discrimination

The company will investigate all allegations of discrimination thoroughly to ensure any intentional, or unintentional, behaviour which is in breach of this policy is likely to lead to disciplinary action where an allegation is proven.

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