



Equal Opportunities Policy

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- a. This sets out the Company's policy on equal opportunities. The Company is committed to avoiding unlawful discrimination and a policy of treating all its employees, job applicants, clients, members, volunteers, customers, and suppliers equally.

Principles

- b. There should be no unlawful discrimination on account of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, political association or belief, sex or sexual orientation. These are known as protected characteristics under the legislation.
- c. Discrimination can take the form of a number of possibilities:
 - **Direct Discrimination** – where someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic. An example of direct discrimination would be refusing to employ a woman because she is pregnant.
 - **Indirect Discrimination** – where a rule or a policy that applies to everyone within the organisation can disadvantage people with a particular Protected Characteristic unless that required characteristic can be justified by showing that it was a reasonable characteristic to enable you to manage your business, i.e. that it is 'a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim'.
- d. Proportionate means that: -
 - What the employer is doing is actually achieving its aim
 - The discriminatory effect should be significantly outweighed by the importance and benefits of the legitimate aim; and
 - The employer should have no reasonable alternative to the action that it is taking



- e. The aim can be “legitimate” if it relates to:
- Economic factors such as the needs of and the efficiency of running a business;
 - The health, welfare, and safety of the individual (including protection of young people or older employees;) or
 - The particular training requirements of the job
 - **Associative discrimination** – where direct discrimination takes place against a person because they associate with someone who has a Protected Characteristic e.g. where an employee is discriminated against due to them being a carer of their disabled child.
 - **Discrimination by Perception** – where direct discrimination takes place against someone because others think they possess a Protected Characteristic, whether they do or not e.g. where an employee is discriminated against because he is thought to be gay even though he is not.
 - **Harassment** is where there is unwanted conduct, related to one of the protected characteristics (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity) that has the purpose or effect of violating a person’s dignity; or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It does not matter whether or not this effect was intended by the person responsible for the conduct.
 - **Harassment by a Third Party** occurs where an employee is harassed and the harassment is related to a Protected Characteristic, by third parties such as customers. The law prior to its repeal in October 2013, stated that an employer would liable if:
 - the harassment occurred on at least two previous occasions (although not necessarily by the same harasser or suffering the same type of harassment);
 - it was aware that the previous harassment has taken place; and
 - it had failed to take reasonable steps to prevent harassment from happening again.
- f. Employers are required to continue to ensure that they take all reasonably practicable steps to prevent any harassment of employees. Mindful of this, the above is still relevant to our policy.



- **Victimisation** occurs where an employee is subjected to a detriment, such as being denied a training opportunity or a promotion because they made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because they are suspected of doing so. However, an employee is not protected from victimisation if they acted maliciously or made or supported an untrue complaint. There is no longer a need for a complainant to compare their treatment with someone who has not made or supported a complaint under the Equality Act 2010. For example, if a blind employee raises a grievance that the employer is not complying with its duty to make reasonable adjustments, and is then systematically excluded from all meetings, such behaviour could amount to victimisation.
- g. The Company shall appoint, train, develop, reward, and promote on the basis of merit and ability.
- h. All employees have personal responsibility for the practical application of the Company's equal opportunities policy, which extends to the treatment of job applicants, employees, clients, members, customers, suppliers, and visitors.
- i. Special responsibility for the practicable application of the Company's equal opportunities policy falls upon directors, Managers and supervisors involved in the recruitment, selection, promotion, and training of employees.
- j. The Company's grievance procedure is available to any employee who believes that they may have been unfairly discriminated against. The harassment complaints procedure set out in this policy is available to any employee who believes that they may have been harassed. Employees shall not be victimised in any way for making such a complaint in good faith. Complaints of this nature shall be dealt with seriously, in confidence and as soon as possible.
- k. Disciplinary action shall be taken against any employee who is found to have committed an act of unlawful discrimination. Serious breaches of this policy and serious incidents of harassment shall be treated as gross misconduct. Allegations of discrimination which are not made in good faith shall also be considered as a disciplinary matter. Confidential records of ongoing matters dealt with in accordance with this policy shall be kept.
- l. In the case of any doubt or concern about the application of this policy in any particular instance, consult a Manager.
- m. The Company shall keep under review its policy, procedures, and practices on equal opportunities.



Part-time and fixed-term employees

- n. Part-time and Fixed term employees should be treated the same as comparable full-time or permanent employees and enjoy no less favourable terms and conditions (on a pro-rata basis where appropriate) unless different treatment is justified.

Equal Opportunities Code of Practice

- o. The Company has introduced this equal opportunities policy as a commitment to make full use of the talents and resource of all its employees and to provide a healthy environment which shall encourage good and productive working operations within the organisation. This code of practice describes how the policy is to be applied throughout the Company.

- p. The Company is particularly concerned that equality of opportunity is maintained in the following areas:
 - o recruitment and selection;
 - o promotion, transfer and training;
 - o terms of employment, benefits, facilities and services;
 - o grievances and disciplinary procedures;
 - o dismissals and redundancies.

To this end, policies and procedures reflecting this objective, including the penalties for failure to follow these policies and procedures are created, reviewed, and communicated to employees and managers. The list is not exhaustive.