



# Equal Opportunities Policy

## **1.1. Equal opportunities policy**

### **Policy statement**

1.1.1. We do not discriminate against staff on the basis of their gender, sexual orientation, marital or civil partner status, gender reassignment, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, disability or age. These elements are known as protected characteristics. The principle of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity applies equally to the treatment of former staff, visitors, clients, customers and suppliers by members of our current workforce.

### **Who this applies to**

1.1.2. All staff have a duty to act in accordance with this policy, and therefore to treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and not to discriminate against or harass other members of staff, whether junior or senior to them. In some situations, we may be at risk of being held responsible for the acts of individual members of staff and will not therefore tolerate any discriminatory practices or behaviour.

1.1.3. This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades, including senior managers, officers, directors, employees, consultants, contractors, trainees, homeworkers, part-time and fixed-term employees, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as **staff** in this policy).

1.1.4. The policy statement applies equally to the treatment of our visitors, clients, customers and suppliers by our staff and the treatment of our staff by these third parties.

### **Responsibility for the policy**

1.1.5. The Managing Directors have overall responsibility for the effective operation of our equal opportunities policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework prohibiting discrimination.

1.1.6. Those working at a management level have a specific responsibility to set an appropriate standard of behaviour, to lead by example and to ensure that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote our aims and objectives with regard to equal opportunities.

1.1.7. All members of staff are responsible for the success of this policy and must ensure that they familiarise themselves with the policy and act in accordance with its aims and objectives. If you are involved in management or recruitment, or if you have any questions about the content or application of this policy, you should contact the Company Secretary to request further information.

1.1.8. This policy is reviewed annually by the Managing Directors.

1.1.9. Staff are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved by contacting the Company Secretary.

### **Scope and purpose of the policy**

1.1.10. This policy applies to the advertising of jobs and recruitment and selection, to training and development, opportunities for promotion, to conditions of service, benefits and facilities and pay, to health and safety and to conduct at work, to grievance and disciplinary procedures and to termination of employment, including redundancy.

## **Forms of discrimination**

- 1.1.11. Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.
- 1.1.12. Direct discrimination occurs where someone is put at a disadvantage for a reason related to one or more of the protected characteristics set out above. For example, rejecting an applicant on the grounds of their race because it is considered they would not "fit in" could be direct discrimination. This also includes discrimination on the grounds of perception and association.
- 1.1.13. Indirect discrimination occurs where an individual is subject to an unjustified provision, criterion or practice which puts them at a particular disadvantage because of, for instance, their sex or race. For example, a height requirement would be likely to eliminate proportionately more women than men. If this criteria cannot be objectively justified for a reason unconnected with sex, it would be indirectly discriminatory on the grounds of sex.
- 1.1.14. Harassment related to any of the protected characteristics is prohibited. Harassment is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Harassment is dealt with further in our Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy.
- 1.1.15. Discrimination also includes victimisation (less favourable treatment because of action taken to assert legal rights against discrimination or to assist a colleague in that regard) which is dealt with under our Anti-harassment Policy.

## **Disability discrimination**

- 1.1.16. If you are disabled, or become disabled in the course of your employment with us, you are encouraged to tell us about your condition. This is to enable us to support you as much as possible. You may also wish to advise the Company of any reasonable adjustments to your working conditions or the duties of your job which you consider to be necessary, or which would assist you in the performance of your duties. The Company may wish to consult with you and with your medical adviser(s) about possible reasonable adjustments. Careful consideration will be given to any such proposals and they will be accommodated where possible and proportionate to the needs of your job. Nevertheless, there may be circumstances where it will not be reasonable for us to accommodate suggested adjustments and we will ensure that we provide you with information as to the basis of our decision not to make any adjustments.
- 1.1.17. We will monitor the physical features of our premises to consider whether they place disabled workers, job applicants or service users at a substantial disadvantage compared to other staff. Where possible and proportionate, we will take steps to improve access for disabled staff and service users.

## **Breaches of the policy**

- 1.1.18. If you believe that you may have been discriminated against you are encouraged to raise the matter through our Grievance Procedure.
- 1.1.19. Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure. Staff who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False allegations which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

1.1.20. Any member of staff who is found to have committed acts of discrimination or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. We always take a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.