

Equality, Diversity and Dignity at Work

Definitions

Our policy outlines the Company's approach to equality and diversity at work. It is important to understand the difference between the concepts of equality and diversity.

- **Equality (or equal opportunities)** is about protecting certain groups of people against unfair treatment based on a particular, personal characteristic. This protection is normally based on those groups covered by legislation i.e. age, sex (gender), race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marital or civil partnership status, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity (the "protected characteristics")
- **Diversity** is about recognising, valuing, and embracing the differences which people have

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to encourage an atmosphere in which all employees embrace the benefits of working in a diverse workforce. The Company aims to promote harmony at work and to ensure fair and equal treatment for all employees, job applicants, customers, suppliers and visitors, irrespective of their individual differences or any personal characteristics.

Scope

This policy relates to all aspects of employment, including individual standards of behaviour, the advertisement of jobs, recruitment and selection, training and development, appraisal, pay, promotion and leaving the Company. The principles apply equally to all dealings with customers, suppliers and visitors.

Statement of Policy

The Company is committed to the principle of valuing diversity. The Company recognises the benefits that can be secured through employing a diverse workforce and harnessing the individual talents of staff from diverse backgrounds and with different skills.

Furthermore, the Company believes in dignity at work for all our colleagues and encourages the ethos of reciprocated respect to build an environment, which embraces fair and unbiased treatment, with mutual understanding and wider tolerances of peoples' differences.

The aim is that these will lead to:

- Tangible business benefits such as improved employee morale, reduced absence levels, customer satisfaction and profits
- An improved Company image leading to a wider customer base and a wider pool of people to recruit from

- The avoidance of costly legal proceedings caused by breaches of equality legislation

The Company is committed to providing fair and equal treatment for all employees, customers, suppliers and visitors and all employees are expected to treat everyone with whom they come into contact with dignity and respect. Employees should be aware of the importance the Company attaches to this policy and that breaches will be classed as disciplinary offences and dealt with accordingly.

Legal Obligations

In valuing diversity, the Company commits itself to go beyond the legal minimum regarding equality. However, in applying this policy the Company still needs to take account of current and future equality legislation (and associated codes of practice) including, but not limited to, the following:

- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Civil Partnership Act 2004
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- The Equality Act 2010

The above legislation protects individuals against direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment (including bullying) and victimisation because of the protected characteristics. We also now have legislation to protect against discrimination by association and perception:

- **Direct discrimination** is treating a person less favourably because one of more of the protected characteristics.
- **Indirect discrimination** is where someone is disadvantaged by an unjustified provision, criterion or practice that also puts other people with the same protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage.
- **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.
- **Bullying** is a form of harassment which is normally but not always, related to an abuse of power.
- **Victimisation** is treating a person less favourably because they have asserted their rights under this policy or equality legislation (i.e. made or assisted with a complaint).

In pursuing this policy, we believe that the principles that underpin the above legislation should be extended to all employees, regardless of any protected characteristic.

Responsibilities

The Company is responsible for facilitating the training and providing the support which may be required, to enable a better understanding of the importance and benefit of this policy, and how to ensure it is enacted by everyone concerned.

All Employees are expected to have read and understood this policy and to have undertaken any training as is appropriate. They are also expected to ensure they behave in accordance with its principles, encourage the same level of behaviour in colleagues and immediately report any breaches witnessed.

All managers are expected to have undertaken any training as is appropriate and to be responsible for ensuring this policy is understood and complied with by employees in their area, dealing with breaches and complaints (whether reported or not) seriously, speedily, sensitively and confidentially and contributing ideas for the advancement of diversity principles within the organisation.

The CEO has overall responsibility for this policy and for reviewing and providing advice on this policy, encouraging the adoption of its principles throughout the organisation and ensuring complaints are adequately investigated.

Policy Breaches

If legal requirements are contravened, both the Company and employees concerned may be liable to legal proceedings and the risk of having unlimited damages awarded against them.

Follow up/review training or education may be more appropriate where minor breaches have occurred due to a lack of understanding of equality and diversity principles.

Implementing the Policy

- It is impossible to define all the characteristics which make people different
- Some are protected by legislation whilst others are not

Communicating this policy

In order to ensure the principles of this policy are embedded in everything we do; all existing employees will receive a copy of this policy and training regarding how it should be interpreted. This policy will also be covered in all future inductions.

Below are some examples to illustrate how this policy impacts on all other work policies and practices. This list is not exhaustive as each situation must be considered on its merits.

General standards of behaviour

The Company always expects employees to conduct themselves in a professional and considerate manner. The Company will not tolerate behaviour such as:

- Physical violence
- Threatening or intimidating behaviour
- Shouting or swearing
- Rudeness
- Isolating, ignoring or refusing to work with certain people

- Telling offensive jokes or name calling
- The display of offensive material such as pornography or sexist/racist cartoons
- Distribution of offensive material via email, text messages, etc.

It is no defence for employees to say they did not intend their behaviour to cause offence, or to blame individuals for being over-sensitive as it is for the recipient of the behaviour to decide what they consider to be offensive. It is the impact of the behaviour rather than the intent which is important.

Recruitment and Selection

Individuals involved in the recruitment and selection of employees will ensure the following criteria are adhered to and that:

- A carefully worded and objective job description/person specification is produced for all vacancies, outlining the essential skills, knowledge and experience required
- Job advertisements are agreed by a senior manager and placed to encourage applications from all sections of the community. Advertisements will not contain any age limits and will avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage particular groups from applying
- Application forms will explain our aims to be an equal opportunities employer, to recruit a diverse workforce which reflects the make-up of the local community and to generally promote diversity principles.
- Short-listing and selection will be based on objective criteria relevant to the job and decisions made by suitably trained employees, purely based on merit

The reasons for all decisions will be recorded. Applicants should not be asked about their health or a disability before a job offer is made.

Training, Development and Promotion

The Company will ensure that irrespective of any protected characteristics:

- The training necessary to implement this equality policy is provided
- All employees are encouraged to achieve their full potential
- Selection for all training, career development opportunities and job changes will be purely based on merit
- Appraisals of performance will be conducted timely and objectively
- Selection for promotion will be purely based on merit

Meeting Individual Needs

As far as possible the Company will try to meet the needs of individuals at work. For example:

- Caring and domestic responsibilities – time off may be appropriate to allow employees to care for children or sick relatives to help them balance their work and home responsibilities

- Working patterns – wherever possible training courses and meetings should be planned to allow attendance by employees working non-standard hours
- Disability – disabled staff and customers should be consulted about any reasonable adjustments which could be made to allow them to better perform their functions
- Religious practices – it may be necessary to provide unpaid time off for prayer or religious festivals or relax dress standards to meet religious needs

Review & Consultation

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains current and links appropriately with other policies. Employees will be consulted as part of the review process. The principles of this policy will also be considered when developing other new organisational policies.

Complaints

If any employee feels this policy has been breached he/she should try to speak to his/her manager in the first instance, who will ensure that all issues are investigated and dealt with appropriately.

Formal complaints about breaches of this policy should be made in writing and submitted to a member of management in accordance with the Company's Grievance Procedure.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Clarke'.

Matt Clarke
Chief Executive Officer