

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

A. STATEMENT OF POLICY

1. We recognise that discrimination is unacceptable and although equality of opportunity has been a long standing feature of our employment practices and procedure, we have made the decision to adopt a formal equal opportunities policy. We are committed to incorporating the twin principles of equality of opportunity and respect for diversity throughout our business. Breaches of the policy may lead to disciplinary proceedings and, if appropriate, disciplinary action.
2. The aim of the policy is to ensure no job applicant, employee or worker is discriminated against either directly or indirectly on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation (Protected Characteristics).
3. We will ensure that the policy is circulated to any agencies responsible for our recruitment and a copy of the policy will be made available for all employees and made known to all applicants for employment.
4. The policy will be communicated to all private contractors reminding them of their responsibilities towards the equality of opportunity.
5. The policy will be implemented in accordance with the appropriate statutory requirements and full account will be taken of all available guidance and in particular any relevant Codes of Practice.
6. We will maintain a neutral working environment in which no employee or worker feels under threat or intimidated.

B. DEFINITIONS

1. **Equality** – Equality between individuals, where everyone has the same opportunities. No-one should be discriminated against because of their sex, ethnic background, age, disability, sexuality or religious belief.
2. **Diversity** – Valuing the fact that individuals are different. Recognising that people with different backgrounds, skills and attitudes bring fresh ideas and opinions.
3. **Direct Discrimination** – Deliberately setting out to exclude people or treat them less favourably because of a Protected Characteristic which cannot be justified.
4. **Indirect Discrimination** – When a provision, criterion or practice is put in place that disadvantages a person or group of people with a Protected Characteristic compared with others without that Protected Characteristic.
5. **Harassment** – Unwanted behaviour that violates a person's dignity or creates a degrading, humiliating, hostile, intimidating or offensive home/working environment which may also be construed as bullying. Harassment is dealt with further in our Personal Harassment Policy
6. **Victimisation** – Less favourable treatment of a person because they have complained or have supported someone else's complaint about discrimination or harassment.
7. **Disability Discrimination** – this includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified unfavourable treatment because of the effects of a disability and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability.

C. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

1. The recruitment and selection process is crucially important to any equal opportunities policy. We will endeavour through appropriate training to ensure that employees making selection and recruitment decisions will not discriminate, whether consciously or unconsciously, in making these decisions.
2. Promotion and advancement will be made on merit and all decisions relating to this will be made within the overall framework and principles of this policy.
3. Job descriptions, where used, will be revised to ensure that they are in line with our equal opportunities policy. Job requirements will be reflected accurately in any personnel specifications.
4. We will adopt a consistent, non-discriminatory approach to the advertising of vacancies.
5. We will not confine our recruitment to areas or media sources which provide only, or mainly, applicants of a particular group.
6. All applicants who apply for jobs with us will receive fair treatment and will be considered solely on their ability to do the job.
7. All employees involved in the recruitment process will periodically review their selection criteria to ensure that they are related to the job requirements and do not unlawfully discriminate.
8. Short listing and interviewing will be carried out by more than one person where possible.
9. Interview questions will be related to the requirements of the job and will not be of a discriminatory nature.
10. We will not disqualify any applicant because he/she is unable to complete an application form unassisted unless personal completion of the form is a valid test of the standard of English required for the safe and effective performance of the job.
11. Selection decisions will not be influenced by any perceived prejudices of other staff.

D. TRAINING AND PROMOTION

1. Senior staff will receive training in the application of this policy to ensure that they are aware of its contents and provisions.
2. All promotion will be in line with this policy.

E. MONITORING AND ACTION

1. We will maintain and review the employment records of all employees in order to monitor the progress of this policy. We will also keep records of contractors we work with and job applicants for the same purpose.
2. Monitoring may involve:
 - a) the collection and classification of information regarding the race in terms of ethnic/national origin and sex of all applicants and current employees;
 - b) the examination by ethnic/national origin and sex of the distribution of employees and the success rate of the applicants; and
 - c) recording recruitment, training and promotional records of all employees, the decisions reached and the reason for those decisions.
3. The results of any monitoring procedure will be reviewed at regular intervals to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of this policy. Consideration will be given, if necessary, to adjusting this policy to afford greater equality of opportunities to all applicants and staff.
4. We will set targets and collect and monitor information on equal opportunities from all those receiving services or working for us so we can prevent discrimination.
5. We will set targets for improving the number of people from groups in the communities that we identify as being under represented in our workforce. If we need to, we will take positive action to help disadvantaged or under-represented groups to compete for jobs and provide services on a genuine basis of equal opportunities.

6. We will take positive action when we need to, to allow members of a minority group to receive equal opportunities in services and work.
7. All main contractors, consultants and other agencies we hire will have adequate equal opportunities policies, appropriate targets for representing minority groups within their workforce and systems for monitoring and reporting progress. If we discover unlawful discrimination, we will do everything possible to influence the partners, consultants, contractors or suppliers to take action and we may review our agreements with them.
8. We will take effective action to tackle victimisation and harassment and we will always place the victim at the centre of what we do. Additionally, our staff and our named partners will follow all relevant policies and procedures that apply to the service they provide and will provide extra support through our various assistance programmes to help employees.
9. To make sure people have equal access to services, we provide access to an interpreting service and translate policies and documents to meet people's needs. Staff with a second language, volunteer their services as interpreters at the first point of contact to help others whose first language is not English. Our offices are accessible. We will make sure there is equal access to information and services by providing appropriate facilities and equipment in our offices.
10. We take a strict approach to breaches of this policy which will be dealt with in accordance with our disciplinary procedure

Last Reviewed: December 2025

Expires: December 2026