



1 EQUAL OPPORTUNITES POLICY (INCLUDING THE AVOIDANCE OF HARASSMENT)

1.1 Policy Statement

1.1.1 The Company has adopted this Equal Opportunities Policy to ensure that all job applicants and employees are treated fairly without favour or prejudice. The following document sets out our policy on equal opportunities, including the avoidance of harassment. (clause setting out who the policy applies to)

1.1.2 The Company recognises that discrimination in the workplace, in any form, is unacceptable and, in most cases unlawful. We are committed to a policy of treating all employees and job applicants equally. No employee or potential employee shall receive less favourable treatment or consideration because of:

- (a) race, colour, religion, nationality or ethnic origin;
- (b) marital status;
- (c) pregnancy or maternity;
- (d) disability;
- (e) sexual orientation;
- (f) gender or gender re-assignment;
- (g) religion or belief;
- (h) age;
- (i) trade union activity;

or will be disadvantaged by any conditions of employment that cannot be justified as proportionate and necessary for legitimate operational reasons.

1.1.3 In particular, all employees/job applicants will be given equal opportunities for recruitment, training, promotion, and equal terms and conditions of employment in all jobs considered to be of equal value. This means that a person's gender (including gender reassignment), age, disability, marital status, pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation, religion, race or belief, colour, ethnic or national origins or nationality will not be taken into account.

1.1.4 The Company will not be responsible for or excuse any act or attitude of discrimination in the conduct of its business with the public or by its staff. Any contravention of this policy may lead to disciplinary action up to and including summary dismissal.

- 1.1.5 The Directors will be ultimately responsible for the effective operation and implementation of this policy. However, all employees have a duty to co-operate with the Company to ensure that this policy is effective to ensure equal opportunities and to prevent discrimination.
- 1.1.6 The provisions of this policy do not form part of your employment contract, and the Company is not contractually bound to follow precisely this procedure in every instance where it is considered inappropriate to do so.

1.2 Scope

- 1.2.1 This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades.
- 1.2.2 The policy statement in clause 1.1 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.
- 1.2.3 This policy also applies in certain circumstances to "off duty" conduct. However, no policy can properly accommodate all possible circumstances and this policy should be seen as creating guidelines only and not contractual obligations on our part.

1.3 Principles

- 1.3.1 There should be no discrimination on account of the protected characteristics listed above.
- 1.3.2 The Company will endeavour to appoint, train, develop, reward and promote on the basis of merit and ability at all times.
- 1.3.3 All employees have personal responsibility for the practical application of this equal opportunities policy, which extends to the treatment of job applicants, employees, customers and visitors.
- 1.3.4 The Company's grievance procedure is available to any employee who believes that he or she may have been unfairly discriminated against. Employees will not be victimised in any way for making such a grievance in good faith. Grievances of this nature will be dealt with seriously, in confidence and in a timely manner.
- 1.3.5 Disciplinary action will 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 will be treated as gross misconduct and may lead to an employee's summary dismissal.
- 1.3.6 Allegations of discrimination which are not made in good faith will also be considered as a disciplinary matter.
- 1.3.7 We will take disciplinary action against any unlawful acts of discrimination against individuals who are being discriminated against for having an association with another individual who has a protected characteristic. Similarly, we will oppose and take disciplinary action against any unlawful acts of discrimination against individuals who

are being discriminated against for being perceived as possessing a protected characteristic.

- 1.3.8 No employee will be discriminated against, subjected to any detriment or victimised because they have made a complaint or allegation in good faith of any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation, or because they have given evidence in relation to any such complaint.
- 1.3.9 Confidential records of on-going matters dealt with in accordance with this policy will be kept.

1.4 Code of Practice

- 1.4.1 Our recruitment processes look to result in the selection of the most suitable person for the job on the basis of fair and objective criteria.
- 1.4.2 The selection of new employees will be based on the job requirements and the individual's suitability and ability to do, or to train for the job in question.
- 1.4.3 Interview questions will be limited to questions relating to the particular job and/or career requirements. Questions or exercises on matters which may be unfamiliar to, for example, racial minority applicants, applicants of a particular sex, or those who have a disability, will not be included if they are unrelated to the requirements of the particular job.
- 1.4.4 Wherever possible, all applicants will be interviewed by at least 2 people.
- 1.4.5 If it is necessary to assess whether personal circumstances will affect the performance of the job (for example, if the job involves unsociable hours or extensive manual handling) this will be discussed objectively, without detailed questions based on assumptions about race, colour, sex, religion or belief, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, pregnancy or maternity, children and domestic obligations.
- 1.4.6 All terms of employment, benefits, facilities and service will be reviewed from time to time, in order to ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination on any of the grounds covered by this policy.
- 1.4.7 It is the Company's policy that disabled people, including job applicants and employees, should be able to participate in all of the Company's activities fully and on an equal basis with people who are not disabled.
- 1.4.8 If any arrangements made by or on behalf of the Company, or any physical feature of premises occupied by the Company, put disabled people at a substantial disadvantage compared to people who are not disabled, the Company will take such reasonably practicable steps as it can to prevent this disadvantage.
- 1.4.9 The Company will set out to ensure that no employee or potential employee should receive less favourable treatment or consideration on the grounds of sexual orientation, religion or belief.

1.5 Harassment

1.5.1 Policy Statement

- (a) All Employees have the right to work in an environment which is free from any form of harassment.
- (b) It is the Company's policy that the harassment of any of its employees is unacceptable behaviour. Anyone found to be in breach of this policy will be liable to disciplinary action which could result in their summary dismissal.

1.5.2 Definition

- (a) Harassment is unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Harassment takes many forms, occurs on a variety of different grounds and can be directed at one person or many people. An essential characteristic is that it is unwanted by the recipient and that the recipient finds the conduct intimidating, offensive or unacceptable. Conduct becomes harassment if it is persistent once it has been made clear that it is regarded by the recipient as objectionable, although a single incident may amount to harassment if sufficiently serious. It is the unwanted nature of the conduct which distinguishes harassment from friendly behaviour which is welcome and mutual. Harassment may be intentional bullying which is obvious or violent, but it can also be unintentional, subtle and insidious.
- (b) Whilst not exhaustive, harassment can be based on:
 - (i) Race, ethnic origin, nationality or skin colour;
 - (ii) Gender or sexual orientation;
 - (iii) Power or hierarchy;
 - (iv) Willingness to challenge harassment (leading to victimisation);
 - (v) Membership, or non-membership of a trade union;
 - (vi) Disabilities, sensory impairments or learning difficulties;
 - (vii) Age;
 - (viii) Possible links to AIDS/HIV;
 - (ix) Status as an ex-offender;
 - (x) Health;
 - (xi) Physical characteristics;
 - (xii) Personal beliefs; and
 - (xiii) Religion or belief

- (c) Whilst not an exhaustive list, forms of harassment include:
 - (i) Physical contact;
 - (ii) Jokes, offensive language, gossip, slander, offensive or sectarian songs and letters;
 - (iii) Posters, graffiti, obscene gestures, emblems, flags;
 - (iv) Offensive email, screen savers, etc;
 - (v) Isolation or non co-operation and exclusion;
 - (vi) Coercion for sexual favours;
 - (vii) Pressure to participate in political/religious groups;
 - (viii) Intrusion by pestering, spying and stalking; and
 - (ix) Bullying, intimidating or oppressive behaviour.
- (d) Harassment is unlawful in many cases and individuals may be legally held personally liable for their actions.

1.5.3 Procedure

- (a) If you believe that you are being subjected to bullying, harassment, and victimisation or are being unfairly discriminated against by an employee, customer, supplier or visitor, you may wish to use an informal approach to try and stop the harassment, discrimination and/or victimisation. While recognising that it may not always be appropriate, we recommend in most cases that an informal approach is considered as the first step.
- (b) If you consider that informal action is appropriate, you should, if possible, advise the harasser that the behaviour specified is unwelcome, must be stopped and is interpreted by you (the complainant) as harassment and/or discrimination and/or victimisation. If preferred, this may be in writing.
- (c) If you wish to discuss such a complaint in confidence, you should contact a Director.
- (d) Where the informal method fails or is deemed inappropriate, or if you prefer, you should raise the matter through our Company grievance procedure. We will always aim to ensure an employee is not victimised or subjected to detrimental treatment during the course of their employment, for raising or supporting a grievance.
- (e) Any allegation regarding a breach of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated accordingly. Every complaint will be dealt with sympathetically, without bias and as quickly as is practicable. Every effort will be made to ensure that individuals who make a complaint in good faith, will not suffer any further detriment or be victimised because of this. However, if a

complaint is made maliciously or otherwise in bad faith we may consider taking formal disciplinary action which may result in dismissal.

- (f) If you raise a grievance about the behaviour of another employee which we consider to be particularly serious, we reserve the right to continue to investigate and deal with the complaint, even if you decide against pursuing it.