

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Our Commitment and Aims

We are committed to providing equality of opportunity in our employment practices and procedures, and to avoiding unlawful discrimination being suffered by our employees, job applicants, clients or customers.

We will not discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership. These are known as "protected characteristics".

We will not discriminate unlawfully against customers, contractors, suppliers or visitors using or attempting to use the goods, facilities and services that we provide.

This aim of this policy is to assist us in putting this commitment into practice to ensure all our employees are treated fairly, respectfully and without prejudice, so that you are able to maximise your full potential, and do not commit and/or are not subjected to unacceptable and unlawful acts of discrimination.

Our policy is implemented in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and all other appropriate statutory requirements and has been compiled after consideration of all available guidance and relevant Codes of Practice.

We will strive to ensure that our work environment remains positive, free from harassment and bullying, and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect at all times in maintaining and sustaining equal opportunities in employment.

Types of Unlawful Discrimination

Direct discrimination is where a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic. An example of direct sex discrimination would be refusing to employ a woman because she was pregnant.

Indirect discrimination is where a provision, criterion or practice is applied that is discriminatory, in relation to individuals that have a protected characteristic. However, for there to be a claim of indirect discrimination the provision, criterion or practice must also:

- be to the detriment of people who share the particular protected characteristic compared with

people who do not;

- Not be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Harassment is where there is unwanted conduct related to one of the prohibited grounds which has the purpose of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment will have taken place in such circumstances even if this effect was not intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

Third-party harassment

Third-party harassment occurs where an employee is harassed by third parties such as clients or customers and the harassment is related to a protected characteristic.

Associative discrimination

Associative discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed due to their association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.

Perceptive discrimination

Perceptive discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed due to a mistaken perception that he/she has a particular protected characteristic.

Failure to make reasonable adjustments

Failure to make reasonable adjustments is where a physical feature or a provision, criterion or practice puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared with someone who does not have a disability and the employer has failed to make reasonable adjustments to enable the disabled person to overcome the disadvantage.

Victimisation

Victimisation occurs where an employee is subjected to a detriment, because he/she made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because he or she is suspected of doing so. However, an employee is not protected from victimisation if he or she gave false evidence or information, or made a false allegation, if the evidence or information is given, or the allegation is made, in bad faith.

Dignity at Work

We have a separate 'Dignity at Work Policy' concerning issues of bullying and harassment on any ground, and how complaints of this type will be dealt with once reported.

Training

We will provide training in equal opportunities to managers and others likely to be involved in recruitment or other decision making where equal opportunities issues are likely to arise.

Responsibilities

You are required to support us in meeting our commitment to provide equal opportunities in employment and to avoid unlawful discrimination.

If you commit serious acts of harassment you may be guilty of a criminal offence. As well as exposing us to liability for unlawful discrimination, you can be held personally liable for such acts.

Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against you or customers are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure. Such acts may in certain circumstances constitute gross misconduct and could lead to your summary dismissal.

Redress

If you consider that you may have been unlawfully discriminated against or been the victim of a breach of this policy, you may use our grievance procedure to make a complaint.

If your complaint involves bullying or harassment, you should refer to the 'Dignity at Work Policy.'

We will take all complaints seriously and will seek to resolve any grievance which we uphold.

You will not be penalised for raising a grievance, even if your grievance is not upheld, unless your complaint is both untrue and made in bad faith.

Monitoring and Review

We will monitor this policy periodically to judge its effectiveness and it will be updated in accordance with relevant changes in the law.

In particular, we will monitor the ethnic and gender composition of the existing workforce and of applicants for jobs (including promoted posts), and the number of people with disabilities within these groups. We will review our equal opportunities policy in accordance with the results shown by the monitoring. If changes are required, we will implement them.

Information provided by job applicants and you for monitoring purposes will be used only for these purposes and will be dealt with in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.