

Equal Opportunities Policy 2019

The company believes that a critical factor in its future business success will be the ability to attract staff and customers from all sectors of society.

The overall aims of the company's Equal Opportunity Policy are:

- To achieve a balanced workforce that fully reflects the composition of the relevant labour market;
- To realise the competitive advantage which can accrue from fully utilising the knowledge, skills and abilities of that diverse workforce;
- To become a preferred employer and provider.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

Underlying the company's overall commitment to equality lies a fundamental belief in the right of everyone to be treated with dignity, respect and freedom from discrimination on the grounds of sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status, disability, age, colour, religion or belief, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin ("**protected characteristics**").

The principles of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity also apply to the way in which staff treat visitors, clients, customers, suppliers and former staff members. All staff have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and not to discriminate against or harass other members of staff, regardless of their status.

The company builds its recruitment practices on equality and fairness. We employ the best person for the job based upon merit, regardless of their personal profile. The company uses a variety of advertising methods, including internet, local newspapers, colleges, job centres, etc. to ensure that our vacancies are advertised to a diverse labour market. We aim to ensure that no job applicant suffers discrimination because of any of the protected characteristics above. Managers involved in the recruitment selection process are trained in equality and diversity issues.

To ensure that this policy is operating effectively, and to identify groups that may be underrepresented or disadvantaged in our company, we monitor applicant's ethnic group, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion and age as part of the recruitment procedure. Provision of this information is voluntary and it will not adversely affect an individual's chances of recruitment or any other decision related to their employment. The information is removed from applications before short-listing and kept in an anonymised format solely for the purposes stated in this policy. Analysing this data helps us take appropriate steps to avoid discrimination and improve equality and diversity.

As part of this policy, the company will take all practical steps to assist the recruitment, retention and development of disabled persons.

If you are disabled or become disabled, we encourage you to tell us about your condition so that we can support you as appropriate. If you experience any difficulties at work because of your disability, you may wish to contact your manager to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. Your manager may wish to consult with you and your medical adviser about possible adjustments. We will consider the matter carefully and try to accommodate your needs within reason. If we consider a particular adjustment would not be reasonable we will explain our reasons and try to find an alternative solution where possible.

The company expects all staff to act in such a way as to foster a climate of equal opportunity within the organisation. Managers and Directors have a particular responsibility to ensure that the philosophy of equal opportunities underlies all their relationships with staff and customers and that all business and employment policies and procedures are applied in an objective, fair and systematic manner, such that discrimination is eliminated.

The company takes seriously its responsibility towards incidents of harassment and discrimination at work and will ensure that any incident that comes to its notice is dealt with effectively.

Discrimination by or against an employee is generally prohibited unless there is a specific legal exemption. Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally. Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics set out above. Indirect discrimination occurs 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 related to any of the protected characteristics is prohibited. Harassment can be defined as 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. In some circumstances, acts of harassment may amount to a criminal offence.

Victimisation is also prohibited. This is less favourable treatment of someone who has complained or given information about discrimination or harassment, or supported someone else's complaint.

You are reminded of the necessity at all times to behave towards each other in a responsible and acceptable manner and to respect the dignity of others.

To remain competitive, the company must continue to secure the confidence and commitment of its entire staff. Creating and sustaining a partnership between company and its staff is a crucial element as is an environment which is motivating, where openness and trust can flourish.

Individuals have a right to expect to be treated fairly, with respect and with dignity and not to be subject to harassment, victimisation or any other inappropriate or discriminatory behaviour. If you have concerns that you have been discriminated against or have been subject to harassment you should, in the first instance, and if appropriate, discuss them with your line manager or alternatively, raise the matter formally through our Grievance Procedure.

Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the Grievance Procedure. Staff who make 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 be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

Any member of staff who is found to have committed an act 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 take a strict approach to breaches of this policy.

All managers have specific responsibilities to ensure that the working environment is safe, and to ensure that individuals are clear about their responsibilities both to colleagues and to the company. Managers should be totally committed to ensuring that any occurrence of inappropriate behaviour is stopped immediately, that company policies, practices and process are followed and the company continues to meet its ethical, regulatory and statutory obligations.

The Managing Director has overall responsibility for the training and implementation of this policy.

Signed: 
Chris Hamilton
Managing Director

Date: 1st January 2019