

Equal Opportunities Policy & Procedure

The company recognises that in the operation of its business high standards of integrity must be maintained by adopting good practices to ensure that the business operates lawfully and that employees and every person who has contact with the company is treated fairly and respectfully.

The company aims to ensure that no job applicant, employee, contractor working on our premises, or any person who uses our services receives less favourable treatment on the protected characteristics, as defined by the Equality Act 2010 of sex, marriage and civil partnership, disability, age, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and pregnancy and maternity or is disadvantaged by any condition or requirement that cannot be shown to be justifiable.

The company believes that it can best achieve a commitment to excellence in customer service with a workforce that values and reflects the diverse society in which it operates.

The company and its employees have a shared responsibility to ensure that these aims are met. In accomplishing these aims, the company will ensure that all employees receive sufficient information and training to understand the importance of promoting the principles of fully-inclusive working practices.

What is discrimination?

Direct discrimination – When someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a Protected Characteristic.

Associative discrimination or discrimination by association – direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a Protected Characteristic.

Discrimination by perception – direct discrimination against someone because it is thought that they possess a particular Protected Characteristic even if they do not actually possess it.

Indirect discrimination – occurs where an individual's employment is subject to an unjustified provision criterion or practice which e.g. one sex or race or nationality or age group finds more difficult to meet, although on the face of it the provision, criterion or practice is 'neutral'.

Harassment – unwanted conduct related to a relevant Protected Characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. Employees may complain of such offensive behaviour even if it is not directed towards them personally.

Victimisation – when an employee is treated less favourably because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010 or are suspected of doing so.

Disability discrimination - this includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified unfavourable treatment because of something arising in consequence of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability.

Recruitment and selection

- For each vacancy, a job description and person specification will be prepared and checked to ensure that the criterion used is job-related, clear, relevant, and justifiable.
- Vacancies will be advertised using advertising media that will reach all sections of society.
- Individuals will be selected and promoted only on the basis of merit and ability.
- Reasons for selection and rejection of applicants for vacancies will be recorded.

Learning and development

- All employees will be given equal opportunity to progress within the company and have the opportunity to pursue self-development activities.
- The company will seek to promote activities that achieve efficiency and encourage employees to succeed and will ensure that:
 - New employees receive an adequate induction into the organisation and their role.
 - Appropriate training is given to employees before, or immediately after, promotion or transfer.
 - Appraisal is provided as appropriate to meet the needs of the company and the individual.
 - Learning and development activities reflect the ways in which individuals learn and a range of learning options will be made available wherever possible.

Disability

- Special assistance will be provided wherever possible to any person with a disability to ensure that their disability does not detrimentally affect their opportunity to gain employment with the company.
- Special assistance will also be offered wherever possible to any employee who develops a disability whilst they are employed by the company. Every effort will be made to retain employees within the company, including the identification and provision of reasonable adjustments to the working environment or working arrangements so that their disability does not detrimentally affect their working life.

Flexible working

- The granting of a flexible working arrangement will be based on our ability to meet the needs of the employee, the business and our customers.
- Where a request for flexible working is not granted it will be on the basis of identified specific business grounds such as: the burden of additional costs, detrimental effect on the ability to meet customer demand, inability to reorganise work among existing staff, inability to recruit additional staff, detrimental impact on performance, detrimental effect on quality, insufficiency of work during the periods the employee proposes to work, planned structural changes etc.

Terms of employment

- All terms of employment, benefits, and facilities will be routinely reviewed to ensure that they are not discriminatory.

Equal pay

- The company believes male and female employees should receive equal pay for like work, work rated as equivalent, or work of equal value. The company will endeavour to maintain a pay system that is transparent, free from bias and based on objective criteria.

Grievance and discipline

- If any employee believes they have been unfairly discriminated against they should make a complaint using the company's grievance procedure.
- The company adopts a zero-tolerance approach to any form of discriminatory behaviour, bullying, harassment or any other behaviour that affects another person's dignity. If any employee is found to have breached this policy they will be subject to the company's disciplinary procedure, which may ultimately lead to dismissal.

Services

- The company recognises its obligation to make its services available to a diverse customer base and will remove, alter or provide a reasonable means of avoiding, any potential barriers to users of its services.