

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Policy statement**

We are opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. We are an equal opportunity employer and are fully committed to a policy of treating all our employees and job applicants fairly and equally, regardless of:

- Marital or civil partnership status
- Age
- Disability
- Race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin)
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Gender, including gender reassignment
- Religion or belief
- Pregnancy and maternity

These will collectively be referred to as the 'protected characteristics', for the purposes of this policy.

No employee or job applicant should be harassed, victimised or directly or indirectly discriminated against because they possess a protected characteristic.

In addition:

- Part-time employees should not be treated less favourably than a comparable full-time employee.
- Fixed-term employees should not be treated less favourably than a comparable permanent employee.
- Employees and job applicants should be treated fairly and equally irrespective of their trade union status.

We will take all reasonable steps to provide a work environment in which all employees are treated with respect and dignity, and that is free of harassment based upon an employee's protected characteristic.

We will not condone or tolerate any form of harassment engaged in by our employees.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to all individuals who work and apply to work for us, including:

- Contract workers
- Agency workers
- Volunteers (including those on work experience)

### **Implementing this policy**

The Directors and line managers will be ultimately responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of this policy and ensuring that they actively promote it within the departments for which they are responsible.

In order to implement this policy, we shall:

- Ensure that, as far as is reasonably practicable, the policy is communicated to all workers to whom it applies.
- Ensure that it is always made available to view for all workers to whom it applies.
- Ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfil our policy objectives.
- Provide equality training and guidance, as appropriate, to staff responsible for its implementation.

All staff that come under the scope of this policy:

- Have a duty to co-operate with us to ensure that this policy is effective in ensuring equal opportunities and in preventing discrimination, victimisation, harassment and bullying in the workplace.
- Must comply with it and act in accordance with its objectives.

### **Complaints and enforcement**

Action will be taken under our disciplinary procedures against any employee who is found to have committed an act of improper or unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation. Serious breaches of this policy will be treated as potential gross misconduct, and could render an employee liable to summary dismissal. Employees should also bear in mind that they can be held personally liable for any act of unlawful discrimination. Employees who commit serious acts of harassment may also be guilty of a criminal offence.

An employee should draw the attention of his/her line manager to suspected discriminatory acts or practices, or suspected cases of harassment or victimisation.

An employee who believes that they have suffered from an act of improper or unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation should at first instance inform his/her line manager. He or she will be entitled to raise a grievance in accordance with our grievance procedure, which must be used before pursuing a complaint at an Employment Tribunal.

An employee must not victimise or retaliate against another employee who has made, or is thought to have made, allegations or complaints of discrimination, victimisation or harassment, nor against anyone who has or is thought to have assisted that employee. Such behaviour will be treated as potential gross misconduct in accordance with our disciplinary procedures (section **Error! Reference source not found.**).

### **Recruitment, advertising and selection**

We are committed to applying our equal opportunities policy statement at all stages of our recruitment and selection process.

Advertisements will encourage applications from all suitably qualified and experienced people. When advertising job vacancies, in order to attract applications from all sections of the community, we will, as far as reasonably practicable:

- Ensure advertisements are not confined to those publications or media which would exclude or disproportionately reduce the numbers of applicants with a protected characteristic.
- Avoid prescribing any unnecessary requirements which would exclude a higher proportion of applicants with a protected characteristic.
- Avoid prescribing any requirements as to marital or civil partnership status.
- Where vacancies may be filled by promotion or transfer, they will be published to all eligible employees in such a way that they do not restrict applications from employees with a protected characteristic.

The selection process will be carried out consistently for all jobs at all levels and all applications will be processed in the same way.

The staff responsible for shortlisting, interviewing and selecting candidates will be clearly informed of the selection criteria and of the need for their consistent application.

Person specifications and job descriptions will be limited to those requirements that are necessary for the effective performance of the job. Wherever possible, all applicants will be interviewed by at least two interviewers, and all questions asked of the applicants will relate to the requirements of the job.

The selection of new staff will be based on the role requirements and the individual's suitability and ability to do, or to train for, the job in question.

When assessing the suitability of a disabled job applicant, we will consider what reasonable adjustments can be made to work provisions, criteria and practices, or to work premises, in order to ensure that the disabled person is not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled.

If it is necessary to assess whether personal circumstances will affect the performance of the role (for example, if the job involves unsociable hours or extensive travel), this will be discussed objectively, without detailed questions based on the protected characteristics or assumptions about the protected characteristics.

### **Promotion and equality training**

We are committed to providing opportunities for advancement to our employees where possible. Any internal vacancies will be published to all eligible employees in such a way that they do not restrict applications from employees with a protected characteristic. The recruitment process will comply with the statements made in the above subsection on 'recruitment, advertising and selection'.

The promotion system will be periodically reviewed to ensure there is no unlawful discrimination or that a group of employees with a protected characteristic are not excluded from access to promotion, transfer and training.

We will make equality training available for all Directors and line managers, if they so wish or if it is considered advisable, to help them identify discriminatory acts or practices, or acts of harassment or bullying. We will make training available to all employees, if they so wish or if it is considered advisable, to help them understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to dignity at work, and what they can do to create a work environment free from bullying and harassment.

### **Terms of employment, benefits, facilities and services**

All terms of employment, benefits, facilities and services will be reviewed from time to time, in order to ensure that they comply with this policy.

### **Equal pay**

We are committed to equal pay in employment. We believe our male and female employees should receive equal pay for like work, work rated as equivalent or work of equal value. In order to achieve this, we will endeavour to maintain a pay system that is transparent, free from bias and based on objective criteria.

### **Monitoring equal opportunity and dignity at work**

If it is considered necessary, we will regularly monitor the effects of selection decisions and personnel and pay practices and procedures, in order to assess whether equal opportunity and dignity at work are being achieved. This will also involve considering any possible indirectly discriminatory effects of its working practices. If changes are required, we will implement them. We will also make reasonable adjustments to our standard working practices to overcome barriers caused by disability.