**Equal Opportunities, Equality & Diversity Policy (2025)**

We are committed to valuing diversity and seek to provide all staff with the opportunity for employment, career, and personal development based on ability, qualifications, suitability for the work, and their potential to be developed into the role.

We believe that people from different backgrounds bring fresh ideas, perspectives, and approaches that make the way work is undertaken more effective and efficient.

We will not tolerate direct or indirect discrimination against any person on grounds of any protected characteristic (set out below) in any part of our business. This applies to employees, suppliers, visitors, management, contractors, and all our policies and practices.

It is also the responsibility of all staff, through their daily actions, decisions, and behaviour, to promote equality and diversity, comply with all relevant legislation, and ensure that they do not discriminate against colleagues, clients, suppliers, or any other person associated with the business. Your attention is also drawn to our Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment and may be amended at any time. It covers all staff working for us and applies to all aspects of our relationship with staff and to relations between staff members at all levels. This includes (but is not limited to): job advertisements, recruitment and selection, training and development, promotion, conditions of service, pay and benefits, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment.

**What is Equality and What is Diversity?**

**Equality** requires us, and you, to treat everyone equally and fairly, with equal opportunities and rights.

**Diversity** recognises and values the differences between people. It is important that differences are embraced positively while ensuring equality is kept at the forefront of our actions.

**Objectives**

The aim of this policy is to communicate our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity.

It is our policy to provide employment equality to all, irrespective of:

* Gender, including gender reassignment, and those who identify as non-binary or gender-neutral
* Marital or civil partnership status
* Having or not having dependants
* Religious belief or political opinion
* Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, being an Irish Traveller)
* Disability, including by association
* Sexual orientation
* Age
* Pregnancy and family leave
* Sex

We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. All job applicants, employees, and others who work for us will be treated fairly and objectively.

Decisions about recruitment, selection, promotion, training, or any other benefit will be made on merit and without unlawful discrimination.

This policy is designed to help all those who work for us to develop their full potential and to ensure that the talents and resources of our workforce are fully utilised to maximise efficiency and effectiveness.

**Equality Commitments**

We are committed to:

* Promoting equality of opportunity for all persons
* Creating and maintaining a good and harmonious working environment in which all individuals are treated with dignity and respect
* Preventing unlawful discrimination, harassment (including sexual harassment), and victimisation
* Taking proactive steps to prevent harassment in line with our legal duty
* Fulfilling all our obligations under equality legislation and associated codes of practice
* Taking lawful positive action where appropriate
* Treating breaches of this policy as misconduct, which may lead to disciplinary action

**Implementation**

To achieve these objectives, we will:

* Communicate this policy to employees, job applicants, and relevant third parties (such as contractors and agency workers)
* Incorporate responsibilities for equality and diversity into job descriptions and objectives where appropriate
* Provide training and guidance as needed, including at induction and management level
* Ensure adequate resources are available to support the aims of this policy

**Forms of Discrimination**

* **Direct discrimination**: Treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic. Example: rejecting an applicant because of their race.
* **Indirect discrimination**: Applying a provision, criterion, or practice which disadvantages people with a protected characteristic, unless objectively justified. Example: a fixed retirement age may indirectly discriminate on the grounds of age.
* **Harassment**: Unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that violates a person’s dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.
* **Victimisation**: Treating someone less favourably because they have raised, supported, or provided information about a discrimination or harassment complaint.

**Recruitment and Selection**

We aim to ensure that no job applicant suffers discrimination. Recruitment procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure fairness and objectivity. Selection criteria are based on relevant merits and abilities and are regularly reviewed for proportionality. Wherever possible, shortlisting will be carried out by more than one person.

Vacancies will be advertised to a diverse labour market. Applicants will not be asked about health, disability, pregnancy, or personal characteristics unless:

* It is necessary to establish whether they can perform an intrinsic part of the role (subject to reasonable adjustments)
* To identify reasonable adjustments for assessment or interview
* For lawful positive action measures
* For equal opportunities monitoring (separate from decision-making)

We are required by law to ensure that all employees are entitled to work in the UK. All candidates must provide valid original documents before employment starts, regardless of nationality.

**Training, Promotion, and Conditions of Service**

* Training needs will be identified through regular appraisals.
* All staff will have access to training to enable career progression.
* Promotion decisions will be based on merit.
* Conditions of service, benefits, and facilities will be reviewed to ensure fairness and accessibility.

**Termination of Employment**

Redundancy criteria and disciplinary procedures will be fair, objective, and free from discrimination. Decisions will be based solely on objective evidence and criteria.

**Disability Discrimination**

We encourage staff to inform us if they are disabled or become disabled so that appropriate support and reasonable adjustments can be provided. We will work with employees and medical advisers to identify suitable adjustments. If a particular adjustment is not reasonable, we will explain our decision and explore alternatives.

We will also monitor our premises to ensure accessibility and will make reasonable improvements where possible.

**Fixed-term Employees and Agency Workers**

We will ensure that fixed-term and agency staff have fair access to benefits, training, promotion, and permanent opportunities, and we will monitor their progress accordingly.

**Monitoring and Review**

We will maintain monitoring systems to ensure the effective implementation of this policy. The policy will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary to reflect changes in legislation, case law, and best practice.

**Complaints**

Employees who believe they have experienced discrimination, harassment, or victimisation are entitled to raise the matter under our Grievance Procedures, available in the Staff Handbook.

All complaints will be taken seriously, dealt with promptly and confidentially, and investigated fairly. Staff raising complaints, or supporting others who do so, will be protected from victimisation.

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