

1. Introduction

1.1 The organisation is committed to celebrating diversity, positively promoting equality, fostering equal opportunities and tackling discrimination in all it does to ensure all Employees/Non-Executive Directors are treated with respect and valued equally. This policy should be read and adhered to in conjunction with our policies on harassment and bullying, and recruitment and selection. Any changes in service delivery will take account of this policy.

- We will ensure that our Employees/Non-Executive Directors are trained in equal opportunities matters so that they are able to recognise the needs of colleagues.
- We will regularly review all our policies and procedures to ensure that they comply with legislation and good equalities practice. We aim to provide an example to others of good practice in our employment practices.

2. Equality Act 2010

2.1 The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) consolidates and replaces the previous discrimination legislation. The Act covers discrimination because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. These categories are known in the Act as 'protected characteristics'.

3. Age

3.1 The protected characteristic of age is defined in the Equality Act by reference to a person's age group. An age group can mean people of the same age or people of a range of ages. Age groups can be wide (for example, 'people under 50'; 'under 18s') and they can also be quite narrow (for example, 'people in their mid-40s'; 'people born in 1952'). Age groups may also be relative (for example, 'older than me' or 'older than us').

3.2 Age issues include the need to make managers consider institutional age discrimination and how to remove it.

- We ensure that consultation and participation in decision making involves people across the age groups.
- The organisation does not tolerate age related harassment of Employees/Non-Executive Directors.
- No Employee/Non-Executive Directors will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, or will be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements regarding age which cannot be justified.
- The organisation will challenge assumptions about younger and older workers that create and perpetuate inappropriate recruitment, selection, training, promotion and retirement practices.

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- Flexi-time working is available to most employees, with recognition given to the importance of work-life balance and family and caring commitments for employees of all ages.

3.3 We acknowledge that we may need to revise these standards, in the light of any new legislation on discrimination on the grounds of age.

4. Disability

4.1 Disability is a protected characteristic. The Equality Act 2010 says that “A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a long-term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.” It covers therefore a wide range of physical, sensory and mental disabilities, including chronic mental problems and learning difficulties. Physical or mental impairment also includes sensory impairments, such as those affecting sight or hearing. Long term means that the impairment has lasted, or is likely to last for, at least 12 months, or for the rest of the affected person’s life.

- We seek to identify and remove any policies and practices that disadvantage Employees/Non-Executive Directors with a disability.
- People with disabilities will receive full and equal consideration throughout the whole recruitment and selection process, and positive action is taken to support them in this process by offering a guaranteed interview to candidates who meet the Equality Act definition of disability and the essential criteria within the person specification.
- Disabled Employees/ Non-Executive Directors will be supported through compliance with the requirements of the Equality Act and will be given additional support as appropriate.
- We will ensure our public buildings and offices are accessible for people with disabilities and where reasonable adjustments cannot be achieved we will seek to consider alternative arrangements.

5. Gender Reassignment

5.1 The Equality Act defines gender reassignment as a protected characteristic. People who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process (or part of a process) to reassign their sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex have the protected characteristic of gender reassignment.

5.2 Under the Equality Act ‘gender reassignment’ is a personal process (that is, moving away from one’s birth sex to the preferred gender), rather than a medical process. The reassignment of a person’s sex may be proposed but never gone through; the person may be in the process of reassigning their sex; or the process may have happened previously. It may include undergoing the medical gender reassignment treatments, but it does not require someone to undergo medical treatment in order to be protected.

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- The organisation will not tolerate harassment of Employees/Non-Executive Directors for reasons of gender re-assignment.
- No Employee/Non-Executive Directors will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender re-assignment, or will be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be justified.
- It will have no bearing whatsoever on their ability or suitability of a person to do their job if they are proposing to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process (or part of a process) to reassign their sex.

6. Marriage and Civil Partnership

6.1 The Equality Act defines marriage and civil partnership as a protected characteristic.

6.2 Marriage will cover any formal union of a man and a woman which is legally recognised in the UK as a marriage. A civil partnership refers to a registered civil partnership under the Civil partnership Act 2004, including those registered outside the UK.

- The organisation will not tolerate harassment of Employees/Non-Executive Directors for reasons of marriage or civil partnership.
- No Employee/Non-Executive Directors will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of marriage or civil partnership, or will be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be justified.
- Marriage and or civil partnership will have no bearing whatsoever on the ability or suitability of a person to do their job.

7. Pregnancy and Maternity

7.1 The Equality Act lists pregnancy and maternity as a protected characteristic.

7.2 The protected period for pregnancy or maternity starts when a woman becomes pregnant and continues until the end of her maternity leave period, or until she returns to work if that is earlier.

- The organisation will not tolerate harassment of Employees/Non-Executive Directors for reasons of pregnancy or maternity.
- No Employee/Non-Executive Director will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity, or will be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be justified.

8. Race

8.1 The organisation is keen to actively promote racial equality in all of its employment practices. This means ensuring that the views and priorities of employees from all ethnic minority groups are reflected in the organisation's policies.

As part of our commitment to openness, we consult widely when developing and evaluating policies to ensure that the views of all stakeholders are taken into account. As part of developing our Employees/Non-Executive Directors and the way we work, we

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will develop innovative approaches to increase the diversity of those who apply to work for the organisation.

- We will celebrate diversity, positively promote racial equality, foster equal opportunities and tackle discrimination in all our work.
- Racism and racial harassment is not tolerated and will be challenged when it is encountered.
- We will record any incidents of racial discrimination and investigate them fully.

9. Religion or Belief

9.1 The protected characteristic of religion or belief includes any religion and any religious or philosophical belief. It also includes a lack of any such religion or belief.

- The organisation will not tolerate harassment of Employees/Non-Executive Directors by reason of their religion or belief.
- No Employee/Non-Executive Directors will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of their religion or belief.
- The organisation will respond sensitively to balancing service needs against issues such as requests for leave for religious observance, or in laying down rules on dress or uniform.

10. Sex

10.1 Sex is a protected characteristic and refers to a male or female of any age. A comparator for the purpose of showing sex discrimination will be a person of the opposite sex. Sex does not include gender reassignment or sexual orientation. Sex issues include the need to make managers consider institutional sex discrimination and how to remove it, and to increase the motivation and confidence of all Employees/Non-Executive Directors, to help them progress.

- Sex discrimination in employment practices and sexual harassment in the working environment will not be tolerated.
- A range of working patterns is available to all employees, with recognition given to the importance of work life balance, family and caring commitments for men and women.
- The organisation is committed to treating each sex equally and fairly and will seek to provide training and development opportunities to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to develop their career irrespective of their sex.

11. Sexual Orientation

11.1 Sexual orientation is a protected characteristic. It means a person's sexual orientation towards:

- Persons of the same sex (that is, the person is a gay man or a lesbian)
- Persons of the opposite sex (that is, the person is heterosexual)
- Persons of either sex (that is, the person is bisexual)

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11.2 Sexual orientation relates to how people feel as well as their actions.

- The organisation will not tolerate harassment of Employees/Non-Executive Directors for reasons of their sexual orientation or gender re-assignment.
- No Employee/Non-Executive Director will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of sexual orientation, or gender re-assignment, or will be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be justified.
- A person's sexual orientation has no bearing whatsoever on their ability or suitability to do their job

12. Action Plan

12.1 The organisation will carry out regular consultation on our policies and practices to ensure that we are meeting the requirements of this policy.

13. Training

13.1 We will ensure that Employees/Non-Executive Directors are fully trained in equalities and receive regular customer care training so that they are able to recognise the differing needs of colleagues and customers.

14. Monitoring

14.1 We will monitor services to ensure that we are following this policy and we will report to the Board when we are alerted to potential issues.

15. Bullying and Harassment

15.1 Any reports of bullying or harassment will be treated in accordance with our Bullying and Harassment policy.

16. Partners

16.1 We will ensure that our partners either follow this policy or show commitment to equalities through their own equalities policy.

17. Recruitment and Employment

17.1 As an employer the organisation is committed to treating all employees and potential employees equally.

18. Recruitment

18.1 We will advertise vacancies in a way that will not discriminate against anyone applying. We will keep records of job applicants, candidates selected for interviews and successful candidates. We aim to attract applicants that fairly represent the community that we serve.

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19. Employment

- 19.1 Managers have a responsibility to create a positive working environment, which reduces the possibility of discrimination or harassment taking place and for dealing with unacceptable behaviour, or any complaint, promptly, fairly and thoroughly.
- 19.2 Complaints of unfair treatment, discrimination, harassment and bullying within employment are dealt with through the grievance procedure. We will deal effectively with any such instances that are reported to us.
- 19.3 The organisation seeks to promote an open atmosphere where any Employee/Non-Executive Director who feels that they are being discriminated against, victimised, harassed or bullied should be able to either discuss the problem with the Human Resources Team, or make a formal complaint.
- 19.4 All Employees/Non-Executive Directors have the right to make a complaint and to know that it will be dealt with promptly and fairly. The issue will be dealt with confidentially.
- 19.5 The organisation has a Bullying and Harassment policy, the details of which are available to Employees/Non-Executive Directors. The policy states that every employee and Non-Executive Director have an obligation to observe this policy and ensure that we do not bully, harass or discriminate against our colleagues or condone such behaviour of others.
- 19.6 The organisation has a Whistleblowing Policy the details of which are available to Employees/Non-Executive Directors. The policy provides internal mechanisms for reporting any malpractice, illegal acts or omissions by its Employees/Non-Executive Directors and in accordance with the current legislation provides protection for those who raise genuine concerns which they reasonably believe are in the 'public interest'.
- 19.7 Employees/Non-Executive Directors are asked to report any behaviour of this kind, whether it is directed against themselves or others, to their manager or the Human Resources Team, and be willing and prepared to act as a witness in support of a complainant.
- 19.8 Once employed we will also monitor equalities in the following areas:
- Promotions
 - Disciplinary action
 - Training
 - Salaries
 - Staff in senior positions.

This will allow the organisation to build up a demographic picture of its workforce and highlight any areas where we are under-represented, or areas that may require improvement.

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19.9 When an employee leaves we will conduct an exit interview to monitor the reasons so that we can act on any problem areas.

19.10 We will report to the Board on areas of concern.

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