

Equal Opportunities Policy



Introduction

The Company is committed to providing equal opportunities in employment and to avoiding unlawful discrimination in employment or to customers.

This policy is intended to assist the Company to put this commitment into practice. Compliance with this policy should also ensure that employees do not commit unlawful acts of discrimination.

Striving to ensure that the work environment is free of harassment and bullying and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect is an important aspect of ensuring equal opportunities in employment.

Legislation

It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment on grounds of sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins, sexual orientation or religion or belief, or because someone is married or is a civil partner.

It is unlawful to treat someone less favourably on grounds of disability than others without that disability are or would be treated, unless the less favourable treatment can be justified, or to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to employment caused by disability.

It is unlawful to discriminate unjustifiably on grounds of age in relation to employment. Discrimination after employment may be unlawful, e.g. in refusing to give a reference or in the form of reference given.

It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in the provision of goods, facilities or services to customers on grounds of sex (which may include gender reassignment), pregnancy, religion or belief, sexual orientation, colour, race, nationality, or ethnic or national origins. It is unlawful to discriminate, without justification, on

grounds of disability or to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to using services caused by disability.

The duty to make reasonable adjustments includes the removal, adaptation or alteration of physical features, if the physical features make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of services.

Some types of harassment or bullying will be unlawful discrimination.

It is unlawful to victimise someone because he or she has alleged unlawful discrimination or supported someone to make a complaint or given evidence in relation to a complaint.

Types of Unlawful Discrimination

Direct Discrimination

An example of direct sex discrimination would be refusing to employ a woman because she was pregnant. Unlike the other forms of discrimination, direct discrimination on the grounds of age can be justified.

Indirect Discrimination

An example of indirect sex discrimination could be requiring everyone to work full time unless there is a good reason, unrelated to sex, as to why the particular job has to be done on a full-time basis, since requiring everyone to work full time will normally adversely affect a higher proportion of women than men.

Harassment

Is where there is unwanted conduct related to one of the prohibited grounds which has the purpose of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person, even if this effect was not intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

Failure to make Reasonable Adjustments

Is where arrangements disadvantage an individual because of a disability and reasonable adjustments are not made to overcome the disadvantage.

Victimisation

Is where someone is treated less favourably than others because he or she has alleged unlawful discrimination or supported someone to make a complaint or given evidence in relation to a complaint.

Equal Opportunities in Employment

The Company will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline and selection for redundancy.

Person and job specifications will be limited to those requirements that are necessary for the effective performance of the job. Candidates for employment or promotion will be assessed objectively against the requirements for the job, taking account of any reasonable adjustments that may be required for candidates with a disability. Disability and personal or home commitments will not form the basis of employment decisions except where necessary.

The Company will consider any possible indirectly discriminatory effect of its standard working practices, including the number of hours to be worked, the times at which these are to be worked and the place at which work is to be done. When considering requests for variations to these standard working practices, the Company will refuse such requests only if it considers it has good reasons, unrelated to any prohibited ground of discrimination, for doing so.

The Company will comply with its obligations in relation to statutory requests for contract variations. The Company will also make reasonable adjustments to its standard working

practices to overcome barriers caused by disability.

Customers, Suppliers and other People not employed by the Company

The Company will not discriminate unlawfully against customers using or seeking to use goods, facilities or services provided by the Company.

Employees should report any bullying or harassment by customers, suppliers, visitors or others to their manager who will take appropriate action.

Training

The Company will provide training in equal opportunities to managers and others likely to be involved in recruitment or other decision making where equal opportunities issues are likely to arise.

The Company will provide training to all existing and new employees and others engaged to work at the Company to help them understand their rights and responsibilities and what they can do to help create a working environment free of bullying and harassment. The Company will provide additional training to managers to enable them to deal more effectively with complaints of bullying and harassment.

Employee Responsibilities

Every employee is required to assist the Company to meet its commitment to provide equal opportunities in employment and avoid unlawful discrimination.

Employees can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, the Company for any act of unlawful discrimination. Employees who commit serious acts of harassment may be guilty of a criminal offence.

Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against employees or customers are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under the Company's Disciplinary Procedure.

Discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal without notice.

Grievances

If you consider that you may have been unlawfully discriminated against, you may use the Company's Grievance Procedure to make a complaint.

The Company will take any complaint seriously and will seek to resolve any grievance which it upholds. You will not be penalised for raising a grievance, even if your grievance is not upheld, unless your complaint is both untrue and made in bad faith.

Further Information

This policy will be monitored periodically by the Company to judge its effectiveness and will be updated in accordance with changes in the law