



1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to promote the equality of opportunity afforded to each employee, potential employee or past employee of the company irrespective of matters such as their sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, beliefs or age (their “protected characteristics”).

The company will treat any employee, applicant for employment or past employee equally irrespective of matters such as their sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, beliefs or age.

This policy sets out the company’s intention to ensure that no applicant for employment, employee or former employee suffers discrimination, victimisation or harassment.

The company will treat any reports or instances of such discrimination with the utmost seriousness and will investigate fully and invoke the disciplinary procedure if there are grounds to believe that any such conduct is discovered. Any instances of deliberate discriminatory conduct will be likely to lead to instant dismissal.

To comply with its legal obligations, the company may collect data to monitor the effectiveness of this policy and to prevent instances of discrimination from occurring.

This policy is non-contractual in effect and does not form part of normal terms and conditions of employment. The company reserves the right to change the terms of this policy from time to time and to introduce a replacement procedure as may be required.

2. Definition and scope

This policy covers all employees, agency workers, directors of the company who must comply with its provisions (referred to in this policy as “employees”). Visitors and independent contractors on the company’s premises are also required to comply with the terms of this policy and any instance of discriminatory conduct by any customer, supplier or other contact of the company will also be subject to its provisions. Any employee who believes that any employee has been subject to treatment contrary to this policy should report the matter immediately to their line manager who will take such action as necessary to prevent any unlawful treatment from continuing.

General Definitions

There are two broad types of discrimination, and these can in very general terms be summarised as:

- Direct discrimination which is treating a person less favourably on the ground of one or

more of the protected characteristics set out above.

- Indirect discrimination which is applying an unjustified policy, criterion or practice which results in a person with a protected characteristic being placed at a particular disadvantage.

In addition, discrimination legislation provides for the following further offences:

- Harassment related to any protected characteristic is prohibited. Harassment is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.
- Victimisation is less favourable treatment of a person who complains that they have been subjected to discriminatory treatment in the past.

Employees engaging in any such discrimination will face immediate suspension and investigation. If there are grounds to suspect that discriminatory conduct has taken place, the disciplinary procedure will be invoked immediately and instant dismissal will be the likely outcome if the charges are upheld.

Discrimination exposes the discriminator (personally) and the company to potential substantial liability and as such allegations of discrimination will be treated with the utmost seriousness. The company will take such steps as are reasonable to ensure that any discrimination ceases forthwith.

This policy also seeks to prevent inadvertent discrimination by the company. If any employee considers that any policy, criterion or practice adopted by the company amounts to discrimination they should raise the matter immediately with their line manager.

Any offensive, insensitive or vulgar language demeaning a person in relation to a protected characteristic will not be tolerated.

This policy also covers conduct which any person from one of the groups defined above may find offensive and/or unwanted. Conduct such as the displaying of offensive material such as pornographic pictures, even if they are published in a newspaper is therefore in breach of this policy and is strictly forbidden in any of the company's premises.

Discrimination law extends to many areas of the company's operations such as recruitment, advertising, promotion and retirement and other forms of dismissal. It is therefore possible for the discrimination to occur in relation to those who are not employees of the company such as applicants for employment and, in certain circumstances, former employees.

It is not always necessary for there to be "proof" that discrimination has taken place, in order for the company to take action to prevent it. The law, as well as the company, recognises that discrimination may take place in circumstances where there are no witnesses and/or unwilling witnesses. Lack of proof should not therefore deter any employee who believes that they have been the victim of discrimination from coming forward to make a complaint under this policy.

Disability Discrimination

The company encourages any employee suffering from a disability to let us know in order that appropriate support can be provided. Disability has a legal definition. It is not necessary for any employee to be registered as disabled in order to qualify as disabled for legal purposes. The law defines disability as a long term mental or physical impairment having a substantial effect on day-to-day activities. The company will take any reasonable steps to ensure that

any employee's disability is alleviated in the workplace. This may involve making changes to their working practices or duties. Equally, it may mean that the company makes adjustments to the physical environment in which the employee works by making adaptations and/or purchasing equipment to assist the employee in carrying out their duties.

Harassment and Bullying

Harassment is unwanted behaviour towards a person and may take many forms, such as telephoning or texting, inappropriate joking or propositioning. Bullying may well amount to harassment and is generally an inappropriate means of communicating including threatening, making unreasonable demands, or embarrassing or belittling anyone.

The company wishes to promote a sense of dignity between employees and will be supportive of any employee who believes that their treatment by any employee contravenes this policy. Such employees are encouraged to discuss the matter informally with their line manager, a member of the human resources department or a trusted colleague. The company will take steps to investigate any such complaints. Both the employee complaining of such conduct and their supporting colleague, if any, will be protected from any adverse consequences arising from them doing so.

In the unlikely event that an informal approach about harassment or bullying is ineffective in solving the problem, employees are encouraged to lodge a formal written grievance.

Harassment may amount to a serious offence and the company will not tolerate any conduct that may amount to harassment or bullying. Any employee responsible for such conduct will be subject to disciplinary proceedings and in most cases deliberate and/or persistent bullying and harassment will result in instant dismissal.

3. Procedure

An employee who becomes aware that any employee may be subject to any of the above forms of discrimination should raise the matter immediately with their line manager who will take action immediately to investigate and resolve the situation. During the course of any such investigation, the company will take steps immediately to separate the affected employee from the source of any possible discrimination.

Any such complaint will be treated, in the first instance, in the strictest confidence. However, it may be necessary to approach the person responsible for the discrimination formally to take steps to ensure that it does not continue, or to give them an opportunity to explain themselves. The employee's permission may be required in certain circumstances, for the source of the complaint to be disclosed so that a proper investigation and, if necessary, a formal disciplinary process can take place under the company's disciplinary policy.

A manager at an appropriate level will be appointed to deal with the complaint and will call a meeting, usually within 14 days to take the employee's concerns further. The matter will be treated as a formal grievance and the procedure followed will be that contained in the company's grievance procedure. It is likely that the manager appointed to hear the grievance will also carry out the investigation that may then form the basis of formal disciplinary proceedings against those responsible for the discriminatory conduct.

The company will take all necessary steps to ensure that the discrimination ceases and may arrange for training to take place where appropriate.

There will also be a "follow-up" meeting to take place with the responsible manager so that any action taken to avoid discrimination can be explained, subject to confidentiality.

If there is any repetition of the discrimination or if the employee considers that they have been subjected to victimisation or harassment in consequence of having made the complaint, the employee should immediately bring this to the attention of their line manager or the manager responsible for investigating the original complaint, if different.