

Equal Opportunities Policy

1. Policy Statement

The company considers all forms of discrimination to be unacceptable in the workplace and recognises that it is in the interests of the company, as well as its employees, to promote a policy for equal opportunity in employment. The company is fully committed to providing equal opportunities throughout employment including in the recruitment, training and promotion of staff and to eliminating discrimination in the workplace.

Unlawful discrimination on the grounds of disability, gender, sexual orientation, marriage, race, colour, religious convictions, age, nationality or ethnic origins, responsibility for dependants, medical conditions or political beliefs is unacceptable.

The company will ensure that all current and potential employees are aware of its policy in this regard and all employees are required to ensure that the policy is carried out in its entirety. Any allegations of unlawful discrimination will be treated seriously and dealt with confidentially and speedily in accordance with the company's discrimination, harassment and bullying procedure. Managers have a responsibility to ensure that they do not ignore or treat lightly grievances or complaints from members of a particular group or any individual on the assumption that the individual is over-sensitive.

2. Discrimination

The company will not unlawfully discriminate against an employee by treating that employee less favourably than other employees are or would be treated in the same or similar circumstances.

The company will not apply to any of its employees or prospective employees any requirement or condition which is unjustified, but will ensure that any condition or requirement is based on objective requirements.

3. Job Advertisements/Promotion Opportunities

The company will take all reasonable steps to employ and promote employees on the basis of their abilities and qualifications without regard to race, religion, colour, sex, age, marital status, nationality, ethnic origin, disability, trade union membership (or non-membership) or sexual orientation. When advertising job vacancies, in order to attract applications from all sections of the community, the company will, as far as is reasonably practicable:

- (a) Ensure that advertisements are not confined to those areas or publications which would exclude or disproportionately reduce the number of applicants of a particular sex, racial or social group;
- (b) Avoid prescribing any requirements which would exclude a higher proportion of a particular sex or racial group;
- (c) Avoid prescribing any requirements to marital status;
- (d) Where a particular qualification is required, state that a fully comparable qualification obtained overseas is as acceptable as a UK qualification;
- (e) Where vacancies are filled by promotion or transfer, publish them to all eligible employees in such a way that they do not restrict applications from employees of any race or sex;

- (f) Not recruit any new employees solely on the recommendation of an existing employee.

4. Job Applications and Interviews

All job applications will be treated equally and processed in exactly the same way. The staff responsible for short listing, interviewing and selecting candidates will be clearly informed of the selection criteria and of the need for constant application.

All questions put to job applicants will relate to the requirements of the job. If it is necessary to assess whether personal circumstances will affect the performance of the job (for example, if the job involves unsocial hours or extensive travel) this will be discussed objectively without detailed questions based on assumptions about race, religion, marital status, children and/or domestic obligations.

5. Selection

When assessing the suitability of an employee for a particular post, no decisions will be taken by the company which cannot be objectively justified in a particular circumstance. The selection of new staff will be based on job requirements and the individual's suitability and ability to do, or train for, the job in question. The company will not disqualify an applicant because that person is unable to complete an application form unassisted, unless the completion of the application form is a valid test required for safe and effective performance of the job. It is the company's policy to give full and fair consideration to applications for employment from disabled persons and to provide appropriate training, development and promotion prospects, equivalent to those given to other employees, wherever reasonably practicable.

6. Terms, Benefits and Service

The company makes no distinction based on any of the grounds referred to above between employees in relation to the terms, benefits, facilities and services that it provides employees.

All terms of employment, benefits, facilities and services will be reviewed from time to time to ensure that there is no discrimination on those grounds.

The company will take all reasonable steps to ensure the protection of the dignity and well-being of all employees during their employment with the company. You are referred to the company's disability, harassment and bullying procedures, and are reminded that you have a duty to co-operate with the company to ensure that this procedure is properly observed and complied with.

7. Management Responsibilities

Managers and supervisors have a responsibility for ensuring equal opportunities and preventing discrimination at all levels. They must not themselves differentiate between those over whom they have authority in the exercise of their managerial or supervisory role. The company will take such measures as may be necessary to ensure the proper training, supervision and instruction of managers and supervisors in order to familiarise them with the company's equal opportunities policy, to help them identify discriminatory acts or practices, and to ensure that they promote equal opportunities within the areas of the business for which they are responsible.

Managers and supervisors may have been given authority to exercise their discretion in certain circumstances and must do so on the basis of justifiable objective criteria and not on the grounds of an individual employee's race, religion, colour, sex, age, marital status, nationality or ethnic origin, disability or sexual orientation. They are required to maintain accurate written records of their decisions regarding any matters in respect of which they have exercised their discretion.

Managers and supervisors must ensure that no unacceptable behaviour is taking place in the areas of the business for which they are responsible and take steps to ensure that it does not occur. They must also ensure that the employees for whom they are responsible know that such behaviour is unacceptable and what to do if it occurs. If a manager or supervisor becomes aware that such behaviour has occurred, he or she must respond appropriately and in accordance with the company's discrimination, harassment and bullying procedure. If the manager or supervisor is unable to deal with the matter for any reason, he or she should refer the matter to a senior manager immediately. Under no circumstances should such behaviour be ignored or trivialised. All complaints must be treated seriously and failure on the part of managers and supervisors to carry out their duties in respect of equal opportunities may result in disciplinary action being taken against the manager or supervisor concerned.

8. Promotion, Transfer and Training

All persons responsible for selecting employees for training, whether induction or promotion training, or for transfer to other jobs, will have been advised of their obligations not to discriminate on the grounds referred to above. Where a promotional system is in operation, the assessment criteria will be examined to make sure that they do not discriminate against a particular sex or racial group.

Where general ability and personal qualities are the main requirements for promotion to a post, care will be taken to consider favourably all candidates including those with different career patterns and general experience.

9. Monitoring Equal Opportunities

In order to ensure the effectiveness of its equal opportunities policy, the company monitors the composition of its workforce, applicants for promotion and/or training and job applicants. Information given as part of its monitoring policy is treated in the strictest confidence and is used solely for monitoring purposes. The company will regularly monitor the effects of selection decisions and personnel practices and procedures in order to assess whether equality of opportunity is being achieved. The company will, from time to time, review the selection criteria and procedures for recruitment, training, transfer and promotion to ensure that they do not include requirements or conditions which constitute, or may lead to, unlawful discrimination.

If the review undertaken by the company shows that a particular group has been under-represented in particular work the company will, wherever appropriate, take such steps as are reasonably practicable to address the situation.