



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

The following Policy and Code of Practice apply to all Employees.

The Group is committed to ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly and are valued irrespective of disability, race, gender, health, social class, sexual preference, marital status, nationality, religion, employment status, age or membership or non-membership of a trade union.

Equal Opportunities Policy

No one is to receive less favourable treatment on any of the above grounds or is to be disadvantaged by requirements or conditions, which cannot be shown to be justifiable.

Equal Opportunities Involve:

- Treating everyone fairly and without bias
 - Creating a work environment free from harassment, victimisation and bullying
 - Encouraging, supporting and developing our own and others' abilities to maximise our contribution to the business
 - Each of us understanding what is expected of us in terms of work performance, standards and behaviour
- Equal Opportunities is not about:
- Ignoring or devaluing diversity by pretending that everyone is the same
 - Giving certain groups an unfair advantage in the workplace
 - Pretending that individuals are receiving equal opportunities by the unfair application of procedures and practices
 - Lowering standards

Good Equal Opportunities Practice Involves:

Managers implementing and monitoring fair, objective and systematic procedures for:

- Good communications
- Recruitment, selection, promotion, transfer and leaving
- Managing individuals' performance, training, development and careers
- Access to counselling and other support processes
- Flexible patterns of work
- Individual grievances
- Discipline
- Ensuring the fair treatment and dignity of Employees at work and making sure our workplaces are free from harassment, victimisation and bullying

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The Business Case

We believe that equal opportunity is fundamental to the delivery of a successful business. It leads to:

- Improved safety
- Enhanced quality
- Improved individual performance
- Better customer service and public image
- A wider pool of potential recruits
- Better use and appreciation of individuals' skills and abilities
- Decreased staff turnover
- Lower absenteeism and sickness levels
- Better value for money, reduced expenditure and lower legal costs

Responsibilities for Implementation

The Board of Directors will be held accountable for effective implementation. The monitoring and review of progress will take place regularly as part of the business review process.

In addition every Employee has a personal responsibility to:

- Treat people fairly and without prejudice
- Value and respect others
- Ensure that no one is harassed, victimised or bullied in the workplace
- Promote a work environment where everyone feels confident to report incidents that are unfair or personally offensive
- Seek to develop their own skills and encourage others

Policy Framework

Our Equal Opportunities Policy has been developed within the framework of the following legislation:

UNITED KINGDOM

- Disabled Persons (Employment) Acts 1944 and 1958
- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Acts 1970 and 1976
- Equal Pay Act 1970 and Equal Pay (Amendment) Regulations 1983
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- Sex Discrimination Acts 1975 and 1986
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Companies Act 1985
- Trade Union Reform and Employee Rights Act 1993

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EUROPEAN LEGISLATION

- Treaty of Rome 1957, Article 119
- Pregnant Workers' Directive 1992
- European Commission recommendation on the protection of the dignity of women and men at work

OUR EMPLOYMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES including

- Guides to good equal opportunities practice
- Contracts of employment
- Return to work schemes
- Policy on harassment at work
- Individual grievance procedure
- Promotion, transfer and redundancy arrangements
- Disciplinary procedure
- Safety
- Team briefing and communication

It is recommended that this Equal Opportunities Policy is read in conjunction with the Harassment Policy and Code of Practice, our guidelines and the guidelines issued by the Commission for Racial Equality, the Equal Opportunities Commission and on the employment of people with disabilities by the Department of Employment

Definition of Principal Terms

UNLAWFUL SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION occurs when, because of their sex, a woman or man is treated less favourably than a person of the opposite sex in similar circumstances.

UNLAWFUL RACIAL DISCRIMINATION occurs when, on racial grounds, a person is treated less favourably than others.

In neither case is there a need for the person discriminating to intend to do so, merely the evidence that the reason for discrimination was in fact racial or sexual.

DIRECT DISCRIMINATION consists of treating a person, on the grounds of race or sex, less favourably than others are or would be treated in the same or similar circumstances.

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INDIRECT DISCRIMINATION consists of applying a requirement or condition which, whether intentionally or not, adversely effects one group considerably more than another and which cannot be justified.

HARASSMENT consists of any unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of women and men at work. It includes unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct and it could amount to unlawful discrimination. It can involve a single incident or may be persistent and may be directed to one or more individuals. In addition to racial and sexual harassment, for the purposes of this policy, harassment on the basis of age, disability, health, social class, membership or non-membership of a trade union are also included.

UNLAWFUL VICTIMISATION consists of treating a person less favourably than others are, or would be treated in the same or similar circumstances, because they have made a complaint or allegation of discrimination or have acted as a witness or informant in connection with proceedings under the Race and Sex Discrimination Acts.

BULLYING includes persistent criticism, personal abuse and/or ridicule, either in public or private, which humiliates and demeans the individuals involved, gradually eroding their self confidence

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