

# Equality Opportunities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

## **Equal Opportunities Statement**

We are committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion among our workforce. The aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and our service users, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

## **Our Commitment and Principles**

We believe that diversity brings strength and innovation to our organisation. We are dedicated to promoting a culture where differences are valued, and every individual is encouraged to contribute to our success. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion is integral to our business strategy and underpins our organisational values.

## **Core Values:**

- **Respect:** We treat everyone with dignity and value their unique contributions.
- **Integrity:** We act ethically and transparently in all our interactions.
- **Inclusion:** We strive to create an environment where everyone feels welcomed and valued.
- **Equity:** We ensure fair treatment, opportunities, and advancement for all.

## **We are fully committed to:**

- Treating all of our employees and job applicants equally in all aspects of employment including: recruitment and selection, promotion, transfer, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, other terms of employment, discipline, selection for redundancy and dismissal. Creating a working environment that is free of bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.

- Training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under this equal opportunities, diversity & inclusion policy.
- Employing, training and promoting employees on the basis of their experience, abilities and qualifications, without regard to race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, gender reassignment, age, marriage and civil partnership or disability. In this policy these are known as the “Protected Characteristics”.
- Making opportunities for training, development and progress available to all employees, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the company.

We will not condone any form of bullying, harassment, or unlawful discrimination whether engaged in by employees or by outside third parties who do business with us, such as clients, service users, contractors/freelancers and suppliers.

Employees have a duty to co-operate with us to ensure that this policy is effective in ensuring equal opportunities and in preventing discrimination, harassment or bullying. Action will be taken under our Disciplinary Procedure against any employee who is found to have committed an act of improper or unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying or intimidation. Serious breaches of this policy will be treated as potential gross misconduct and could render the employee liable to summary dismissal.

All employees should understand they, as well as the Company, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, service users, suppliers and the public.

You should draw to the attention of your line manager any suspected discriminatory acts or practices or suspected cases of harassment. You must not victimise or retaliate against an employee who has made allegations or complaints of discrimination or harassment or who has provided information about such discrimination or harassment. Such behaviour will be treated as potential gross misconduct. Employees should support colleagues who suffer such treatment and are making a complaint.

## **Discrimination**

You must not unlawfully discriminate against or harass other people, including current and former employees, job applicants, clients, service users, suppliers and visitors. This applies in the workplace, outside the workplace (when dealing with service users, suppliers or other work-related contacts or when wearing a work uniform), and on work-related trips or events including social events.

The following forms of discrimination are prohibited under this policy and are unlawful:

- Direct discrimination – when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a Protected Characteristic.
- Indirect discrimination – occurs where an individual’s employment is subject to an unjustified provision criterion or practice which e.g. one sex or race or nationality or age group finds more difficult to meet, although on the face of it the provision, criterion or practice is ‘neutral’.

- Associative discrimination or discrimination by association – direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a Protected Characteristic.
- Discrimination by perception – direct discrimination against someone because it is thought that they possess a particular Protected Characteristic even if they do not actually possess it.
- Harassment – unwanted conduct related to a relevant Protected Characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. You may complain of such offensive behaviour even if it is not directed towards you personally.
- Victimisation – when an employee is treated less favourably because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance about unlawful discrimination or are suspected of doing so.
- Disability discrimination: this includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified unfavourable treatment because of something arising in consequence of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability.

## **Our Commitment**

### **Recruitment**

The recruitment process will be conducted in such a way as to result in the selection of the most suitable person for the job in terms of relevant abilities and qualifications. We are committed to applying our equal opportunities policy statement at all stages of recruitment and selection.

Recruitment publicity will aim to positively encourage applications from all suitably qualified people when advertising job vacancies, in order to attract applications from all sections of the community.

Where vacancies may be filled by promotion or transfer, they will be published to all eligible employees in such a way that they do not restrict applications from employees with a particular Protected Characteristics. However, where having regard to the nature and context of the work, having a particular Protected Characteristics is an occupational requirement and that occupational requirement is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, we will apply that requirement to the job role and this may therefore be specified in the advertisement.

The selection process will be carried out consistently for all jobs at all levels. We will ensure that this equal opportunities policy is available to all staff, and in particular is given to all staff with responsibility for recruitment, selection and promotion.

The selection of new staff will be based on job requirements and the individual’s suitability and ability to do, or to train for, the job in question. Person specification and job descriptions will be limited to those requirements that are necessary for the effective performance of the job. Candidates for employment, promotion or transfer will be assessed objectively against the requirements of the job.

With disabled job applicants, we will have regard to our duty to make reasonable adjustments to work provisions, criteria and practices or to physical features of work premises or to provide auxiliary aids or services in order to ensure that the disabled person is not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled.

All applications will be processed consistently. The staff responsible for short listing, interviewing and selecting candidates will be clearly informed of the selection criteria and of the need for their consistent application. All questions that are put to the applicants will relate to the requirements of the job.

### **Transfer and promotion**

All persons responsible for selecting new employees, employees for training or employees for transfer or promotion to other jobs will be instructed not to discriminate because of one or more of the Protected Characteristics. Where a promotional system is in operation, the assessment criteria will be examined to ensure that they are not discriminatory. The promotional system will be checked from time to time in order to assess how it is working in practice.

When a group of workers who predominantly have a particular Protected Characteristic appear to be excluded from access to promotion, transfer and to other benefits, our systems and procedures will be reviewed to ensure there is no unlawful discrimination.

### **Terms of employment, benefits, facilities and services**

All terms of employment, benefits, facilities and service will be reviewed from time to time, in order to ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination on the grounds of one or more of the Protected Characteristics.

### **Equal pay and equality of terms**

We are committed to equal pay in employment. We believe our male and female employees should receive equal pay for like work, work rated as equivalent or work of equal value. In order to achieve this, we will endeavour to maintain a pay system that is transparent, free from bias and based on objective criteria.

### **Disabilities**

If you are disabled or become disabled, we encourage you to tell us about your condition so that we can support you as appropriate.

If you experience difficulties at work because of your disability, you may wish to contact your line manager to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. Your line manager may wish to consult with you and your medical adviser about possible adjustments. We will consider the matter carefully and try to accommodate your needs within reason. If we consider a particular adjustment would not be reasonable we will explain our reasons and try to find an alternative solution where possible.

We will monitor the physical features of our premises to consider whether they might place anyone with a disability at a substantial disadvantage. Where necessary, we will take reasonable steps to improve access.