



# Equality and Diversity Policy

**Publication:** May 2015

**Date for Review:** May 2017

**Version:** 3



## Contents

|   | <b>Page</b> |
|---|-------------|
| <b>1. Regulatory / legal framework</b>    | <b>3</b>    |
| <b>2. Review</b>                          | <b>3</b>    |
| <b>3. Policy statement</b>                | <b>4</b>    |
| <b>4. Responsibilities</b>                | <b>4</b>    |
| <b>5. Purpose and Scope</b>               | <b>4</b>    |
| <b>6. Eligibility</b>                     | <b>4</b>    |
| <b>7. The Standard</b>                    | <b>5</b>    |
| <b>7.1. Customer service</b>              | <b>5</b>    |
| <b>7.2. Recruitment and selection</b>     | <b>5</b>    |
| <b>7.3. Learning and development</b>      | <b>6</b>    |
| <b>7.4. Leave arrangements</b>            | <b>6</b>    |
| <b>7.5. Employment relations issues</b>   | <b>7</b>    |
| <b>7.6. Sickness absence</b>              | <b>7</b>    |
| <b>8. Equality and Diversity Training</b> | <b>7</b>    |
| <b>9. Monitoring</b>                      | <b>7</b>    |
| <b>10. Further advice and guidance</b>    | <b>8</b>    |



## 1. Regulatory / legal framework

The Equality Act came into force from October 2010. It replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single new Act that provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all.

### Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 seeks to tackle unlawful discrimination against a person or groups or people based on one or more of the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender re-assignment
- Marriage and civil partnerships
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

In addition the Equality Act requires organisations to make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of disabled employees and users of their services.

The Equality Act also places a duty on all organisations, in the exercise of their public functions, to have 'due regard' to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

## 2. Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, unless;

- There are significant changes required
- There are found to be deficiencies or failures in this policy which result in complaints from staff or customers
- The policy is deemed to be no longer effective or in line with business vision and values

At which point the Executive Director will initiate an immediate review.



### **3. Policy statement**

This policy sets out our commitment to creating an environment in which everyone feels valued and able to make a positive contribution to the services we provide and the culture of our business.

We will seek to promote equality and diversity in everything we do, in our published documentation, on our website and in all other activities and responsibilities to staff, customers and partner organisations.

Actions found to be taken in direct or indirect conflict with this aim will be taken very seriously and could lead to formal investigation under the appropriate policy or contract.

### **4. Responsibilities**

The Executive Director is responsible for ensuring that all aspects of the policy are properly applied and demonstrated through their own actions and behaviours.

Heads of Service and Managers are responsible for applying the policy and demonstrating this through their own actions and behaviours.

Staff members are expected to understand and follow the standards set in this policy.

The Executive Director is responsible for reviewing the policy's application, to ensure it remains up to date and to support managers with any complaints or failures to support our equality and diversity objectives.

### **5. Purpose and scope**

The purpose of this framework is to set out clearly how the organisation embraces equality and diversity in to our normal day-to-day activities.

We all expected to demonstrate knowledge and understanding in this area, we are expected to challenge any behaviours that do not support our objectives.

### **6. Eligibility**

All members of staff are covered by this framework and are expected to demonstrate our commitment to equality and diversity in everything we do.

Respect and professionalism must be shown to colleagues and customers at all times as failure to do so will be in breach of this framework.



## **7. The Standard**

The Senior Management Team (SMT) has agreed to share the same commitment to equality and diversity across all functions, teams and services.

Our framework is built on the following principals, that we will not discriminate against any member of staff or customer on an unfair or unjustifiable basis. This specifically means discrimination will not be tolerated on the basis of:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender re-assignment
- Marriage and civil partnerships
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

We aim to:

- Be easily accessible to all members of the community we serve
- To respond to enquiries professionally, promptly and in a friendly manner
- Understand the customers needs and requirements
- Go the extra mile wherever possible

These standards have been incorporated into the following areas of employment and housing management activity.

### **7.1 Customer service**

The organisation has a Customer Contact Policy that sets a standard for dealing with internal and external enquires. This policy makes it clear that it is the responsibility of all staff to understand the needs of the customer and look to provide the best possible service on every occasion.

Complaints and feedback on failure to deliver good customer services will be monitored by management and copied to a nominated Manager for regular review.

### **7.2 Recruitment and selection**

The organisation has a Recruitment and Selection Policy that sets out the process when seeking to recruit new or promote existing staff. This policy makes it clear that it is the responsibility of the recruitment panel to ensure the process is conducted in a fair manner and that decisions are based on merit.



The organisation complies with the Job Centre Plus Two Ticks scheme and all disabled applicants will be guaranteed an interview should they meet the minimum short-listing criteria.

### **7.3 Learning and development**

The opportunity to learn and develop new skills will be available to all members of staff. The decision as to whether or not to invest in a members of staff's development will depend on several factors as set out in the Learning and Development Policy, these include:

- The relevance of the development to the individuals role
- The opportunities to develop already enjoyed by the individual
- The benefit learning is anticipated to bring to the organisation, team and individual
- The cost and budget available
- The individuals learning plan and objectives for the period
- The individuals' current competence and performance

Decisions can be made on the basis of the time it will take for the benefit of the investment to be realised by the organisation. This is not the same as making a decision based on someone's age, this will not be an acceptable criteria.

### **7.4 Leave arrangements**

The organisation will set out a policy and procedure in the following areas:

- Flexible Working
- Policy Maternity
- Leave Policy
- Adoption Leave Policy
- Special Leave Policy

Each policy and procedure will clearly set out the process by which changes to working arrangements can be requested and responded to. The organisation will try to accommodate requests made under these policies and will use the following criteria are used as a basis on which decisions will be taken:

- Impact of the proposed change on the team,
- Impact of the proposed change to the customer
- Regulatory requirements

Decisions will not be based on the number of times a request has been made.



## **7.5 Employment relations issues**

Grievances or complaints raised that are based on or include accusations of bullying, harassment or discrimination will be taken seriously and dealt with as quickly as possible.

In some circumstances it will be necessary to suspend or move staff during an investigation. However, it should be understood that this action will in any way indicate blame or fault.

Where it is agreed that a working relationship can be repaired by providing counselling support or mediation, the Executive Director can arrange to put these arrangements in place.

## **7.6 Sickness absence**

The organisation has a policy setting out how it will manage the impact of short and long-term sickness absence.

Sickness absence attributable to a medical condition covered by the Disability Discrimination Act will be shown more tolerance than other conditions. Reasonable adjustments to the working environment or duties will be sought to ensure any adverse impact on the individuals health are minimised or removed

## **8. Equality and diversity training**

Equality and diversity training will be available as part of the corporate learning and development programme. All staff will attend as part of their induction training as well as ongoing refresher type training.

In circumstances where there is a concern that a member of staff is unclear on how to embrace diversity or demonstrates inappropriate behaviour, consideration will be given to supporting this individual through training.

## **9. Monitoring**

The Executive Director will monitor the number of discrimination issues raised across the organisation and will report to Group Board on a regular basis.

HR key performance indicators will be provided to SMT on a quarterly basis. Information will be provided by:

- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Disability
- Age



Issues of concern will be taken up by the Executive Director where an inappropriate trend or pattern becomes apparent.

## **10. Further advice and guidance**

There may be circumstances that arise that are not dealt with in this procedure. If you need any further advice or guidance, please contact the Executive Director. Details are available on the intranet.