



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Policy statement

The Company is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to a policy of treating all its employees and job applicants equally. The Company will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline and selection for redundancy.

It is the policy of the Company to take all reasonable steps to employ and promote employees on the basis of their abilities and qualifications without regard to race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, marital or civil partnership status and/or disability. The Company will appoint, train, develop and promote on the basis of merit and ability alone.

Employees have a duty to co-operate with the Company to ensure that this policy is effective to ensure equal opportunities and to prevent discrimination. Action under the Company's disciplinary procedure will be taken against any employee who is found to have committed an act of improper or unlawful discrimination. Serious breaches of the equal opportunities policy will be treated as potential gross misconduct and could render the employee liable to summary dismissal. Employees should also bear in mind that they can be held personally liable for any act of unlawful discrimination.

Employees must not harass, bully or intimidate other employees on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, marital or civil partnership status or disability. Such behaviour will be treated as potential gross misconduct under the Company's disciplinary procedure. Employees who commit serious acts of harassment may also be guilty of a criminal offence. The Company has a separate anti-harassment policy which deals with these issues and sets out how complaints of this type will be dealt with.

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

Sources of 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 respect of abilities and qualifications. The Company is committed to applying its equal opportunities policy at all stages of recruitment and selection.

Advertisements

Recruitment publicity must positively encourage applications from all suitably qualified people. When advertising job vacancies, in order to attract applications from all sections of the community, the Company will, as far as reasonably practicable:

1. Ensure advertisements are not confined to those areas or publications which would exclude or disproportionately reduce the numbers of applicants of a particular gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or racial group;
2. Avoid prescribing any unnecessary requirements which would exclude a higher proportion of a particular gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or racial group or which would exclude disabled job applicants;
3. Avoid prescribing any requirements as to marital or civil partnership status;



4. 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 of any particular gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or racial group or from employees with a disability.

Selection methods

The selection process will be carried out consistently for all jobs at all levels. The Company 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 the job requirements and the individual's suitability and ability to do, or to train for, the job in question. Person specifications and job descriptions will be limited to those requirements that are necessary for the effective performance of the job. Candidates for employment or promotion will be assessed objectively against the requirements for the job. With disabled job applicants, the Company will have regard to its duty to make reasonable adjustments to work provisions, criteria or practices or to work premises in order to ensure that the disabled person is not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled.

Selection tests

Any selection tests which are used will be limited to questions relating to the particular job and/or career requirements. The tests will measure the individual's actual or inherent ability to do or to train for the work or career. Thus, questions or exercises on matters which may be unfamiliar to applicants of a particular gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or racial group will not be included in the tests if they are unrelated to the requirements of the particular job. The tests which are used will be reviewed from time to time in order to ensure that they remain relevant and free from any unjustifiable bias, either in content or in scoring mechanism.

Applications and interviewing

All applications will be processed in 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 their consistent application.

Wherever possible, all applicants will be interviewed by at least two people. All questions that are put to the 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 unsociable hours or extensive travel), this will be discussed objectively, without detailed questions based on assumptions about race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, marital or civil partnership status, disability, children and/or domestic obligations.

Training, transfer and promotion

The Company will take such measures as may be necessary to ensure the proper training, supervision and instruction for all line managers in order to familiarise them with the Company's policy on equal opportunities, and in order to help them identify discriminatory acts or practices and to ensure that they promote equal opportunity within the departments for which they are responsible. The training will also enable line managers to deal more effectively with complaints of bullying and harassment.

All persons responsible for selecting new employees, employees for training, or for transfer to other jobs, will be instructed not to discriminate on grounds of race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, marital or civil partnership status and disability.

The Company will also provide training to all employees to help them understand their rights and responsibilities under the anti-harassment policy and what they can do to create a work environment that is free of bullying and harassment.



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 predominantly of one race, religion, sex, sexual orientation or age group or a worker with a disability appears to be excluded from access to promotion, transfer and training and to other benefits, the promotional system 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 race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, marital or civil partnership status or disability.

Equal pay

The Company is committed to equal pay in employment. It believes its 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, the Company will endeavour to maintain a pay system that is transparent, free from bias and based on objective criteria.

Grievances and complaints

All allegations of discrimination will be dealt with seriously, confidentially and speedily. The Company will not ignore or treat lightly grievances or complaints about unlawful discrimination from members of a particular race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or age or from employees who have undergone gender reassignment, are married, have entered into a civil partnership or have a disability. Such complaints should be raised promptly under the terms of the Company's grievance procedure. If the complaint involves bullying or harassment, the grievance procedure is modified as set out in the anti-harassment policy.

Employees will not be penalised for raising a grievance, even if it is not upheld, unless the complaint was both untrue and made in bad faith.

Monitoring equal opportunity

The Company will regularly monitor the effects of selection decisions and personnel practices and procedures in order to assess whether equal opportunity is being achieved. This will also involve considering any possible indirectly discriminatory effects of its standard working practices. If changes are required, the Company will implement them. The Company will also make reasonable adjustments to its standard working practices to overcome barriers caused by disability.