



OPPORTUNITIES AND DIGNITY AT WORK

Policy statement

The Company is an equal opportunity employer and is fully committed to a policy of treating all its employees and job applicants equally.

The Company will take all reasonable steps to employ, train and promote employees on the basis of their experience, abilities and qualifications without regard to race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, age or disability. The Company will also take all reasonable steps to provide a work environment in which all employees are treated with respect and dignity and that is free of harassment based upon an employee's race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, age or disability. The Company will not condone any form of harassment, whether engaged in by employees or by outside third parties who do business with the Company.

Employees have a duty to co-operate with the Company to ensure that this policy is effective in ensuring equal opportunities and in preventing discrimination or harassment. Action will be taken under the Company's 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 equal opportunities and dignity at work statement 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 as well as, or instead of, the Company for any act of unlawful discrimination.

Employees should draw the attention of their manager to suspected discriminatory acts or practices or suspected cases of harassment. Employees 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 in accordance with the Company's disciplinary procedure.

Recruitment, advertising and selection

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

Advertisements will encourage applications from all suitably qualified and experienced 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 publications which would exclude or disproportionately reduce the numbers of applicants of a particular gender, sexual orientation, religion or racial group.

2. Avoid prescribing any unnecessary requirements which would exclude a higher proportion of a particular gender, sexual orientation, religion or racial group or which would exclude disabled job applicants.
3. Avoid prescribing any requirements as to marital 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, religion or racial group or from employees with a disability.
5. Ensure that the setting of age limits as a criterion of any specific job is justifiable.

The selection process will be carried out consistently for all jobs at all levels. 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 interviewers and all questions asked of the applicants will relate to the requirements of the job. 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.

With disabled job applicants, the Company will have regard to its duty to make reasonable adjustments to work arrangements 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.

Training and promotion

The Company will train all line managers in the Company's policy on equal opportunities and in helping them identify discriminatory acts or practices or acts of harassment or bullying. Line managers will be responsible for ensure they actively promote equal opportunity within the departments for which they are responsible.

The Company will also provide training to all employees to help them understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to dignity at work and what they can do to create a work environment free of bullying and harassment.

Where a promotional system is in operation, it will not be discriminatory and it will be checked from time to time to assess how it is working in practice. When a group of workers predominantly of one race, religion, sex or sexual orientation or a worker with a disability appears to be excluded from access to promotion 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, marital status, age 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.

Harassment

It is against the Company's policy for any employee, male or female, to sexually harass another employee or to harass him or her on the grounds of actual or perceived sexual orientation. It is also against the Company's policy for any employee to harass another employee on the grounds of his or her race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, age or disability. Harassment occurs where a person engages in unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating the other's dignity at work or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive work environment for the other person.

Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, engaging in other unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, subjection to obscene or other suggestive comments, and sexual jokes or pictures. Racial harassment includes, but is not limited to, engaging in unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a racial nature, subjection to racist comments, and racist jokes or pictures. Harassment may comprise intentional bullying which is obvious or violent but it can also be unintentional or subtle, such as the use of nicknames or teasing. It is for the complainant to decide for him or herself what they regard as offensive.

Reporting complaints

All allegations of discrimination or harassment will be dealt with seriously, confidentially and speedily. The Company will not ignore or treat lightly grievances or complaints of discrimination or harassment from members of a particular sex, sexual orientation, religion or racial group or from employees who are disabled.

With cases of harassment, while the Company encourages employees who believe they are being harassed to notify the offender (by words or by conduct) that his or her behaviour is unwelcome, the Company also recognises that actual or perceived power and status disparities may make such confrontation impractical.

If you wish to make a complaint of discrimination or harassment, you should follow the following steps:

1. First of all, report the incident of discrimination or harassment to your line manager. If you do not wish to speak to your line manager, you can instead speak to an alternative manager or to a member of the personnel department.
2. Such reports should be made promptly so that investigation may proceed and any action taken expeditiously.
3. All allegations of harassment will be taken seriously. The allegation will be promptly investigated and, as part of the investigatory process, you will be interviewed and asked to provide a written witness statement setting out the nature and details of the incident or complaint and the basis for it. Confidentiality will be maintained during the investigatory process to the extent that this is practical and appropriate in the circumstances. However, in order to effectively investigate an allegation, the Company must be able to determine the scope of the investigation and the individuals who should be informed of or interviewed about the allegation. The Company reserves the right to arrange for another manager to conduct the investigation other than the manager with whom you raised the matter.
4. The Company will also invite you to attend at least one meeting at a reasonable time and place at which your complaint can be discussed. You should take all reasonable steps to attend that meeting and you have the right to be accompanied by either a trade union official or a fellow employee of your choice.

5. Once the investigation has been completed and after the meeting with you has taken place, you will be informed in writing of the outcome and the Company's conclusions and decision as soon as possible. You will also be notified in writing of your right to appeal against the Company's decision if you are not satisfied with it. The Company is committed to taking appropriate action with respect to all complaints of discrimination or harassment that are upheld.
6. If you wish to appeal against the Company's decision, you must do so in writing within five working days of the Company's decision. On receipt of an appeal, a more senior manager (who may not be the person to whom you addressed your appeal) shall make arrangements to hear your appeal at an appeal meeting. At that meeting you may again, if you wish, be accompanied by either a trade union official or a fellow employee of your choice. You should take all reasonable steps to attend the appeal meeting. Following the meeting, you will be informed in writing of the Company's final decision on your appeal.
7. You will not be penalised for raising a complaint of discrimination or harassment even if it is not upheld, unless the complaint was both untrue and made in bad faith.

Any employee who is found to have discriminated against or harassed another employee in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action under the Company's disciplinary procedure. Such behaviour may be treated as gross misconduct and could render the employee liable to summary dismissal. In addition, line managers who had knowledge that such discrimination or harassment had occurred in their departments but who had taken no action to eliminate it will also be subject to disciplinary action under the Company's disciplinary procedure.

Monitoring equal opportunity and dignity at work

The Company will regularly monitor the effects of selection decisions and personnel and pay practices and procedures in order to assess whether equal opportunity and dignity at work are being achieved. This will also involve considering any possible indirectly discriminatory effects of its working practices.

Signed