

Equal opportunities policy template

Equal Opportunities statement

[COMPANY NAME] aims at all times to promote equality and diversity in the workplace and to provide a working environment that is free from discrimination. We wish to ensure that all of our team members feel respected and valued, that they can achieve their full potential, and that all employment decisions are taken without reference to irrelevant or discriminatory criteria.

About this policy

This policy applies to everyone who works for the Company, or who act on the Company's behalf. All team members have a role in ensuring that equality is promoted at work. We all have a personal responsibility to comply with the policy and to ensure, as far as possible, that others do the same.

The [COMPANY NAME] is responsible for this policy, and for ensuring that all in the Company understand their rights and obligations as detailed within it, and for any necessary training on equal opportunities.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we may amend it at any time.

The legal framework

As well as being morally wrong, it is illegal to discriminate against a person on the basis of any of the following Protected Characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marital or civil partner status
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin)
- Religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation (ie homosexuality, bisexuality or heterosexuality)

There are four basic types of unlawful discrimination:

Direct discrimination

This means treating someone less favourably than you would treat others because of a Protected Characteristic. For example, rejecting a job applicant because they are Jewish, or not promoting someone because they are gay. This includes any less favourable treatment because you perceive a person to have a Protected Characteristic (even though they do not in fact have it), or because they associate with a person or group who has a Protected Characteristic.

Indirect discrimination

This means placing someone at a disadvantage through a policy, practice or criterion that applies to everyone but adversely affects people with a particular Protected Characteristic. For example, if a

company insisted that all employees work on a Sunday, this would adversely affect Christians. And requiring that a job be fulfilled full-time would adversely affect women as they generally have greater childcare commitments. If such a practice or criterion cannot be justified as a reasonable means to an end, then it could be considered unlawful.

Harassment

Harassment related to any of the Protected Characteristics will be unlawful if it consists of unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, offensive, degrading or humiliating environment for that person. If you feel that you have been the subject of harassment please refer to our Bullying & Harassment Policy for more information and guidance.

Victimisation

This is the unfavourable treatment of a person because they have taken action to assert their own legal rights under discrimination law, or assisted someone else to do so. For example, if a disabled employee asserts in a grievance that their employer is not complying with its duty to make reasonable adjustments, and is then systematically excluded from meetings.

Equal opportunities in employment

We commit to avoiding unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline, and selection for redundancy.

Recruitment and selection

Person and job specifications 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 position, and on the basis of merit. Similarly other selection exercises such as redundancy selection will be conducted against objective criteria. A person's personal or home commitments will not form the basis of employment decisions except where justified and necessary.

We will generally advertise vacancies to a diverse section of the labour market. Our advertisements should avoid any kind of stereotyping or wording that may discourage particular groups from applying.

Job applicants should never be asked questions which might suggest an intention to discriminate on grounds of a Protected Characteristic. For example, you may not ask an applicant if they plan to have children.

Working practices

We will consider any possible indirectly discriminatory effect of our standard working practices, including the number of hours to be worked, the times at which these are to be worked and the place at which the work is to be carried out. When considering requests for variations to these working practices we will only refuse these if we have good reasons for doing so.

Part-time and temporary employees

We will treat part-time and fixed-term employees the same as comparable full-time or permanent employees, and will ensure that they enjoy no less favourable terms and conditions (albeit on a pro-rata basis where appropriate), unless different treatment is justified.

Disability

We will not ask job applicants about their health or any disability before offering them a position, unless it is to check that they can perform an intrinsic part of the job, or to see if we need to make any particular arrangements to accommodate them at interview. Where necessary, job offers can be made conditional to a satisfactory medical check. Health or disability questions may be included in equal opportunities monitoring forms - these must not be used for selection or decision-making purposes.

If you are disabled or become disabled, we would ask you to tell us about your condition, in strict confidence, so that we can support you as much as possible, and discuss with you any adjustments that may help you.

Breaches of the policy

All staff members have a right to equality of opportunity and an obligation to uphold this policy. Managers must take responsibility for implementing the policy and for taking positive steps to promote equality at work.

We consider any violation of the Equal Opportunities policy to be a serious matter, and, where appropriate, we may invoke the disciplinary procedure when dealing with a breach. Serious cases of deliberate discrimination may amount to gross misconduct resulting in summary dismissal. Unlawful discrimination may also result in legal proceedings against you personally and against the Company, and may leave you and the Company liable to pay compensation.

If you believe that you have suffered discrimination you can raise the matter through our grievance procedure, or you can talk to your manager, HR person or a trusted colleague in the first instance if you feel more comfortable doing this. Complaints will be treated in confidence and investigated as appropriate.

You must not be victimised or retaliated against for complaining about discrimination. However, making a false allegation deliberately and in bad faith will be treated as misconduct.

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