

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

1. Introduction

At Working Links we aim to treat all people fairly, irrespective of their race*, religion or belief, disability, sex, gender re-assignment, age, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, marital or civil partnership status, collectively known as the Protected Characteristics. We also aim to treat all our people fairly regardless of employment status.

Our Company was founded and operates specifically to address inequalities of opportunity in the communities we serve. It is therefore fundamental to our success that we address our own internal behaviours with vigour and commitment.

We all have a duty to embrace and support this vision and must challenge behaviour and attitudes that prevent us from achieving this. Using fair, objective and innovative practices our aim is to ensure that:

- All employees and potential employees are treated fairly and with respect at all times
- All our people have the right to be free from harassment, bullying and victimisation of any description, or any other form of unwanted behaviour. For further details please refer to the Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy.
- All our people have an equal chance to contribute and to achieve their potential.

We are committed to promoting equality of opportunity and this policy is in adherence to the Equality Act 2010. We progress our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy through our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and our RESPECT campaign.

2. Aim

Working Links is committed to being an Employer of Choice and we will strive to create and implement our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy of which equal opportunity is part.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion recognises that we are all different and involves building an environment where people are respected as individuals and where their diverse range of views, perceptions, qualities, experiences and contributions are valued. Diversity is about the culture and environment of work and whilst equality and diversity are different concepts, equality is an essential ingredient in achieving diversity.

The success of the business depends on people. By accessing, recruiting and developing talent from the widest possible talent pool we can gain an insight into different markets and generate greater creativity in anticipating customer need. Our intention is to ensure that our people reflect the diversity of our customers and the communities we serve.

3. Scope

The principle of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity applies equally to the treatment of employees, workers, visitors, funders, customers, partners and suppliers by members of our workforce and also, in some circumstances, ex-employees.

This policy covers all individuals working at all levels, including senior managers, directors, employees, contractors, trainees, part time and fixed term employees and agency personnel.

4. The Protected Characteristics

Sex

Women and men are equally and fairly represented and rewarded for their contribution at all levels of the organisation, through:

- challenging gender stereotypes; and
- supporting employees in balancing their life at work and at home.

Gender Reassignment

People who propose to, start or have completed a process to change their gender irrespective of medical supervision are protected against all forms of discrimination and harassment.

Marital/ Civil Partnership Status

People are treated fairly and equally in the workplace irrespective of their marital or family status.

Race

The racial and cultural diversity of our communities is represented at all levels of the organisation through:

- challenging racial stereotypes; and
- understanding, respecting and valuing different backgrounds and perspectives.

Disability

The abilities of disabled people are recognised and valued at all levels of the organisation through:

- focusing on what people can do rather than on what they cannot;
- challenging stereotypes about people with disabilities; and
- making appropriate adjustments in the workplace to help people with disabilities achieve their full career potential.

Age

Age diversity within the workforce is promoted and valued through:

- challenging age stereotyping; and
- recognising the benefits of a mixed-age workforce.

Religion or Belief

People are treated fairly in the work place irrespective of their religious or political opinions by recognising individuals' freedom of belief and the right to protection from intolerance and persecution.

Sexual Orientation

People are treated fairly in the workplace irrespective of their sexuality through:

- respecting people's sexual orientation and
- challenging negative stereotypical views.

Pregnancy and Maternity

Women are treated fairly and are not discriminated against on the grounds of their pregnancy and maternity.

5. Types of discrimination (Prohibited Conduct)

Discrimination by or against an employee is generally prohibited unless there is a specific legal exemption. Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

Direct – occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics. Direct discrimination is putting a person at a disadvantage for a reason related to one or more of the protected characteristics, trade union membership, part-time or fixed-term status.

Indirect - occurs where someone is disadvantaged by an unjustified provision, criterion or practice that also puts other people with the same protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage. Indirect discrimination is less obvious discriminatory treatment e.g. where an individual is subject to an unjustified provision, criterion or practice which puts them at a particular disadvantage because of their protected characteristics, trade union membership, part-time or fixed term status.

Harassment – related to any protected characteristic is prohibited. Harassment is unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct occurs which has the purpose or effect of, affecting a worker's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person (see 'Dignity at Work' policy for further details).

Victimisation – is also prohibited. This is treating a person less favourably than another on the grounds that he or she has taken action through internal procedures or external means to assert legal rights against discrimination or to assist a colleague in that regard.

Associative Discrimination – this is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic

Perceptive Discrimination – this is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic.

6. Complaints procedure

In order for complaints about actions or conduct which breach this policy to be dealt with promptly and fairly, the employee should follow the Company's grievance procedure and raise the complaint in writing with their Line Manager.

For complaints relating to harassment, you are encouraged to raise the matter through your manager and consider the Anti- Harassment and Bullying Policy.

The complaint must:

- identify the alleged person;
- give specific examples of the actions or conduct that the employee believes constitutes discrimination or harassment; and
- include times, dates and names of any witnesses.

Our objective is to address situations positively and correct them, so early advice of situations is far better than allowing them to deteriorate beyond a point where remedial action can be taken.

Working Links will ensure that any breach of this policy or complaint is dealt with in a serious, sensitive and confidential manner, so that the matter can be resolved as quickly as possible for all concerned.

If, after investigation, it is proved that an individual has harassed any other worker on the grounds of one or more of the Protected Characteristics, trade union membership, employment status, or otherwise act in breach of this policy, they will be subject to disciplinary action which may result in dismissal or termination of the working arrangement.

In the event that someone has good reason to believe that their complaint has not been so addressed, they have the right to communicate their concerns to HR who will investigate and respond promptly. Anyone who raises a complaint in good faith will be protected against victimisation or less favourable treatment as a result.

Malicious or false allegations of a breach of this policy will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.

7. Non-conformance

Any breach or non-conformance will be investigated thoroughly in accordance with Working Links' Disciplinary Policy and the individual may be subject to disciplinary action which, depending on the severity of the issue, could lead to dismissal from the company.

Document control

This policy will be reviewed at least annually to respond to any changes. Please refer to the [Policies page on FrameWork](#) for the latest version.

This policy is owned by Human Resources.

Version	Date reviewed / edited	No change / Change details	Author / Editor / Reviewer	Approved by (if required)	Approval date (if required)	Next review date
1.0	12/2012	Updated to reflect Equality Act 2010	Tracey Burgess	HRD	12/2012	December 2013
1.1	02/12/2013	Updated to reflect change of policy name and reference to EDI strategy.	Tracey Burgess	Clare Davey	02/12/2013	December 2014
1.2	04/03/2015	Updated document control	Sarah Millott	Clare Davey	04/03/2015	December 2014
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