

## Engaging Potential Equal Opportunity Policy for Staff

EP is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all staff and job applicants. We aim to create a working environment in which all individuals are able to make best use of their skills, free from discrimination or harassment, and in which all decisions are based on merit.

We do not discriminate against staff on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation (protected characteristics).

The principles of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity also apply to the way in which staff treat visitors, clients, customers, suppliers and former staff members.

All staff have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and not to discriminate against or harass other members of staff, regardless of their status.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

### Forms of discrimination

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 discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics set out above. For example, rejecting an applicant on the grounds of their race because they would not "fit in" would be direct discrimination.

Indirect discrimination 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. For example, a requirement to work full time puts women at a particular disadvantage because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement will need to be objectively justified.

Harassment related to any of the protected characteristics is prohibited.

Harassment is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

Harassment is dealt with further in our Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy.

Victimisation is also prohibited.

This is less favourable treatment of someone who has complained or given information about discrimination or harassment, or supported someone else's complaint.

### Recruitment and selection

We aim to ensure that no job applicant suffers discrimination because of any of the protected characteristics above. We are required by law to ensure that all employees are entitled to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status will not be made based on appearance or apparent nationality.

All prospective employees, regardless of nationality, must be able to produce original documents (such as a passport) before employment starts, to satisfy current immigration legislation.

The list of acceptable documents is available from the UK Border Agency.

### **Disability discrimination**

If you are disabled or become disabled, we encourage you to tell us about your condition so that we can support you as appropriate.

If you experience difficulties at work because of your disability you may wish to contact your line manager to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. Your line manager may wish to consult with you and your medical adviser(s) about possible adjustments. We will consider the matter carefully and try to accommodate your needs within reason. If we consider a particular adjustment would not be reasonable we will explain our reasons and try to find an alternative solution where possible.

### **Breaches of this policy**

If you believe that you may have been discriminated against you are encouraged to raise the matter through our Grievance Procedure.

If you believe that you may have been subject to harassment you are encouraged to raise the matter through our Anti-harassment Policy.

If you are uncertain which applies or need advice on how to proceed you should speak to the Centre Manager.

Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the relevant procedure.

Staff who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. False allegations which are found to have been made in bad faith will, however, be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

Any member of staff who is found to have committed an act of discrimination or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal.

We take a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Initials</b>
1	24/03/10		TW
2	31/08/10	Revised and Updated	TW
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