

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION POLICY

1 POLICY PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure we create an environment of equality, fairness and respect for all in our employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time.
- Ensure we do not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- Ensure we oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities.

The aim is for our employees to be representative of all sections of society and our customers, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

The definitions set out below aim to educate and help employees to identify any issues and flag them via the correct channels.

2 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

Equality can be described as breaking down barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity and access for all groups both in employment and to clients and customers. Diversity can be described as celebrating differences and valuing everyone.

Equality and Diversity are not interchangeable but interdependent. There can be no equality of opportunity if difference is not valued and taken account of.

3 DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination can be explained as treating a person unfairly because of who they are or because they possess certain characteristics. Discrimination may take seven main forms and is defined in law along with the protective characteristics associated with each provision. More information on discrimination can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/discrimination-your-rights>
<https://www.ihrec.ie/your-rights>

4 PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

Protected characteristics, recognised within the Equality Act 2010, are age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

5 BULLYING

ACAS characterises bullying as offensive, intimidating malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

6 HARASSMENT

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.

Bullying or Harassment may be by an individual against an individual or involve groups of people. It may be obvious, or it may be insidious. Whatever form it takes, it is unwarranted and unwelcome to the individual.

Example of bullying and harassment include:

- Spreading rumours or insulting someone by word, behaviour or exclusion
- Unfair treatment
- Unwelcome sexual advances – touching, standing too close, display of offensive materials, asking for sexual favours
- Making threats or comments about job security without foundation
- Deliberately undermining a competent worker by overloading and constant criticism
- Preventing individual's from progressing by withholding training or blocking promotion

7 VICTIMISATION

Victimisation takes place when a person is treated less favourably because they have asserted their legal rights in line with the Equality Act or helped someone else to do so.

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8 STAR OUTiCO COMMITMENT

Star OUTiCO is committed to:

- Encouraging equality and diversity in the workplace.
- Creating a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all employees are recognised and valued.
- This commitment includes training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the equality policy. Responsibilities include employees conducting themselves to help the company provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.
- All employees should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, customers, suppliers and the public.
- Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the company's work activities. Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the company's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and any appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.
- Further, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.
- Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all employees, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the company.
- Decisions concerning employees being based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
- Review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.

9 WHO TO CONTACT

If you witness or experience something you are uncomfortable with, please talk to a member of the HR Team or your line manager.

It can sometimes be difficult to label behaviours as harassment or bullying – if you instinctively know something is not right or should be stopped this is usually a flag that you should discuss the issue with someone.

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