

	<b>Equality &amp; Diversity Policy</b>	Issue number:	Document Reference:
		09	OSL/HR/POL/004
		Issue Date: October 2020	Author: Lucy Aylward

### **Purpose**

We are committed to promoting equality and diversity and promoting a culture that actively values and recognises the differences between backgrounds and cultures and the valuable experiences and insights that this offers to the work place. Our aim is to manage diversity successfully to help our Company nurture creativity and innovation, thereby allowing us to tap hidden capacity for growth and improved competitiveness.

The Company aims to offer an inclusive environment in which diversity is valued and used in a respectful way to create an effective and efficient workplace and recruit and retain a diverse workforce that reflects the community that we serve. We aim to ensure that all employees have the opportunity to maximise their potential and enhance their self-development and their contribution to the Company.

To that end the purpose of this policy is to provide equality and fairness for all employees and ensure that no employees receive, either directly, indirectly or by association, less favorable treatment based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or perceived sexual orientation. These characteristics listed are known as the Protected Characteristics.

All employees, whether full time, part time or temporary, will be treated fairly and with respect and the Company will proactively tackle any discrimination or disadvantage.

This policy and any other relevant procedures will operate in accordance with the statutory requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and any other relevant statutory requirements.

### **Our Commitment:**

- To create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued;
- Every employee will be entitled to a working environment that promotes respect and dignity and an absence of any form of intimidation, bullying or harassment;
- All staff will have access to training, development and progression opportunities;
- There will be equality throughout the Company;
- Our rules procedures and practices will be reviewed regularly to ensure fairness;
- Breaches of our equality policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings; and
- This policy will be reviewed regularly.

### **Who Does This Policy Apply To**

This policy will apply to all individuals within this organisation and each individual is responsible to ensuring that they are compliant with this policy during their time at work. All individuals within the organisation should, and will be encouraged to, promote the aims of this policy. We will also encourage any external individuals and Company's associated with this Company to promote the values of this policy.

### **Who Is Responsible For This Policy**

The Directors has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring that it complies with all relevant legislation. The Directors may from time to time delegate the day to day operation of this policy to another employee.

All managers or people with responsibility for other employees are expected to set an appropriate standard of behaviour for other employees and lead by example. They also have a responsibility to ensure that those they are responsible for are adhering to the aims of this policy.

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### **What is Equality and Diversity?**

Equality is ensuring that all individuals or groups of individuals are treated fairly with attention being paid to their specific needs with regard to the above Protected Characteristics.

Diversity is a recognition and respect for the value of the differences between people to allow all to realise their full potential and an ability to promote and inclusive culture where all can contribute to the effective running of the Company. Equality and diversity are dependent upon each other to be successfully present within our Company and both should be adhered to.

### **Discrimination**

You must not unlawfully discriminate against other people including, but not limited to, current and former employees, job applicants, clients, customers, suppliers, sub-contractors, visitors or any other person associated with the Company. This applies whether you are at your normal place of work, at another site whilst representing the Company or at any work related events including social events.

There are a number of forms of discrimination and this policy prohibits any of these forms, as detailed below, and you should be aware that they are all unlawful.

### **Direct Discrimination**

Direct discrimination is the less favourable treatment of a person due to one of the Protected Characteristics. This can be during employment or in recruitment.

### **Indirect Discrimination**

Indirect Discrimination is a procedure, rule, provision, criteria or policy etc. that applies to everyone but will have an adverse effect on people who possess one of the Protected Characteristics more than people without which cannot be justified.

### **Victimisation**

Victimisation is treating someone less favourably on retaliation for a complaint made or support of a complaint made about discrimination or harassment.

### **Disability Discrimination**

Disability Discrimination can be both direct and indirect discrimination which allows any less favourable unjustified treatment because of a disability and failing to make any reasonable adjustments to lessen any disadvantages caused.

### **Harassment**

We have a separate policy to deal with harassment and bullying and you should refer to that policy for definitions and details.

### **Recruitment and Selection**

The Company will uphold equal opportunities for all during the recruitment, promotion and selection for redundancy process. Candidates will be recruited solely on their own merits and their ability to carry out the job role.

Recruitment and selection will be made by matching the best person to the job role.

We will aim to take steps to ensure that knowledge of vacancies reaches a wide labour market and, where relevant, groups under-represented in the Company. Advertisements will be worded in a way so as not to discourage particular groups from applying. A copy of this policy may be made available on request.

Where appropriate, use may be made of lawful exemptions to recruit suitably-qualified people to cater for the special needs of particular groups.

Interview questions and selection processes will all be relevant to the job and will not be of a discriminatory nature. Questions will not be asked that may imply an intention to discriminate on the grounds of any Protected Characteristics.

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Applicants will not be asked about their health before a job offer is made. There may times where this is required to establish if an applicant is able to perform a fundamental part of the job subject to reasonable adjustments or to assess the reasonable adjustments required. Where necessary job offers may be made on the condition of a medical check.

Short listing and interviewing of candidates will be carried out by more than one person where possible.

The Company will be required by law to ensure that all employees are entitled to work in the UK. All prospective employees, regardless of nationality, will be required to produce original documents before their employment starts to satisfy this requirement such as a passport. We will not at any time make assumptions as to nationality based on appearance or perceived nationality. A list of appropriate documentation is available from your Manager.

To ensure effective operation of this policy and to identify groups that may be underrepresented or disadvantaged within our Company we may monitor applicants gender, ethnic group, any disabilities, sexual orientation, religion and age using our Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form. Requests for this information will be anonymous and will have no bearing on the applicants' chance of success. No applicant will be required to give this information and completion of the form will be voluntary.

The recording of this information will be solely for the purpose of monitoring and to take appropriate steps to avoid any discrimination and improve equality and diversity within the Company. Such monitoring will not be used as part of the selection criteria for selection of new staff or for selection of existing staff for training or promotion opportunities, or any other decision related to your employment with us. All information gathered is stored separate from your personnel file and application forms.

### **Training and Promotion**

Any opportunities for training within the Company will normally be made known to all employees. We will also endeavour to identify any training needs of employees.

You will be given appropriate access to training in order to help you progress within the Company. Selection for training will be made in line with this policy and will be made solely on the merits of the particular situation. All vacancies will be advertised internally and individuals given the opportunity to apply for any posts. Selection for interview will be in line with the recruitment and selection details above.

We will monitor the structure of the Company at all levels and where appropriate we will take steps to ensure that there are no unjustifiable barriers to promotion and to ensure that disadvantaged or underrepresented groups needs are met.

### **Third Parties**

Discrimination against an employee by any third party, whether a customer, client, supplier or any other associated person or company will not be tolerated. Any concerns/complaints regarding discrimination should be raised with your Manager.

Where an employee is subjected to discrimination by a third party with whom the Company associates who is not an employee, the Company will endeavour to take all reasonable steps to ensure that that such discrimination does not continue or occur again,

### **Termination of Employment**

Should it become necessary to make any employee(s) redundant, we will apply a criteria and procedures that are fair and objective and look solely at the merits of each person. Procedures and criteria applied will not be directly or indirectly discriminatory.

Any disciplinary procedures and or penalties applied will also be done so without any discrimination whether this results in warnings up to and including dismissal.

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### **Disabilities**

We will endeavour to support you and consider any reasonable adjustments should you have a disability. If you are disabled or become disabled, we encourage you to speak to your Manager so that we can evaluate the situation. If you experience any difficulties at work in relation to a disability you should contact your Manager to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would assist in minimising the effects.

Your Manager may wish to consult with you and your medical advisor about possible adjustments. If the Company are unable to make an adjustment and deems it to be unreasonable, we will explain our reasons in full and discuss alternative solutions where possible.

We will endeavour to make access to and around our premises easy and avoid any potential disadvantages. Where necessary we will ensure that any reasonable changes are made to the access to limit any disadvantages.

### **Part-time and Fixed-Term Work**

Any employees engaged to work on a part-time or fixed term basis will not suffer any detrimental or less favourable treatment than those engaged to work on a full-time basis. Any benefits applicable to employment will be received, on a pro-rata basis, by all employees whether part time, full-time or fixed term subject to any conditions on length of service applied to all employees.

### **Breaches of this Policy**

Any breaches of this policy will be considered a serious matter and will be dealt with under our disciplinary procedures as detailed in the Employee handbook. Serious breaches of this policy and deliberate discrimination may be considered gross misconduct and may result in dismissal.

If you believe that you have suffered a detriment or any other adverse effect due to discrimination you should raise the matter through our grievance or harassment and bullying procedure as detailed in your Employee handbook.

Whilst we will support all parties during and after a thorough and objective investigation into the allegation as appropriate, if through the course of the investigation and subsequent disciplinary meetings evidence demonstrates that the allegation has been made maliciously, or for personal gain, then the individual making the complaint will be subject to Disciplinary proceedings as outlined in the Company's Disciplinary Policy.

*Lucy Aylward*

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HR Manager