



Equality & Diversity Policy

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Policy Statement of Intent

The Company supports the principle of equal opportunities, the protected characteristics as detailed in the Equality Act 2010 and opposes any discrimination on the grounds of sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, marital status, race, ethnic origin, religion or philosophical belief. Being a committed equal opportunities employer, the Company will take every possible step to ensure that employees are treated equally and fairly in respect of these matters. All policies and practices will conform to the principle of equal opportunities in terms of recruitment, selection, training, promotion, career development, discipline, redundancy and dismissal.

Aims & Objectives of this Policy Statement.

The company will facilitate a programme of action based on best practice and one which:

- Will lead to change.
- Identifies and prevents unfair discrimination.
- Will create a working environment in which discrimination does not exist.
- Will seek to eliminate abuse, harassment, victimisation and segregation to all those groups listed below.

The company will work to eradicate discrimination and prejudice and create equal opportunities for all employees. It recognises that the following groups experience inequality more than others: -

- Non-British white people
- People from other ethnic minority groups
- Disabled people
- Lesbians
- Gay men
- Women

Other people also experience discrimination and disadvantage because of age, social class, religious beliefs and cultural practices, language, domestic caring and childcare responsibilities and H.I.V. status.

The company will develop its action programme to ensure this policy is effective, addresses and meets the needs of people in these and other oppressed groups.

To achieve its intended objectives the company will comply with all relevant legislation and statutory codes of practice determined by:-

The Equality Act 2010

Scope of this Policy

The company Directors, Managers and all other employees shall be made aware of this policy its content and intent.

The company and its employees will reflect the aims of the policy in its activities, particularly in relation to the provision of our services and employment decisions.

Responsibility and Duties of the Company and others

The overall responsibility for the compilation and implementing this policy rests with the Company Secretary Head of Group Services Jason Mansfield. However all other company Directors, Managers, Supervisors and employees have a duty to adhere to the policy. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary action against those involved.

Subcontractors/self-employed and other external agencies who may be required to work for the company will be made aware of this Equality & Diversity Policy and will be required to adhere to the policy whilst engaged on any work associated with the company.

Equality & Diversity Policy opportunity is a key company priority. The promotion of equality and the eradication of prejudice and discrimination will form an integral part of the role equality plays in the company, its contact and business dealings with suppliers, customers and other corporate entities.

The company Directors and its management team accept their personal responsibility in the practical application, development and implementation of these policies.

The company is committed to compliance with all United Kingdom and Europe community anti-discriminatory legislation which could help the cause of those who suffer the effects of disadvantage and discrimination.

The company will examine the effects any legislation and directives may have and assess their impact on oppressed groups.

General Equal Opportunities Policy

5A. Recruitment

All employee appointments will be carried out using a selection process that avoids the potential for discrimination. Employees who have a disability in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 definition, when known to us may be excluded from the first sifting process and be invited to interview.

Staff involved in recruitment must have received a copy of this policy and to have had appropriate training in order that they can effectively recruit people without using any bias.

All advertising for employees shall be none discriminatory and will not refer to gender race creed or age. Terms and conditions will remain the same across all groups, relative to the position. An exception to this would be in the form of positive action to encourage applications from potential employees from those groups listed in item.2 where it is shown that there is an imbalance in the workforce which does not reflect the composition of these groups in the employment catchment area of the company. In this case certain adverts may be specifically aimed at those groups to redress this situation.

Deliberate refusal or deliberately omitting to offer a person employment by rejecting an application without due thought, consideration or not interviewing will not be tolerated.

Each aspect affecting recruitment including the composition of the workforce, applications, short listing interviews, appointments, promotions those leaving or dismissals will be monitored. The information obtained will be actively used to devise action plans.

These plans will assist to develop positive training and in other steps to promote greater and more effective equality throughout the company.

5B. Language & Behaviour

Prejudicial language or behaviour which offends or threatens colleagues or any groups it is aimed at will not be tolerated. Where disciplinary action is required this will be dealt with under the company Disciplinary Procedures, the Anti-Bullying and harassment Policy and Codes of Practice.

The company will actively agree and promote language which encourages respect and recognition for groups whom it felt may be discriminated against.

5C. External Harassment of Company Employees

Employees who may suffer discrimination or any form of threatening behaviour during the course of their day to day contact with the general public, clients or others not associated with A&M are advised to remove themselves from such situations immediately they arise. Employees are advised to make contact with their departmental manager as soon as they feel safe to do so and seek guidance. Employees are advised not to respond to any forms of discriminatory behaviour, threatening behaviour or bad language targeted at them.

Age Discrimination Statement

Where age discrimination issues arise, the company shall address such issues using the requirements guidance and advice of the Equality Act 2010.

There are four types of age discrimination:

Direct Discrimination – example: where an employer, on the grounds of a person's age (or appearance), treats him/her less favourably than others are or would be treated. So a refusal to interview anyone over the age of 50 would almost certainly represent direct discrimination.

Indirect Discrimination - this applies where an employer imposes or operates (and cannot 'objectively justify') a provision, criteria or practice which puts people of a particular age or group at a disadvantage. So a requirement for, "10 years' experience of installing cavity wall and loft insulation experience" would place those below the age of around 28 at a disadvantage. So unless that length of experience can be objectively justified, indirect discrimination will have occurred.

Harassment - this is defined as conduct by one or more persons which, on the grounds of age has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity and/or creating an intimidating, hostile degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Such conduct might be name-calling, unwanted offensive jokes, verbal abuse and/or ignoring.

Victimisation - this is less favourable treatment of an individual someone, not specifically due to their age (which would amount to direct discrimination), but because they have done one or more of the 'protected acts': brought proceedings under the Equality Act 2010; given evidence or information in connection with proceedings brought by someone else; made allegations that the Regulations have or may have been contravened; or done anything else under or by reference to the Regulations.

Religious Faiths, Beliefs and Practices

The Company respects all religious faiths, beliefs and practices equally as they are represented within the workplace. All employees have the right, within the law, to religious freedom and to the peaceful practice and expression of their religious faith, including the beliefs, values and practices involved in them. As part of our culture is the expectation and requirement that religious groups and adherents of all faiths within the Company should accord full respect to the religious faith, beliefs, values and practices of others, and for those who subscribe to no faith.

The legitimate right of religious people, within the law, to religious freedom and the peaceful practice and expression of religious faith should be demonstrated by consideration and by a concern for the freedom and dignity of those of differing religious faith and of those subscribing to none. In practice this implies:

- Respect for another person's expressed wish to be left alone;
- The avoidance of the imposition of religious views on individuals who are in vulnerable situations in ways which exploit these;
- The avoidance of violent action or language, threats, manipulation, improper inducements or the misuse of any kind of power;
- Respect for the right of others to disagree.
- Disregard for any of the above will be considered a breach of the fundamental principle of respect for others, and may constitute harassment.

Dress Code

The Company welcomes the variety of appearance brought by individual styles, customs and personal choices. The wearing of items arising from particular religious norms (e.g. hijab, kippah, mangal sutra and clerical collar) is seen as part of a welcome diversity. Only Safety Health and Environment requirements may mean that for certain tasks specific items of clothing such as overalls, protective clothing etc need to be worn. If such clothing produces a conflict with an individual's religious belief, the issue will be sympathetically considered by the line manager or academic supervisor, with the aim of finding a satisfactory resolution that does not compromise the S.H.E of any the Company's employees, customers or business partners.

Wearing slogans or symbols which are discriminatory (e.g. racist or sexist) is a disciplinary offence and will be dealt with accordingly.

Religious Observance

For many religious people the daily practice of corporate, personal or private prayer is a primary responsibility and one of the ways in which religious practice constitutes and sustains a sense of personal identity. Adherents of a religion should advise their line manager, if they have any special requirements in this regard. Line managers are responsible for ensuring that if other staff or students are affected by an individual's spiritual needs, a reasonable degree of respect and understanding is exercised between them and a sensible solution found.

Where facilities are sought by employees, the Company will make reasonable effort to provide accommodation (with appropriate additional facilities, such as washing facilities, nearby).

Working Hours

All staff, without exception, are required to work in accordance with their contract, although there is normally some flexibility over how the hours are worked. Where the hours conflict with religious beliefs please speak to your Line Manager and we will try to respond sympathetically whilst meeting the needs of the business.

Approved Absence for Religious Festivals

Appropriate and sympathetic consideration will be given by line managers to requests for leave from employees specifically wishing to participate in their religious festivals where these are not covered by UK Public Holidays. Good communication, well in advance of the festival in question is essential in fostering flexible and appropriate responses.

Staff should advise line managers of leave requests for the coming year at the start of the leave year, or on joining the Company. Line managers should follow the normal holiday request format for granting annual leave and in exceptional circumstances, unpaid leave, to facilitate these requests.

Whilst such requests will not be refused unreasonably without adequate explanation, it must be appreciated that managers must always ensure the service to our customers does not suffer.

Gender Statement

The company recognises that women can experience disadvantages and discrimination. The company also recognises that there are important differences between women and therefore particular attention will be given to the specific needs of black women, women from other minority groups, disabled women, lesbians, carers, older women and those of single parents.

The company will seek to eradicate policies, practices and procedures which discriminate against women employees.

The company acknowledges that women can contribute at all levels and it will endeavour to make full use of their skills, experience, knowledge and vision.

To this end the company will ensure that career breaks, childcare arrangements, work arrangements and any other factors likely to affect women's ability to progress are given proper attention.

Changes in law affecting the labour market may have an adverse effect on female employees.

The company will therefore take all appropriate measures to protect women in its employment.

Sexual Harassment

The company views sexual harassment as a very serious issue and as such will not tolerate it in any relation to employment. No employee should have to accept sexual harassment when it happens at work, it is an infringement of your dignity and respect as an employee.

There is no clear definition of sexual harassment, but it is essentially unacceptable behaviour which is based on your sex, and which is unreasonable, unwelcome and offensive.

The following examples reflect some forms of sexual harassment: -

- Unwelcome sexual attention
- Suggestions that sexual favours may further your career (or refusal) may hinder it.
- Insults or ridicule of a sexual nature.
- Lewd, suggestive or over familiar behaviour.
- Display or circulation of sexual suggestive material.

Unwanted sexual attention is harassment if it continues after you make it clear that you find it unacceptable. However, one incident can be enough to constitute sexual harassment, if it is sufficiently serious. Most people who are sexually harassed are women. But, men too can be sexually harassed.

Prevention

As an employee you can stop sexual harassment happening in your workplace.

You need to be aware of the issue you must make sure your own conduct does not cause offence or could be misunderstood. Do not be afraid to stand up to those individuals who attempt sexual harassment at work. Enlist or support colleagues who are being sexually harassed at work.

This policy is designed to protect all employees of this company and combat sexual harassment. If you do not know what action to take ask your supervisor or manager.

As an example of what action you may take:-

- You must make it clear to the person who is harassing you that their behaviour is unwelcome and that you want it to stop immediately.
- You may want to ask a friend, colleague or an employee representative to be with you when you have cause to do this. Once the person knows their behaviour to you is unwelcome this may deter them enough to stop.

Should their behaviour continue, talk to your immediate supervisor. Also consult your representative who may advise you to file an official complaint.

It is of utmost importance that you keep a record of the incidents so you can accurately recall what has been happening. If any of your colleagues are also being harassed by the same person, ask them to keep records too.

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In the event it is your supervisor or manager who is harassing you, speak to someone higher as well as your fellow employees and representatives.

If none of these possibilities are open to you, seek help immediately from a Citizens Advice Bureau, or from the Equal Opportunities Commission on HELPLINE 0845 6015901.

Sexual harassment at work may be unlawful sex discrimination. Those who believe they have been sexually harassed at work may be able to bring a complaint to an employment tribunal.

Complaints must be brought within three months of an act complained about.

The company will not tolerate Sexual Harassment in any form against any employee and will fully investigate all complaints brought to the attention of its management for the protection of the employee's rights.

The following procedures should be considered if you feel you are experiencing abuse:-

Informal procedure

Stage 1:

You should speak or write to the individual concerned informing him or her that their behaviour is unwelcome and asking them to stop behaving in that manner.

Stage 2:

If the unwanted behaviour continues, you should ask your line manager to speak to the person concerned.

Stage 3:

If the unwanted behaviour continues, you should keep a record of any relevant incidents and consider taking formal action as set out below.

Formal procedure

Stage 1:

If you feel that the informal procedure has not stopped the unwanted behaviour or that the behaviour is too serious to be resolved by using that procedure, you should notify your line manager of the matter in writing who will then arrange to investigate it. Where your line manager is the cause of your complaint you may speak to their Manager or a Director.

Stage 2:

If there appears to be any substance to the matter, your line manager will notify the appropriate level of management, be that the Operations Director or the Managing Director without delay.

Stage 3:

The Company will investigate the matter, take whatever immediate steps are necessary (for example, relocation or suspension) and consider invoking the Disciplinary Procedure.

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Lesbian and Gay Policy Statement

The company recognises that same sex relationships are a common feature in all cultures and that there is a long history of disadvantage and discrimination towards lesbians and gay men.

The company is committed to ensure equal treatment of its employees who are either lesbian or gay and will devise procedures and practices not based on the assumption that all its employees are heterosexual.

The company recognises there are important differences between the lives of women and men, and that some lesbians and gay men could also be disabled and therefore face combined problems of their physical and sexual status.

The company will support the rights of lesbians and gay men to be open about their sexual identity, should they choose to do so.

The company will endeavour to create a working environment where lesbian and gay people will feel confident that they will be treated the same as their heterosexual colleagues.

The company will ensure that wherever possible within its powers offer the same services, conditions and benefits in same sex relationships as in heterosexual relationships.

The company will not tolerate harassment based on unjustified views of heterosexuality being the "normal" form of relationship. Harassment on the grounds of a person being lesbian or gay will be treated as serious misconduct.

A particular feature of discrimination experienced by gay and lesbian people is due to a negative stereotyping and of their invisibility as a fully recognised group.

The company will therefore develop a positive profile of working towards equality for gay and lesbian people within its organisation.

Race Equality Statement

The company, throughout this statement uses the term "non-British white" when referring to all those groups who may be victims of racism and discrimination, who suffer more than any other minority groups.

The company recognises that non-British white people and those from other minority groups experience racial discrimination and that such discrimination has had a powerful effect on the ability of black people to gain equality of access to a variety private public services and facilities.

The company recognises such inequalities and shall redress the situation of ensuring that irrespective of racial origin all will be treated with dignity and respect and have equal access to all opportunities within our organisation.

Racial harassment and victimisation, when they occur are real causes for concern to the company. This being the case the company will create an environment that encourages its workforce to report and feel confident that all incidents of this nature will be addressed fully and effectively in accordance with existing procedures and the Equality Act 2010.

Diversity

The company is committed to and recognises the needs and differences which often require addressing when employing people/individuals from the diverse cultural groups in the modern society of the United Kingdom.

When working with people we will be mindful that each has individual needs and may have different approaches to their daily lifestyles as well as disabilities, sexuality, religion, age and social class concerns.

Some examples which require consideration would be:-

- Flexibility working practices and methods of work.
- Arrangements for parents childcare needs
- The need to visit doctors or dentists/hospital or alternative medical practitioner.
- Individuals interpretation of any human rights issues.
- The recognition for our organisation to treat each employees needs and concern on the basis of them being an "Individual with Individual needs".

Disability Equality Statement

The company recognises and operates a disability policy and defines a disabled person as:-

- An individual with a long term physical or mental impairment that has a detrimental effect on their ability to carry out day to day activities.

The company will work towards the removal of any discrimination against disabled people. The company is committed to ensuring equal treatment of disabled employees and to ensuring they are not treated any less favourably than other groups.

It is recognised that disabled people are not all the same, for example disabled people may differences relating to age, they may also be women, lesbians, gay men, and/or non-British white people. Disabled people with any combination of these situations face far greater oppression.

The company will develop a positive profile for disabled people to counteract the common impression, stereotyping them as being highly dependent in a position of helplessness which all leads to exclusion in many areas of company operations and decision making.

The company will not tolerate harassment of disabled people based on unjustified views of "normality" and recognises that disabled people may be subject to other forms of harassment, for example sexual harassment and victimisation.

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Communication systems will be made accessible to disabled people who may need Braille, sign language or interpretation.

The company is committed to equality in all its policies and practices to ensure disabled people are treated in the same way as other groups in employment with this company.

Training

Training will be provided to support any changes required to carry out this policy to maintain its effectiveness. This includes professional development training for relevant staff.

Regular equal opportunities training designed to keep staff members aware of current issues and developments will be provided and their attention drawn to these discussions to ensure that equal opportunity issues are properly highlighted and dealt with as part of other company training programmes.

The company will provide training in skills compliant to equal opportunities together with training at all levels to facilitate promotional opportunities and understanding for members of all groups of people.

Examples of Definitions of Unwanted Behaviour

Discrimination: treating one person less favourably than another on the grounds of their sex, age, sexual orientation, marital status, race, religious belief or disability.

Harassment: any unwanted behaviour which is offensive, abusive or intimidating. It can be persistent or isolated and includes behaviour which induces anger, stress, anxiety, fear or sickness on the part of the person being harassed. It can be physical, verbal, direct or indirect and can include gestures, intimidation, unwelcome remarks, suggestions, propositions, malicious gossip, jokes and banter. In addition, non-verbal harassment can include offensive literature, pictures, graffiti and unwelcome physical conduct.

Victimisation: singling someone out for ill-treatment.

Implementing Policy Changes

It is the duty of the company directors to implement additional improvements to its equal opportunity policy as they are identified and developed.

This policy forms the basis that provides the mechanism to move forward in the achievement of the ultimate objective, which is total equality among all groups and eradication of all discriminatory practices from this organisation.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The company equal opportunities policy will be monitored constantly and evaluated annually to ensure it is kept updated.

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Key information on important issues and aspects of employment will be collated and analysed to obtain a detailed understanding of how company policies and practices are working in their aim of achieving equality of opportunity.

Corrective action will be taken to deal with any particular obstacles or difficulties as a result of monitoring policy.

Accountability

It is the responsibility of the Directors and the management team of this company to accept responsibility concerning decisions directives or investigations that arise from all matters related to this company Equality & Diversity Policy.

The above will be held accountable for bringing to a satisfactory conclusion all complaints, investigations and contraventions of this Policy.

Where changes to age related regulations are required such issues shall form part of the monthly board of directors meeting agenda.

The company will review the policy on an annual basis, or sooner should directives, urgent changes or new legislation make it necessary.

Managing Directors: –

Simon Atherton

Gary Mollard

Signed:



Signed:



Dated: 19th August 2024

Review Date: August 2025