

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY**

The Company is an equal opportunities employer. This means that it is the Company's policy, and it will make every effort to ensure, that there is no discrimination or harassment on the grounds of colour, race, nationality, religion, religious background, political opinion, ethnic origin, disability, age, gender or marital status or sexual orientation in the way that the Company treats its employees, job applicants, and visitors.

In issuing this policy, the Company has three main objectives. Firstly to encourage its employees to take an active role against all forms of harassment and discrimination; secondly to deter employees from participating in harassment or discriminatory behaviour and thirdly to demonstrate to all employees that they can rely upon the Company's support in cases of harassment or discrimination at work. The Company's is committed to a working environment that offers equal treatment and equal opportunities for all its employees, so that every employee is able to progress to their true potential.

This policy applies to all aspects of the Company's working practices and therefore applies to the recruitment and selection of employees, terms and conditions of employment, training, salary, work allocation, promotion and disciplinary procedures. The Company's recruitment, selection, promotion procedures and general policies and practices will be periodically reviewed to ensure that this equal opportunities policy is being implemented.

All employees are required to follow and implement the Company's equal opportunity policy and to undergo any training and development activities to ensure that they can carry out their duties and responsibilities in terms of promoting, developing, implementing and reviewing the policy arrangements in the course of their work.

### **Harassment**

Racial or sexual harassment, harassment of individuals who have or have had a disability, or sectarian harassment or any other form of discrimination will not be tolerated under any circumstances and a member of staff who harasses or discriminates against another employee, job applicant, or visitor of the Company, will be subject to the Company disciplinary procedure. In serious cases, such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and result in summary dismissal.

Harassment generally may include any unwanted verbal or physical abuse and/or advances and/or behaviour which an employee may find offensive and which causes them to feel threatened, humiliated, patronised or harassed. Harassment may be deliberate or unconscious, open or covert, direct or indirect, an isolated incident or repeated action. It may also include, in certain circumstances, off duty conduct. It will not necessarily be a defence that such incidents consist of words or behaviour that might be claimed to be "common place" or intended as a joke.

### **Racial Harassment**

Racial harassment is racial discrimination and is contrary to the Company's equal opportunity policy. It is also unlawful. This type of harassment will not be tolerated under any circumstances and the Company will take prompt action upon becoming aware that such incidents have taken place.

Racial harassment may include :-

1. Abusive language and racist jokes;
2. Racial name calling;
3. The display or circulation of racially offensive, written or visual material including graffiti;
4. Physical threats, assault and insulting behaviour or gestures;
5. Open hostility towards workers or other individuals of a particular racial group, (including organised hostility) in the workplace;
6. Unfair allocation of work and responsibilities;
7. Exclusion from normal workplace conversation or social events, i.e. being "frozen out".

The above examples are not exhaustive and each incident of harassment or discrimination will be viewed on its individual facts.

### **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is similarly sex discrimination, unlawful and contrary to the Company's equal opportunities policy and is defined as unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature by one employee towards another. Examples of harassment include: -

1. Insensitive jokes and/or pranks;
2. Lewd comments about appearance;
3. Unnecessary body contact;
4. Displays of sexually offensive material, for example pin-ups;
5. Requests for sexual favours;
6. Speculation about an employee's private life and/or sexual activities;
7. Threatened or actual sexual violence;
8. Threat of dismissal, loss of promotion etc. for refusal of sexual favours.

Whilst the above list gives examples of sexual harassment, harassment takes many forms, from relatively mild sexual banter to actual physical violence and the above examples are not exhaustive.

Harassment of an individual in this manner because of their sexual orientation (i.e., because they are homosexual, transsexual or undergoing "sex change treatment") will also be regarded as sexual harassment by the Company and will not be tolerated.

### **Harassment of Disabled Individuals**

Harassment of an individual who has a disability or has had a disability in the past is unlawful. It is also contrary to the Company's equal opportunities policy, which seeks to ensure that people with disabilities receive treatment that is fair, equitable and consistent with their skills and abilities.

In accordance with statutory requirements, the Company recognises that a person with a disability is someone who has or has had a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his/her normal day-to-day activities. Therefore depending on individual circumstances a person, who has been seriously injured, has or has had a progressive illness, significant learning difficulties or poor hearing/vision/mobility, is likely to be a person with a disability.

Examples of harassment of a person who has or has had a disability include: -

1. Non verbal offensive gestures (e.g. staring at a particular affliction);
2. Offensive letters;
3. Insensitive jokes, pranks, nicknames or comments;
4. Physical mistreatment (e.g. jostling or assault).

As part of the Company's equal opportunities policy, we will make every effort, if a disabled person joins the Company or if an existing employee becomes disabled, to make such adjustments as are necessary and practical to retain them within the Company.

As with sexual and racial harassment, harassment of a person with disabilities will not be tolerated by the Company and all instances of such behaviour or alleged behaviour will be taken seriously, and fully investigated and may result in disciplinary action.

Finally, the Company will seek to ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are considered generally in both the context of the Company's working practices and in the nature of its premises and continuing services.

### **Harassment on grounds of Religion, Religious Background or Political Opinion**

The Company is committed to creating a harmonious working environment in which no worker feels apprehensive because of his/her religious belief or political opinion. Intimidation or harassment in any form is unacceptable behaviour. Sectarian harassment constitutes unlawful discrimination under Fair Employment legislation.

Sectarian harassment is unwanted conduct of a sectarian nature, or other conduct based on religious belief or political opinion affecting the rights of people at work. Sectarian harassment may take many forms. It can range from extreme forms such as violence and bullying to less obvious actions like ignoring someone at work. The following, though not an exhaustive list, may constitute sectarian harassment:

1. Physical harassment ranging from gestures to serious assaults;
2. Verbal harassment through deliberate articulation of sectarian jokes, banter, offensive language, gossip and slander, sectarian songs, threats;
3. Written harassment through circulation of sectarian notes, letters or other written material containing offensive language;
4. Visual display of offensive material, posters, graffiti, flags, bunting and emblems;
5. Offensive behaviour; isolation or non-co-operation at work, exclusion from social activities.
6. Coercion through pressure to participate in political/religious groups;
7. Pressure to participate in or contribute to party political or religious collections;
8. Intrusion by pestering, spying, following etc.

The Company will treat such behaviour as gross misconduct, which may warrant dismissal.

### **Duties and Responsibilities in respect of Harassment**

It is the duty and responsibility of the Company and every employee to stop all types of harassment and discrimination in the workplace. It is only through the efforts of individual employees that harassment and discrimination can be eradicated. We must all recognise that every member of staff has the right not to be subjected to any form of harassment or discrimination whilst at work whether from other employees or other individuals. Additionally, we must ensure that no members of staff subject other members of staff, job applicants, and visitors to any form of harassment or discrimination.

#### Employees:

All employees have a responsibility to help to ensure a working environment in which the dignity of employees is respected. They should be aware of the serious and genuine problems which harassment can cause, and ensure that their behaviour is beyond question and could not be considered in any way to be harassment. They should alert management to any incident of harassment to enable the Company to deal with the matter in line with the policy and procedure. They should also provide support to colleagues who are being harassed, by encouraging them to follow the agreed harassment complaints procedure.

#### Managers/Supervisors:

Managers and supervisors have a responsibility to ensure that harassment does not occur, particularly in work areas for which they are responsible. Managers and/or supervisors are responsible for any incidents of harassment of which they are aware or ought to be aware. In all cases, they must ensure that appropriate action is taken.

Managers and supervisors also have a responsibility to explain the Company's policy and procedure to their staff and take steps to positively promote it. They will be responsive and supportive to any member of staff who complains about harassment, provide full and clear advice on the procedure to be adopted, maintain confidentiality in all cases and ensure that there is no victimisation.

#### The Company:

The Company will designate individuals to provide advice and assistance to employees who are subject to harassment. The Company will seek to ensure that employees are, where practicable, given the opportunity, should they wish, to raise their complaint with someone of their own race, ethnic origin, gender, religion, etc. This will be borne in mind when such personnel are being identified.

Managers, supervisors and designated advisors will receive appropriate guidance through the Human Resources Manager in the best means of resolving problems and in the details of the Company's policy and procedure so that they can perform their role effectively. All other employees will be made fully aware of this policy and procedure for dealing with harassment in the workplace.

#### Review:

The Company will monitor the incidence of sectarian harassment. This will include issues raised as complaints, through exit interviews and any other incidents of which management is aware. Monitoring information and the effectiveness of the policy and procedure for dealing with sectarian harassment will be reviewed annually.