

**Equal Opportunities Policy and Procedure**

**POLICY**

***It is this organisation’s policy that all employment decisions are based on merit and legitimate business needs of the organisation.*** ***The Company is committed to a policy of treating all its employees, workers and job applicants equally. No employee or potential employee will receive less favourable treatment because of any 'protected characteristic', namely:***

* ***age (or perceived age)***
* ***disability (past or present)***
* ***gender reassignment***
* ***marriage or civil partnership status***
* ***race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins***
* ***religion or belief***
* ***sex***
* ***sexual orientation***
* ***part-time or fixed term status***

***No employee or potential employee will be disadvantaged by any conditions of employment that cannot be justified as necessary on operational grounds.***

***The Company aims to encourage, value and manage diversity and is committed to equality for its entire staff. Suffolk Chamber wishes to attain a workforce which is representative of the communities from which it is drawn.***

***These principles of equality of opportunity and non-discrimination also apply to the manner in which our staff treat clients, our business partners and visitors.***

**PROCEDURE**

1. Equal opportunity is about good employment practices and efficient use of our most valuable asset, our employees. Every manager and employee has *personal* responsibility for the implementation of the policy. Any instance of doubt about the application of the policy, or other questions, should be addressed to the Chief Executive, as should any requests for special training. Our intention is to enable all our staff to work in an environment which allows them to fulfil their potential without fear of discrimination, harassment or victimisation.
2. The employer’s commitment to equal opportunities extends to all aspects of the working relationship including recruitment and selection procedures; terms of employment including pay, conditions and benefits; training, appraisals and career development; work practices including conduct, allocation of tasks and discipline and grievance; work-related social events; and termination of employment and matters after termination, including references.
3. The policy also applies to the treatment of the employer’s customers/clients, visitors, suppliers and former staff members.
4. This is a statement of policy only and does not form part of any contract of employment. This policy may be amended at any time by the Employer at their discretion.
5. Achieving equality in the workplace is a collective responsibility shared by all staff irrespective of seniority, tenure and working hours.
6. All staff have a personal responsibility to ensure compliance with this policy and to treat colleagues and clients with dignity at all times. Staff must not discriminate against or harass other members of staff, visitors, clients, customers, suppliers or former staff members.
7. Staff involved with the recruitment and selection of employees must take special responsibility by leading by example and ensuring compliance. Staff may request additional training on these grounds.
8. Any staff member who considers that they may have a disability is strongly encouraged to speak with their line manager and to discuss any reasonable adjustments to their employment or working conditions which they consider to be necessary or which they consider would assist them in the performance of their duties. For these purposes disability may include any physical or mental impairment which substantially affects the ability to perform day to day activities ad tasks and has lasted (or is likely to last) more than 12 months. Disclosure of this information will be treated in confidence if you wish it to be so, and the procedure for this is outlined in the staff handbook.
9. Any member of staff may use the grievance procedure to complain about discriminatory conduct and the procedure for this is outlined in the staff handbook.
10. All employment decisions in relation to staff, visitors, clients, customers, suppliers or former staff members will be based on legitimate business need and which do not go further than is needed to satisfy that need. If you are in any doubt as to whether the particular conditions or criteria are indirectly discriminatory or justifiable please speak to the relevant line manager or to the Operations Director.
11. The employer is legally required to verify that all employees have the right to work in the UK, and on starting employment or prior to this all employees must produce original documents to the Employer’s satisfaction. Further information on this can be found in the Staff Handbook.
12. If a member of staff believes they have been a victim of discrimination they should follow the Employer’s grievance procedure outlined in the Staff Handbook.
13. If a visitor, client, customer, supplier or former staff member believes they have been the victim of discrimination they should contact the relevant line manager in the first instance to raise their concerns.

**Discipline**

1. Any breach of equal opportunities rules or failure to comply with this policy will be taken very seriously and it is likely to result in disciplinary action against the offender, up to and including immediate dismissal.

**Monitoring**

1. The employer encourages staff to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it may be improved. The policy will be regularly reviewed in line with current ISO-9000-2015 guidelines and on the advice of our HR provider.

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| Policy | Equal Opportunities Policy and Procedure |
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| **Amendment** | **Issue no (date)** |
| First Draft Issued | (07/2013) |
| Amended in line with current staff handbook | (06/2015) |
| Amended to include additional characteristics | (08/2019) |
| Amended to include new logo  | (09/2020) |
| Amended in line with current handbook (including update to policy statement and protected characteristics) | (07/2021) |