

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

### 1. Statement

- 1.1 The Group supports the principle of equal opportunities in employment and opposes all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination in any aspect of employment.
- 1.2 The Group is fully aware of its responsibilities as an employer and acts in accordance with the following: -
1. Equal Pay Act 1970
  2. Sex Discrimination Act 1975 as amended
  3. Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
  4. Race Relations Act 1976 as amended
  5. Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
  6. Disability Discrimination Act 1995
  7. Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006.

### 2. Policy

- 2.1 We strive to treat all employees with dignity and respect. The Group is committed to ensuring that its work places are free from unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation, whether direct or indirect on grounds of: -
- Age
  - Gender
  - Colour
  - Marital Status
  - Disability
  - Ethnic or national origin
  - Religion and similar beliefs
  - Sexual orientation

2.2 We strive to protect all employees and applicants for employment from unlawful discrimination.

Equal Opportunities in employment covers all aspects including the following:

- recruitment and selection
- promotion
- allocation of work
- training and development
- remuneration & benefits
- general facilities
- performance management
- termination of employment

2.3 The Group undertakes to review periodically its selection criteria and procedures to maintain a system where individuals are selected, promoted, and treated solely on the basis of merit and ability.

2.4 If an existing employee becomes disabled the Group will make every effort to retain him or her within the workforce whenever reasonably practicable.

2.5 The Group believes that all employees should immediately appreciate what would amount to discrimination. It is against the Group's policy for anyone to discriminate against or harass another employee/worker or to encourage or condone the actions of another person who is discriminating or harassing or to fail to report such action. The Group will not tolerate acts which breach this policy. Such offences are regarded seriously and will be dealt with under the Group's Disciplinary Procedure, which could result in the termination of employment of someone who acts in contravention of this policy.

2.6 All employees have a right to equality of opportunity and have a duty to implement this policy. Any employee has the right to invoke the Group's formal Grievance Procedure if they feel that they have been discriminated against or harassed during the course of their employment. Any complaint will be treated seriously and in a confidential manner. Issues should be raised with the Department Manager/Director, or if preferred for whatever reason, direct with the HR Manager.

2.7 The Group undertakes to distribute and publicise this policy to all employees from time to time as appropriate.

### 3. Harassment

- 3.1 The Group believes that the dignity of every person must be respected. Harassment of colleagues, visitors or customers is unacceptable conduct and will be regarded as gross misconduct. The highest standards of conduct are required of everyone regardless of seniority.
- 3.2 The Group recognises that harassment may take many forms. It may be directed towards persons of either sex. It may relate to a person's ethnic origin, age, belief, sexual orientation, physical or mental attributes or some other personal characteristic.
- 3.3 Harassment may involve action or inaction, behaviour, exclusion, comment or physical contact that the recipient finds objectionable or offensive. It may result in the recipient feeling threatened, humiliated, intimidated, patronised, demoralised or less confident in their ability. Condoning such conduct may be harassment in itself.

#### **Examples of unacceptable conduct include:**

- verbal abuse, or insulting behaviour;
  - sexist or racist jokes, jokes about an individual's sexual orientation or jokes about an individual's physical or mental attributes
  - the display or circulation of sexually suggestive or racially abusive material;
  - bullying, coercive or threatening behaviour;
  - the ridicule or exclusion of an individual for cultural or religious differences, on the grounds of disability;
  - unsolicited or unwelcome sexual advances, including touching, staring or commenting;
  - comments of a sexual nature about a person's appearance or dress.
- 3.4 Harassment, and particularly sexual, racial or disability harassment, will be regarded as gross misconduct for disciplinary purposes. Accordingly, employees guilty of harassment run a serious risk of summary dismissal.

Equally, an allegation of harassment must not be made lightly. If it is found that an allegation of harassment has been made without foundation and maliciously then this will also be regarded as gross misconduct for disciplinary purposes.

#### **4. Your Responsibility**

- 4.1 It is your responsibility to ensure your own conduct conforms to the expected standards and reflects this policy.
- 4.2 The aim of these policies is to encourage harmony and respect amongst individuals so as to promote good working practices with a view to maximizing the performance and the return to the Group and its employees.
- 4.3 If equal opportunities are not applied then valuable talent and potential are wasted. Moreover when unfair discrimination, harassment or victimization takes place they bring about a climate of fear, insecurity and poor work performance. As well as being illegal it affects profitability and morale. It is therefore vital that you understand your responsibilities.
- 4.4 Equal opportunity is taken very seriously by the Group and willful failure to apply these policies or evidence of discrimination, harassment or victimization will result in disciplinary action which may include your dismissal.