

Equality and Diversity Policy



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Race and Diversity

Lilac Alliance recognises that the business needs to focus continually on the issue of race and diversity, and has taken positive, proactive steps in this regard.

The company continues its drive to attract into the workforce a wider range of people that is representative of the diversity of its customers.

This includes the continued approach to appoint more women into management and provide the appropriate training in equal opportunities and dignity-at-work to all new and existing employees.

Equal Opportunities

The Policy of Lilac Alliance. The company has for many years, had policies against unlawful discrimination and to promote equal opportunities. The aim is to restate our commitment to equality of treatment of all those we deal with as employees, potential employees, customers, sub-contractors, suppliers, and the general public; regardless of sex, marital status, race, ethnic or national origin, religion, age or disability.

Lilac Alliance Commitment

Equal opportunities are an important issue for Lilac Alliance. The company developed its policy, not merely to comply with the changes in the law, but in order to ensure a highly effective workplace for the future. We strive to achieve this objective by actively promoting equality of opportunities and by encouraging and assisting employees to develop their potential to the full.

Lilac Alliance is a medium sized employer with approximately 30 employees, but as such is committed to take positive action to eliminate discrimination to provide genuine equality of opportunity. Our policy and practice will be continually and regularly monitored by the partners and senior managers to ensure its effectiveness.

The Board of Directors have overall responsibility for the furtherance of equal opportunities within Lilac Alliance.

Lilac Alliance Policy.

It is the policy of Lilac Alliance:-

- To ensure that no job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, ethnic or national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status or disability and that all
- To review regularly all relevant personnel policies in order to ensure that individuals are selected, promoted, trained and treated based on their relevant merits and abilities.
- To communicate and educate all employees of their own responsibilities and the company's commitment towards the promotion of equal opportunity and equality for all employees.
- To ensure that third parties, be they potential employees, customers, sub-contractors, suppliers or members of the general public are afforded the respect and dignity to which they are entitled.

Guidance on the Implementation of the Policy

All Lilac Alliance employees must be fully aware of the company's policy so that they can consider it on a day-to-day basis. Some of the key points to be aware of are set out below.

Recruitment and Selection

When recruiting staff a Lilac Alliance employee must not discriminate either in favour or against an individual on the grounds of race, ethnic or national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status or disability. To avoid discriminatory practices in recruitment and selection, attention must be given to the following areas:

a) Recruitment

1. When placing advertisements, all Lilac Alliance managers must ensure that they should not be unjustifiably confined to those publications that would exclude or disproportionately reduce the number of applicants from a particular group, and records should be kept of where and how an opportunity was announced.
2. The wording of advertisements must not exclude or imply the exclusion or discouragement of particular groups. Conditions must be specific and justifiable (e.g. professional skills) to the position in question. They should be designed to appeal to as wide a spectrum as possible, and be published as widely as possible.
3. In the advertisement, be clear as to what the job entails and what the key duties are. Ask applicants for information that will tell you whether they can do the job. Do not ask questions unrelated to the job.
4. When considering the responses to advertisements, be open-minded and do not make assumptions as to who would fit in.
5. Where reasonable to do so, adapt methods of recruitment so that disabled people can apply and attend for interview. Consider what adjustments may be necessary before the interview.
6. Where recruiting via a recruitment agency, make sure that they are not asked to act unlawfully.

b) Selection

1. The short listing and selection of applicants should be based on objective criteria drawn from job descriptions and person specifications. Furthermore, the criteria for selection should apply to each applicant.
2. Reasons for the rejection of applicants must be noted on the application form. All application forms must be retained by the Personnel Department for six months.

Business Conduct

All Lilac Alliance employees must be aware of the company policy and must conduct themselves accordingly. Whilst at work, employees are representatives of the company, and any employee found discriminating against any individual, including a fellow employee, on the grounds of race, ethnic or national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status or disability will be subject to the company disciplinary procedure.

All Managers are reminded that they have overall responsibility for the behaviour of their staff, and may be held accountable in part if discrimination is found to have occurred.

Promotions, Transfer and Training

It is unlawful to restrict access to opportunities for promotion, transfer or training in a way, which is discriminatory. In order to avoid direct or indirect discrimination, the following actions must be taken: -

- a) Information about jobs and training must be disseminated as widely as possible and records should be kept of where and how an opportunity was announced.
- b) The selection criteria applied should relate to the requirements of the job and the applicants' ability to do or train for the job in question.

Conditions of Employment, Benefits and Facilities

It is unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of race, ethnic or national origin, religion, sex, marital status or disability, against any particular group of employees in applying conditions of employment or providing benefits, facilities and services for employees. Whilst it is not (at the time of writing) unlawful to discriminate on grounds of age, it is against Lilac Alliance policy. The criteria governing eligibility must be applied objectively and consistently. When it is necessary, all reasonable changes should be made to overcome physical or non-physical barriers, which make it difficult for disabled employees, customers, clients or sub-contractors. A flexible approach to working arrangements should also be promoted where possible. This can include offering flexible hours, time off for family or religious needs or accommodating religious or cultural dress codes.

Grievance and Disciplinary Procedure

Existing company procedures will be kept under review to ensure they are appropriate and cover all aspects of the equal opportunities policy. If any job applicants or employees consider themselves the subject of discriminatory treatment or are aware of any such treatment, they should raise the matter as a formal grievance under the Company's Grievance Procedure as soon as possible.

Harassment at Work

Lilac Alliance grievance and disciplinary procedure should be applied if dealing with complaints of harassment. Employees should feel able to bring their complaints forward without fear of reprimand or victimisation.

They should be able to do so in the knowledge that their complaints will be handled with appropriate confidentiality, seriously and with sensitivity. Complaints should be investigated thoroughly and, where appropriate, disciplinary action should be taken against those who are guilty of harassing other employees.

All complaints received about discrimination or harassment must be notified to the Personnel Department.

Dismissal

It is unlawful to dismiss, or treat less favourably in any other way, an employee based on race, ethnic or national origin, religion, sex, marital status or disability.

Managers must ensure that the company's selection criteria are applied in cases of redundancy. These are set out in the staff handbook; the full reasons for a dismissal should be noted on the employee's personal record.

Although the primary responsibilities for providing equal opportunity rest with the employer, individual employees at all levels have responsibilities to assist in the prevention of discrimination and the promotion of equality.

All employees should:

- Co-operate fully with measures introduced to ensure equal opportunities.
- Ensure that in their own conduct they reflect the intention and the spirit of the policy.

The Law

In implementing this policy, Lilac Alliance also ensures that it meets its legal obligations in the following areas:

Racial Discrimination

The Race Relations Act 1976 makes racial discrimination unlawful in employment, vocational training, and related areas. The Act defines racial discrimination as discrimination on the grounds of colour, race, nationality, or ethnic or national origins.

There are two types of discrimination generally referred to, as direct and indirect. Direct discrimination arises where one person treats another less favourably on racial grounds, than he would someone else. Indirect discrimination consists of applying in any circumstances covered by the Act, a requirement or condition, which, intentionally or not, has a disproportionately adverse effect on a particular racial group and cannot be shown to be justifiable on other than racial grounds. An example would be recruiting from sources, which exclude areas with a high settlement of racial minority groups. Segregation of a person from others on racial grounds is a further form of discrimination. It is also unlawful to treat someone less favourably because they have asserted their rights under racial equality law or have assisted someone else to do so. Such discrimination is called victimisation. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 created a new offence of intentionally causing harassment, alarm or distress through the use of threatening, abusive or insulting behaviour. Convictions may result in imprisonment, a heavy fine or both.

Disability Discrimination

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 deals with discrimination against disabled people. The Act defines disability as a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. As such, this definition can cover a wide range of people who may not necessarily be thought of as disabled. For example, these can include an employee who is absent from work due to long-term sickness or an employee with a persistent bad back. It also covers people who have had a disability in the past.

Sex Discrimination

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 as amended and broadened by the Sex Discrimination Act 1986 makes it unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly on the grounds of sex or marital status. The Equal Pay Act 1970 (as amended) states that women must also be paid the same as men for doing work of equal value.

Direct discrimination means treating someone unfairly because of his or her gender. Indirect discrimination means setting unjustifiable conditions that appear to apply to everyone, but in fact discriminate against one sex.

Ageism

Discrimination against job applicants on the grounds of age - In contrast, to discrimination on the basis of gender, race, or disability, ageism has not been legislated against in the UK, but Lilac Alliance will not condone any discrimination on the basis of age.

Conclusion

Lilac Alliance recognises that the full realisation of an equal opportunities policy will not be achieved merely by reliance on improvements in its procedures. The company's intention is to develop and maintain a balanced and representative workforce in its places of business, and the success of the policy depends on every member of its workforce being aware of and adhering to the policy guidelines.

This Policy is a living document and is reviewed annually. The next review date is September 2026.