**MODEL EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY**

# 1. INTRODUCTION

We are an *equal opportunities employer*. This means that we will make every good faith effort to comply with the spirit and letter of the equality laws.

We will aim to provide equality of opportunity in employment to all persons and we will not discriminate unlawfully against our job applicants or employees on any of the protected equality grounds, which are:

| **Sex** | **Pregnancy or**  **maternity** | **Gender**  **reassignment** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Marital or**  **Civil partnership**  **status** | **Religious or**  **similar philosophical belief** | **Political**  **opinion** |
| **Racial group** | **Sexual orientation** | **Disability** |
|  | **Age** |  |

When making recuitment and selection decisions we will aim to select the best person for the job and all decisions will be made objectively and lawfully. Likewise, we will follow the same principles when making other employment-related policies and decisions, such as those relating to pay and benefits, opportunities for promotion and training, flexible working arrangements, absence and performance management and, if necessary, redundancy.

We will promote a good and harmonious working environment in which our employees will be treated with dignity and respect. We will not tolerate harassment on the protected equality grounds or bullying.

We recognise that our workplace and our employment policies and practices may potentially cause barriers for job applicants and employees who have disabilities. We will make reasonable adjustments to ensure that these are removed when needed. We recognise that a failure to comply with the reasonable adjustment duty would be an act of unlawful discrimination.

Where appropriate, we will take lawful affirmative and positive action to encourage participation from groups that are under-represented in our workforce.

# 2. EMPLOYEES’ RIGHTS

Our employees have a right to work in a good and harmonious environment that is free from unlawful discrimination and harassment and to complain about such behaviour should it occur.

| We have established an internal grievance procedure to deal with such complaints and we would encourage aggrieved employees to use it. All complaints will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially.[[1]](#footnote-1)  Our internal grievance procedure does not replace the right of aggrieved employees to also pursue complaints to an Industrial Tribunal or the Fair Employment Tribunal. Those who wish to consider that option may obtain advice from the Equality Commission (telephone: 028 90 500 600). |
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Employees who make complaints of discrimination or harassment and others who give evidence or information in connection with such complaints, will not be victimised (i.e. they will not be discriminated against or harassed in retaliation for their actions). Victimisation is also discrimination contrary to the equality laws and this policy.

# 3. EMPLOYEES’ RESPONSIBILITIES

All our employees must comply with this policy. They must treat each other with dignity and respect. They must not commit any acts of unlawful discrimination or harassment against any other person, such as their co-workers, job applicants or customers. Such behaviour will not be permitted or condoned. We will treat it as misconduct which may warrant dismissal from employment, or other employment-related penalties as is appropriate.

All our employees should discourage discrimination and harassment by making it clear that they find such behaviour unacceptable and by supporting co-workers who suffer such treatment. Any employee who is aware of any incident of discrimination or harassment should alert a manager or supervisor to enable us to deal with it.

# 4. EMPLOYER’S RESPONSIBILITIES

We will continually make good faith efforts to implement this policy. This responsibility will be carried out by *[ insert name or job title of appropriate senior manager ].* We will:

* provide all employees with a copy of this policy.
* ensure that all complaints of discrimination and harassment are dealt with promptly, seriously and confidentially and in accordance with our internal grievance procedure.
* set a good example by treating employees with fairness, dignity and respect.
* be alert to unacceptable behaviour and will take appropriate action to stop it.
* monitor all incidents of discrimination and harassment and review the effectiveness of this policy periodically.

# 5. MONITORING AND REVIEW

We will monitor all incidents of alleged discrimination, harassment and bullying and we will review the effectiveness of this policy periodically *[or, insert time frame: no less than every three years is recommended]*.

Where such monitoring or review identifies any areas for improvement, we will develop an action plan to address the issue.

Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998[[2]](#footnote-2)

We are registered with the Equality Commission for the purposes of the *Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998*. As such we are obliged to monitor the *community background* and *sex* of our job applicants and workforce. We are also obliged to review the composition of our workforce and our employment policies and practices every three years and, where appropriate, to consider taking affirmative action to promote fair participation between members of the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities. We are committed to complying with these duties and will [have] set up suitable arrangements to ensure that we do so.

***Optional***[[3]](#footnote-3)

*In addition, we will also monitor and review our job applicants and workforce in relation to the following equality characteristics: (Insert which grounds, e.g. sex / racial group / disability / gender reassignment / sexual orientation / age / marital or civil partnership status / dependants or caring responsibilities).*

1. Note (not for inclusion in the policy) – the Equality Commission has published a choice of two separate model procedures. One is a general one that may be used for all grievances, and the other is a separate one for harassment and bullying complaints – see [www.equalityni.org/modelpolicies](http://www.equalityni.org/modelpolicies) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This paragraph may be deleted by those employers who are not registered, and who are not obliged to be registered, with the Equality Commission (i.e. employers who do not employ 11 or more employees (counting only those who work for 16 or more hours per week)). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. It is good practice to monitor on the other equality grounds, as well as periodically reviewing employment policies, including this one. Furthermore, public sector employers who are designated for the purposes of s*ection 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998* have additional obligations in relation to this deriving from their equality schemes and they should reflect that it this part of their own equal opportunities policies. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)