

EQUALITY, INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY POLICY

Purpose and scope

The purpose of this policy is to set out how we ensure equality, diversity and inclusion in our workplace. We aim to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and with respect, within a culture that promotes equal opportunities for everyone, underpinned by our values and principles of The Blakemore Way.

We appreciate that everyone is different and has something unique to offer. We have an increasingly diverse workforce, which is vital to ensure we successfully operate within the multicultural and diverse communities that we serve. We want to respect and understand these differences and to make the most of everyone's culture, talent and experience.

Through this policy and our Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Strategy, we want everyone to feel they can be free to be themselves at work and believe this will make our workplaces richer and business stronger.

The scope of this policy applies to all job applicants, colleagues, workers, contractors, consultants, visitors and suppliers.

Policy objectives

To ensure equality through embracing differences so that everyone has equality of opportunity and protection from discrimination through a fair and consistent approach to the application of rules, policies and procedures. We ensure protection from discrimination and recognise that sometimes this will mean treating people differently. This commitment is relevant to all we do, how we manage ourselves and how we deliver service to our customers.

To ensure diversity through understanding, recognising, respecting and valuing differences. We recognise that it is through embracing diversity in the dimensions of race (including nationality, ethnic origins and colour), gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs or other ideologies, that we create a safe, positive and nurturing environment in which we can all be confident with being individual, which positively impacts on our business strength, culture and values.

To ensure inclusion through attracting and developing talent wherever it exists and encouraging everyone in our business to reach their full potential in whatever they do, consistent with principles of our Purpose and Values. We ensure our policies, procedures and processes are relevant to all, regardless of whether you are an applicant, temporary or permanent colleague, full or part time worker, visitor or supplier. We value every individual contribution towards the company's objectives and will continuously seek ways to ensure everyone has the opportunity to feel included, respected, valued and completely engaged with our business.

Policy requirements

- An equal, diverse and inclusive environment must be promoted for all our colleagues, others who work with us and the communities that we serve.

- Opportunities must be provided that are accessible and appropriate for everyone. Reasonable adjustments will be considered to ensure that we aren't eliminating opportunities for inclusion.
- Organisational capability must be developed for continuous improvement, learning and sharing good practice. Good organisational capability is one that has considered the diversity of its team and is reflective of the communities in which we serve.
- Everyone must contribute to the elimination of all forms of discrimination and/or harassment.
- We must all positively promote equality and inclusion throughout all our activities and communications.
- An environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all our colleagues and stakeholders are recognised and valued must be maintained.
- Everyone must contribute towards a working environment that promotes dignity and respect for all and where no form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.
- Employment practices and procedures will be reviewed regularly to ensure that no job applicants, colleagues or stakeholders are treated less favourably than others.
- Breaches of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy will be treated seriously and disciplinary action will be taken when required. Any act of unlawful discrimination may be treated as Gross Misconduct.

Discrimination

It is against the law to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership. These are known as "protected characteristics" within The Equality Act 2010.

We will also not tolerate discrimination or less favourable treatment because of socio-economic status, appearance, physical abilities, political beliefs or other ideologies, working patterns, fixed-term or part-time employment or trade union membership, nor will we tolerate harassment or bullying of any kind.

Colleagues with management, recruitment and selection and/or training responsibilities will be given guidance on the implementation of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy to ensure that they understand the company's objectives and commitments as well as their own position in law.

Discrimination definitions:

Direct discrimination is where a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic. An obvious example of direct discrimination would be refusing to employ a woman because she is pregnant. In limited circumstances, we can directly discriminate against an individual for a reason related to any of the protected characteristics where there is an occupational requirement. However, the occupational requirement must be crucial to the role and a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Indirect discrimination is where a provision, criterion or practice is applied that is discriminatory in relation to those who have a relevant protected characteristic (although it does not explicitly include pregnancy and maternity, which are covered by indirect sex discrimination) so that its application would be detrimental to

people who share that protected characteristic compared with people who do not, and it cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Associative discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic (although it does not cover harassment because of marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity).

Perceptive discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that he/she has a particular protected characteristic when he/she does not, in fact, have that protected characteristic (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity).

Victimisation occurs where a colleague is subjected to a detriment, such as being denied a training opportunity or a promotion because he/she made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because he/she is suspected of doing so. For example, if a blind colleague raises a grievance that the employer is not complying with its duty to make reasonable adjustments, and is then systematically excluded from all meetings, such behaviour could amount to victimisation. However, a colleague is not protected from victimisation if he/she acted maliciously or made or supported an untrue complaint.

Failure to make reasonable adjustments is where a physical feature or a provision, criterion or practice puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared with someone who does not have that protected characteristic and the employer has failed to make reasonable adjustments to help enable the disabled person to overcome the disadvantage.

Responsibilities

The Board takes overall responsibility for the development and promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion through leading by example and ensuring that progress is reviewed and further actions instigated as necessary.

The Responsible Business team will have responsibility for the formation and continual review and development of the Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Strategy. They shall set targets with departments and report upon metrics of success against these targets. This strategy will include events and communications aimed at supporting managers, engaging all colleagues and increasing everyone's knowledge on subject matter impacting diversity.

The Human Resources team will ensure all policies and procedures are regularly reviewed, that training is delivered in line with these policies and procedures and advice and support is provided to managers when necessary.

All managers at all levels will demonstrate their commitment to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, including:

- Adhering to all policies and procedures
- Ensuring everyone is aware of their responsibilities and receives appropriate training
- Challenging unacceptable behaviours and creating a climate where complaints can be raised without the fear of reprisal

- Taking firm action where unfairness or inconsistency exists
- Encouraging and supporting equality, diversity and inclusion within their teams
- Demonstrating and promoting considerate and fair behaviour
- Treating colleagues with dignity and respect and recognising and valuing individual skills and contributions
- Demonstrating through words and actions that diversity is an integral part of meeting business priorities
- Creating an environment in which colleagues are able to identify and share good practice
- Celebrating success and encouraging positive attitudes towards diversity

Everyone is personally responsible for contributing towards a culture that embraces equality, diversity and inclusion, free from discrimination, victimisation, bullying and/or harassment. We can do this by:

- Treating everyone with respect and consideration, without judgement, prejudice or discrimination, and promoting the same standards of behaviour in colleagues
- Challenging any behaviour that does not meet the expected standards of this policy
- Championing the celebration and inclusion of our diverse colleagues and customers
- Identifying any breaches of this policy and reporting them to either a line manager or a member of the Human Resources team
- Ensuring that we all behave within the principles of this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Communication

We will ensure that this policy is accessible and understood by everyone. We understand that getting our message across successfully means everyone will:

- Be aware of our policy on equality, inclusion and diversity
- Understand the benefit of valuing diversity and how this impacts on both our working environment and the business
- Have a greater awareness of the value of more inclusive communication
- Understand their own role in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion
- Be aware of their legal responsibilities under current equality legislation

Complaints

You should report any instances of unacceptable behaviour, such as inequality, discrimination or victimisation that you have been subjected or witnessed or become aware of to the HR department through our **‘SPEAK UP NOW!’** confidential reporting portal ([click here](#)), or

Scan the QR code to complete the ‘SPEAK UP NOW’ report form:



Support available

Confidential Counselling Service (GroceryAid) – The company has set up a partnership with GroceryAid to provide you with access to a free and confidential counselling service along with a number of other free services. GroceryAid helps people, and their families, who are working in, or retired from, retail and associated businesses.

How can I contact GroceryAid?

- Online – www.groceryaid.org.uk
- Email – welfare@groceryaid.org.uk
- Free and confidential Helpline – available 24/7, 365 days a year on 08088 021 122

Human Resources advice and support

A.F. Blakemore Human Resources Sharedservices@afblakemore.co.uk or 0121 568 2905

A.F. Blakemore Mental Health First Aider reachout@afblakemore.co.uk