

Scope

This procedure applies to Itec Training Solutions Holdings Group and all employees thereof. Throughout this policy, any references to “the Company”, means the Itec Training Solutions Holdings Group and its subsidiaries and associated companies

The Company recognises its responsibility in the promotion of equality and diversity and the elimination of discrimination. Our equality and diversity practices are an integral and fundamental part of this commitment. This policy applies to all employees, customers, learners, suppliers and sub-contractors working in partnership with or for the Company. It applies to all our functions, services, and employment practices and activities.

All employees, customers, learners, suppliers, and subcontractors of the Company are required to act in a way that does not subject any other employees or customer to any form of discrimination on the grounds of age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race, religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation. The Company requires all its employees to behave in ways that promote equality and are non-discriminatory.

Where the Company operates as a prime contractor, the Company will work with suppliers and contractors in relation to ensuring equality, diversity, and the elimination of discrimination.

Purpose

Our policy is designed to ensure a cohesive and coordinated approach to equality and diversity across the business. Our policy, single equality scheme and plan set out our commitments to; equality and diversity; human rights; eliminating all unlawful and unfair discrimination and valuing the differences that diversity brings to our organisation and society as a whole.

It is our commitment to treat all current and prospective; employees, customers, learners, employers, suppliers and contractors fairly and equally, regardless of race; age; sex; sexual orientation; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; disability; religion and belief; gender reassignment. This applies to all our activities, including our role as an employer and as a provider of services, ensuring that all who, or wish to, access our services and our current and potential employees will be treated fairly and without discrimination.

This policy aims to ensure that no unfair, bullying, harassment and discriminatory practices exist within the organisation. The Company is opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination (including harassment of any kind). Discrimination on the grounds of age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race, religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation or any other form of difference will not be tolerated and breaches of the equality and diversity policy by employees will be dealt with under the company’s disciplinary procedure.

Responsibilities

The Board of Directors and Senior Management Team are responsible for ensuring that this policy is fully and effectively implemented and ensuring compliance with relevant legislation and promotion of best practice. Senior Managers are expected to follow this policy and ensure that all employees, learners, customers and suppliers do the same.

The Board of Directors and Senior Management Team have overall responsibility for ensuring that the Company promotes equality of opportunity and eliminates discrimination. HR Director and Manager has senior responsibility for equality and diversity matters relating to staff. The Senior Quality Manager has responsibility for equality and diversity matters relating to learners, sub-contractors and other service users.

The HR department and employee forum are responsible for developing new ideas, promoting equality and diversity in the company, highlighting areas of concern and good practice and monitoring progress with implementing our objectives.

The HR Department is responsible for providing advice and guidance for managers and employees on staff equality and diversity matters and approving our equality schemes, policies and reports. The HR Department is responsible for monitoring compliance with meeting our legislative duties and completing impact assessments on our policies and procedures, promoting awareness of equality issues and disseminating good practice.

Senior Quality Manager is responsible for providing leadership, specialist knowledge and guidance for managers, employees and learners on learner equality and diversity matters. The Quality Department is responsible for consulting with learners and sub-contractors and employees on developments and new ideas.

All managers and employees are responsible for promoting equality and diversity and challenging discrimination, and for ensuring that it is embedded into their delivery, working practices and procedures. The co-operation of all employees is essential for the success of this policy and associated procedure. All employees are responsible for supporting the business in effectively implementing its key equality and diversity strategies and participate actively in measures introduced by the Company to ensure that there is equality of opportunity and non-discrimination.

Policy Statement

The Company is committed to the equal opportunities agenda and challenge discrimination relating to all the protected characteristics; race; age; sex; sexual orientation; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; disability; religion and belief; gender reassignment

The Company is committed to ensuring a culture where people of all backgrounds and experience feel appreciated and valued. We are unequivocally committed to achieving equality of opportunity for all.

The Company are committed to embedding our policy throughout our organisation and to equality and diversity as a guiding principle to

1. meet the requirements of equality & diversity legislation and comply with legal responsibilities,
2. promote and provide clear guidance to staff, sub-contractors, customers, employers, and learners on their responsibilities in respect of equality and diversity and our policy,
3. promote and adopt best practice within the business, promoting good relations, celebrating diversity and actively encouraging new innovations,
4. ensuring all prospective and existing employees have equality of access through our employment policies and practices
5. ensuring all prospective and current learners, including apprentices, and customers, have equality of access and opportunities to achieve their full potential and in the recruitment, delivery of training and in all or work.
6. develop good working relationships with local communities, employers, relevant external authorities and bodies,
7. effectively consult with, communicate, provide training, advice and information for all staff, learners, customers, suppliers and other stakeholder on equality and diversity,
8. effectively review, monitor and evaluate data by equality strand to identify trends and areas for improvement.

Equality Statements & Commitments

Commitment to Race, Disability and Gender

We have general and specific duties in relation to promoting equality on the basis of race, disability and gender. As part of our commitment we will aim to:

- promote equality of opportunity and eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment;
- promote positive relationships and attitudes;
- work with employers and suppliers to eliminate harassment, support victims and take action against perpetrators;
- provide our employees and learners, as appropriate with training to enable them to meet our commitment to race, disability and gender equality, including on induction.
- ensure that our policies do not discriminate against people of black and minority ethnic origins, disability and gender either directly or indirectly;
- ensure that all people are encouraged and supported to be involved in decision making processes and develop additional channels of communication and consultation where formal channels are inappropriate;
- ensure information we provide, where reasonable, is accessible to disabled, black and minority ethnic customers, in languages and / or formats that can be easily understood;
- promote the value of diversity amongst staff and our customers, and ensure our recruitment procedures and development practices do not directly or indirectly discriminate;
- ensure that the needs of people from black and minority ethnic origin, disability and gender are identified in the planning and delivery of services;
- ensure that services are accessible and meet the needs of all.

Reasonable Adjustments

The Company has a duty to make reasonable adjustments to facilitate the employment of a disabled person.

This may include:

- making adjustments to premises;
- re-allocating some or all of a disabled employee's duties;
- transferring a disabled employee to a role better suited to their disability;
- relocating a disabled employee to a more suitable office;
- giving a disabled employee time off work for medical treatment or rehabilitation;
- supplying or modifying equipment, instruction and training manuals for disabled employees;
- providing access to fair assessment and reasonable adjustments for apprentices / learners (See QA035 policy and procedure)
- providing training or mentoring; or
- any other adjustments that the Company considers reasonable and necessary provided such adjustments are within the financial means of the Company.

If an employee has a disability and feels that any such adjustments could be made by the Company, they should contact the HR Department

Commitment to Age, Sexual Orientation and Religion / Belief and/or Non-Belief

The Company supports and is committed to ensuring its services and employment practices comply with the Employment Equality (Age, Sexual Orientation, Religion and Beliefs) Regulations which make it unlawful to discriminate or indirectly, harass or victimise someone on the basis of age, sexual orientation and religion or beliefs.

The Age regulations also remove upper age limits for unfair dismissal and redundancy, make compulsory retirement below sixty-five unlawful and give employees the right to request to work beyond retirement age. The Company supports and is committed to ensuring its services and employment practices comply with the extension of its legal duties as stated in the Equality Act, making it illegal to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation and religion or beliefs in the provision of education, facilities, goods and services.

Further Commitments

In order to deliver the broadest commitment to equality that reflect the community we work with, the Company will ensure that the following groups are not discriminated against in the provision of services or employment practices:

- Marriage and civil partnerships status
- Dependents and / or caring responsibilities
- Poor or at risk health and wellbeing
- Socially excluded
- Socio-economic factors
- Gender reassignment
- Maternity or pregnancy
- Communities that are not cohesive or that are fragmented

In very limited circumstances it will be lawful for an employer to treat people differently if there is a genuine occupational requirement or that it is a proportionate way of achieving a legitimate aim. This means proving that there is no alternative, less discriminatory way of achieving the aims and that the benefits significantly outweigh discriminatory effects.

Breaches & Reporting Concerns

Should employees, through the course of their employment, be found to have caused or encouraged discrimination, this will be regarded as a serious offence, rendering them liable to disciplinary action. Employees may also be held independently and individually liable for their discriminatory acts by an Employment Tribunal and ordered to pay compensation to the person who has suffered as a result of discriminatory acts.

Employees should also draw the attention of management to alleged unlawful or unfair discriminatory acts or practices. In the event that an employee is the subject or perpetrator of, or witness to, discriminatory behaviour, please refer to the Company's Company Handbook or contact the HR Department.

An employee who has a concern regarding unfair discrimination or harassment at work may use one of the Company's formal procedures e.g. grievance, respect at work, bullying and harassment. This does not affect an employee's right of reference to an employment tribunal within the statutory time limits.

Definition of Discrimination

Discrimination is unequal or differential treatment which leads to one person being treated more or less favourably than others are, or would be, treated in the same or similar circumstances on the grounds of age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race, religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation. Discrimination may be direct, indirect, by association, by perception, harassment or victimisation.

Discrimination can be caused by individuals, groups or institutions.

At an Institutional level, it is a collective failure of an organisation to provide appropriate and professional service and / or employment. Prejudices become embedded in policies, practices, procedures and criteria for decision making. These discriminate with the effect of excluding some people in favour of others. This could lead to unequal treatment, inequitable distribution of opportunities, power and resources, which in turn could deprive some people opportunities and a better quality of life.

At an individual level, a person may hold negative attitudes and use language that could result in inappropriate discriminatory behaviour or outcomes.

All forms of discrimination are unacceptable, such as:

Direct discrimination: This occurs when a person or a policy intentionally treats a person less favourably than another on the grounds of a protected characteristic

Indirect discrimination: This is the application of a policy, criterion or practice that applies to everyone but is detrimental or disadvantages a particular protected characteristic

Associate discrimination: Direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic

Discrimination by perception: Direct discrimination against someone because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic

Harassment: Behaviour that is offensive even if it is not directed at them

Harassment by a third party: Harassment of employees by people they don't employ

Victimisation: Someone is treated unfairly because they have made and / or supported a complaint or grievance under the Equality Act

Unlawful Reasons for Discrimination

Age: It is not permissible to treat a person less favourably because of their age. This applies to people of all ages. This does not currently apply to the calculation of redundancy payments. However, different treatment because of age is not discrimination if it can be justified; this means employers must demonstrate that it is a proportionate means of meeting a legitimate aim.

Disability: It is not permissible to treat a disabled person less favourably than a non-disabled person. Reasonable adjustments must be made to working conditions or the workplace where that would help to accommodate a particular disabled person. A person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Gender Reassignment: A transsexual person is someone who proposes to, starts or has completed a process to change his or her gender. It is discrimination to treat transsexual people less favourably for being absent from work because they propose to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment then they would be treated if they were absent due to illness or injury.

Race: For the purpose of legislation and this policy 'race' includes colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin: It is not permissible to treat a person less favourably because of their race, the colour of their skin, their nationality or their ethnic origin. A racial group can be made up of two or more different racial groups.

Religion or Belief: It is not permissible to treat a person less favourably because of their religious beliefs or their religion, including a lack of religion or belief. A religion must have a clear structure and belief system. Belief means any religious or philosophical belief, or lack of belief.

Sex: It is not permissible to treat a person less favourably on the grounds of their gender. This applies to both men and women. Sexual harassment of men and women can be found to constitute sex discrimination.

Sexual Orientation: It is not permissible to treat a person less favourably because of their sexual orientation. The Equality Act protects bisexual, gay, heterosexual and lesbian people.

Marital and Civil Partnership Status: It is not permissible to treat a person less favourably on the grounds of their marital or civil partnership status.

Pregnancy and Maternity: A woman is protected against discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity during the period of her pregnancy and any statutory maternity leave to which she is entitled.



Esther Barnes
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Policy Review Date: May 2023

Next Policy Review Date: May 2024