



The Advantage Foundation Ltd.

Advantage: Equal Opportunities Policy

Statement of Policy

The aim of this policy is to communicate the commitment of the Chief Executive and Board of Directors/Senior Management Team to the promotion of equality of opportunity.

It is our policy to provide employment equality to all, irrespective of:

- gender, marital or family status
- religious belief or political opinion
- disability
- race or ethnic origin
- nationality
- sexual orientation
- age

We are opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. All full-time and part-time employees and job applicants (actual or potential) will be treated fairly and selection for employment, promotion, training or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability.

We recognise that the provision of equal opportunities in the workplace is not only good management practice, it also makes sound business sense. Our equal opportunities policy will help all employees to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.

We are committed to:

- preventing any form of direct or indirect discrimination or victimisation
- promoting equal opportunities for women and men
- securing fair participation for Catholics and Protestants
- promoting equal opportunities for people with disabilities
- promoting a good and harmonious working environment where all men and women are treated with respect and dignity and in which no form of intimidation or harassment will be tolerated
- fulfilling all legal obligations under the relevant legislation and associated Codes of Practice
- taking any necessary positive/affirmative action, including setting goals and timetables

Breaches of our equal opportunity policy and practice will be regarded as misconduct

and could lead to disciplinary proceedings. This policy is fully supported by senior management and has been agreed with the trade union and/or employee representatives.

Implementation

The senior manager has specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy. Each director, manager and supervisor also has responsibilities and we expect all of our employees to abide by the policy and help create the equality environment which is its objective.

In order to implement this policy, we will ensure that:

- the policy is communicated to all employees, through e.g. induction training, management training, team briefings, display on notice board/staff handbook/notes in pay advices etc and made known to job applicants
- manager and supervisors are aware of their responsibilities through appropriate and regular training
- an equal opportunities programme will be developed and will include a range of initiatives, indicating where appropriate affirmative/positive action, with targets and timetables
- appropriate training and guidance will be provided, including training on induction and management courses. In particular, all those involved in assessing candidates for recruitment or promotion will be trained in non-discriminatory recruitment and selection techniques
- consultation will take place with recognised trade unions/employee representatives on the implementation of this policy and any amendments to practice
- an information system will be established to assist the effective implementation of this policy and guidelines will be drafted for assessing the provision of equality of opportunity
- adequate resources are made available to fulfil the aims of this policy

Affirmative Action

Where appropriate, lawful positive action measures such as special encouragement in advertisements or special training will be developed. These measures are available to us in certain circumstances, for example where there is an under-representation of a particular group in specific areas of work.

Monitoring and Review

The provision of equality of opportunity for all will be monitored through the collection and analyses of appropriate statistical data of all full-time and part-time employees and job applicants and, where required, project participants. We will also monitor our workforce composition and undertake periodic reviews as required by the relevant legislation.

Progress on the implementation of this policy and any equal opportunities and affirmative/positive action programmes will be reviewed annually.

A joint employer/employee equal opportunities committee will be established for this purpose.

Complaints

Employees who believe that they have suffered any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation are entitled to raise the matter through the agreed procedures. A copy of these procedures is available from the manager. All complaints of discrimination will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially. These internal procedures do not replace or detract from the right of the employees to pursue complaints, and Fair Employment and Treatment Order 1998, Sex Discrimination (NI) Orders 1976 and 1988, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 to a Fair Employment Tribunal. Information on definitions of discrimination and time limits for raising complaints are set out at the end of this policy statement.

Every effort will be made to ensure that employees making complaints will not be victimised. Any complaint of victimisation will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially. Victimisation will result in disciplinary action and may warrant dismissal.

Direct Discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another on the grounds of their sex, marital status, religious belief, political opinion, race, nationality or ethnic/national origin.

Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination can occur when a requirement or condition which cannot be justified on grounds other than sex, marital status, religious belief, political opinion, race, nationality or ethnic/national origin, is applied equally but has the effect in practice of disadvantaging a considerably higher proportion of persons in one or other of the above groups.

In order to establish a complaint of indirect discrimination, an applicant must show the following:

- that a requirement or condition has been applied
- that the said requirement or condition adversely impacts against the person because of his/her religious belief, political opinion, sex, marital status, race nationality or ethnic/national origin
- that he/she has suffered detriment by reason being unable to comply with the condition or requirement

Disability Discrimination

Disability discrimination occurs when, for a reason related to his/her disability, a disabled person is treated less favourably than other people, and this treatment cannot

be justified. It also occurs when an employer fails to comply with the duty to make a reasonable adjustment in relation to the disabled person, and the failure cannot be justified. An employer cannot justify less favourable treatment if, by making a reasonable adjustment, it would remove the reason for the treatment.

Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another because that person has, for example, asserted rights under any of the discrimination laws or has helped another person to assert such rights or given information to the relevant statutory body, or because it is suspected that the person might do any of these things.

Complaints

Complaints of sex/marital status, race/nationality/ethnic/national origin, and disability discrimination should be lodged with the industrial tribunal within three months from date of the alleged act of discrimination.

In respect of equal pay, the complaint can be lodged at any time while the person is in the job or within six months of leaving the job.

Complaints to a fair employment tribunal must be lodged within three months from which a complainant first knew, or might reasonably have known, of the act of discrimination or within six months from the date when the act occurred, whichever is earlier.