



Equality & Diversity Policy

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March 2018	Liz Moran	April 2022

Version Number & Date of amendment	Summary of amendments	Quality Board Member Approval Name	Signature	Date approved
V1 1/3/2018	First version of this policy	Liz Moran		1/3/2018
V2 3/2/2020	General update	Alison Hughes		3/2/2020
V3 22/04/2021	Annual review	Alison Hughes		22/04/2021
V4 07/09/2021	Focus on training and how this policy impacts apprenticeship and adult learning delivery	Stephen King		07/09/2021

Introduction

We are an equal opportunities employer. We are committed to equality of opportunity and to providing a service and following practices which are free from unfair and unlawful discrimination. The aim of this policy is to ensure that no applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, gender, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be relevant to performance. It seeks also to ensure that no person is victimised or subjected to any form of bullying or harassment.

We value people as individuals with diverse opinions, cultures, lifestyles and circumstances. All employees are covered by this policy and it applies to all areas of employment including recruitment, selection, training, deployment, career development and promotion. These areas are monitored and policies and practices are amended if necessary to ensure that no unfair or unlawful discrimination, intentional, unintentional, direct or indirect, overt or latent exists.

HR has particular responsibility for implementing and monitoring the Equality and Diversity policy and, as part of this process, all HR policies and procedures are administered with the objective of promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating unfair or unlawful discrimination.

All employees, or self-employed contractors whether part time, full time or temporary, will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, training, or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and their talents and resources will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the Company.

All employees receive training on unconscious bias, equality and diversity and this is reviewed, monitored and updated annually. Engagement of this policy is delivered through team meetings and deep dive reviews of delivery and customer feedback. All meetings focus on our values which include ensuring that we are all respectful and supportive - of each other, our learners and our clients.

Equality of opportunity, valuing diversity and compliance with the law is to the benefit of all individuals in our Company as it seeks to develop the skills and abilities of our people. While specific responsibility for eliminating discrimination and providing equality of opportunity lies with Line Managers, individuals at all levels have a responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect. The personal commitment of every employee to this policy and application of its principles are essential to eliminate discrimination and provide equality throughout the Company.

We are committed to:

- creating an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of our employees are recognised and valued
- every employee or self-employed contractor is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated
- providing training, development and progression opportunities to all employees
- understanding equality in the workplace is good management practice and makes sound business sense
- reviewing all our employment practices and procedures to ensure fairness.

Our commitment as a service provider

System Group is committed to:

- providing services to which all clients, including apprentices, are entitled regardless of age, gender, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, offending past, caring responsibilities or social class
- making sure our services are delivered equally and meet the diverse needs of our apprentices, adult learners and employers by carefully assessing and meeting those needs
- providing an environment in which all learners can develop free from discrimination, intimidation, harassment and victimisation on any grounds including protected characteristics
- taking an active approach to identifying and removing barriers to entry and progression routeways across our direct delivery and partner provision
- celebrate diversity and learn from the experiences of all stakeholders in meeting our commitment
- full support of this policy by the Exec team
- monitoring and reviewing this policy annually
- having clear procedures that enable our clients, employers, apprentices, candidates for jobs and employees to raise a grievance or make a complaint if they feel they have been unfairly treated
- treating breaches of our equality and diversity policy as misconduct which could lead to disciplinary proceedings.
- selecting those for employment, promotion, training, or any other benefit purely on the basis of aptitude and ability
- encouraging all employees to come forward with any issues they need Company assistance and understanding with, no matter their background, identity or circumstances, such as if they are victims of domestic abuse or have caring commitments.
- ensuring our service offer will always meet our value of being respectful and supportive – of each other, our learners and our clients
- delivering learning programmes which help apprentices and adult learners develop their understanding of the policy and how it applies practically inside and outside the workplace
- ensuring that team and learner support is accessible to all
- ensuring that wherever practicable we adapt our services to meet the needs of all team members, apprentices and adult learners
- all contractors and partner organisations understand this policy and adhere to it
- ensure that understanding of equality and diversity is integrated into our learning materials and information hub

Equal opportunity policy statements

Age

We will:

- ensure that people of all ages are treated with respect and dignity
- ensure that people of working age are given equal access to our employment, training, development and promotion opportunities and
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about younger and older people.

Disability

We will:

- provide any reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled people have access to our services and employment opportunities
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about disabled people

Race

We will:

- challenge racism wherever it occurs
- respond swiftly and sensitively to racist incidents
- actively promote race equality in System Group
- Report to the appropriate authority incidents of racially motivated hate crime

Sex

We will:

- challenge discriminatory assumptions about women and men
- take positive action to redress the negative effects of discrimination against women and men
- offer equal access for women and men to representation, services, employment, training and pay and encourage other organisations to do the same and

Gender Reassignment

We will:

- provide support to prevent discrimination against transsexual people who have or who are about to undergo gender reassignment.
- prohibit and respond to all instances of discrimination, both from colleagues and externally.

Sexual orientation

We will:

- ensure that we take account of the needs of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals and
- promote positive images of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals.

Religion or belief

We will:

- ensure that employees' religion or beliefs and related observances are respected and accommodated wherever possible and
- respect people's beliefs where the expression of those beliefs does not impinge on the legitimate rights of others.

Pregnancy or maternity

We will:

- ensure that people are treated with respect and dignity and that a positive image is promoted regardless of pregnancy or maternity
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about the pregnancy or maternity of our employees and
- ensure that no individual is disadvantaged and that we take account of the needs of our employees' pregnancy or maternity.

Marriage or civil partnership

We will:

- ensure that people are treated with respect and dignity and that a positive image is promoted regardless of marriage or civil partnership;
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about the marriage or civil partnership of our employees and
- ensure that no individual is disadvantaged and that we take account the needs of our employees' marriage or civil partnership.

Ex-offenders

We will prevent discrimination against our employees regardless of their offending background (except where there is a known risk to children or vulnerable adults).

Equal pay

We will ensure that all employees, male or female, have the right to the same contractual pay and benefits for carrying out the same work, work rated as equivalent work or work of equal value.

Unconscious bias

System Group recognises the dangers of unconscious bias arising at work, which is where an opinion is formed on an individual by a manager or colleague without them necessarily being aware they have formed it.

We will work against all forms of unconscious bias in all decisions taken for employment, including recruitment, promotion and training opportunities, with a focus on promoting diversity and inclusion.

We will review the impact of our approach through learner survey and deep dive reviews, as well as feedback from team members in advance of annual reviews. We will monitor participation rates and make adjustments as required to ensure that our culture promotes equality of opportunity with all stakeholders.

Responsibilities

The Executive Team is responsible for:

Leading and promoting equality of opportunity and inclusion and celebrating diversity across all aspects of our organisation

Reviewing all emerging equality legislation with a view to adjusting policies and approaches where required

Ensuring arrangements for apprentices, adult learners, team members and stakeholders provide fair access for all

Managers are responsible for:

Ensuring all team members complete required Equality and Diversity training

Promoting equality and diversity in the workplace and through learning delivery

Challenging unacceptable behaviour and following disciplinary proceedings where appropriate

Ensuring complaints on the basis of equality and diversity are investigated fairly and confidentially, where appropriate

Team members are responsible for:

Supporting the business in creating and maintaining a workplace free from discrimination.

Challenging inappropriate behaviour

Reporting unacceptable behaviour

Apprentices and adult learners are responsible for:

Familiarising themselves with this policy and their employer's policy

Referring to their line manager or a System Group team member if they have any questions

Reporting unacceptable behaviour

Any matter referred to a Line Manager, or the HR department will be treated seriously, confidentially and will be dealt with sensitively.

This policy will be reviewed annually and in line with legislation.