

Equal Opportunities Policy

Policy statement

Waterman is committed to becoming an equal opportunities employer and to ensuring that all employees, job applicants, customers/clients and other people with whom we deal are treated fairly and are not subjected to unfair or unlawful discrimination.

This policy is not contractual, but sets out the way in which Waterman aims to manage equal opportunities. This policy applies to all employees, workers and job applicants.

Our policy is designed to ensure that current and potential workers are offered the same opportunities regardless of sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, marital status or civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, gender reassignment or any other characteristic unrelated to the performance of the job. We seek to ensure that no one suffers, either directly or indirectly, as a result of unlawful discrimination. This extends beyond the individual's own characteristics, to cover discrimination by association and by perception.

We recognise that an effective equal opportunities policy will help all employees to develop to their full potential, which is clearly in the best interests of both employees and our business. We aim to ensure that we not only observe the relevant legislation but also do whatever is necessary to provide genuine equality of opportunity.

We expect everyone who works for us to be treated and to treat others with respect. Our aim is to provide a working environment free from harassment, intimidation, or discrimination in any form that may affect the dignity of the individual.

We further recognise the benefits of employing individuals from a range of backgrounds, as this creates a workforce where creativity and valuing difference in others thrives. We value the wealth of experience within the communities in which we operate and aspire to have a workforce that reflects this.

Legal considerations

The main legislation that covers equal opportunity and discrimination is the Equality Act 2010. In addition, the following is also taken into consideration:

- the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- the Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- the Human Rights Act 1998
- the Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999
- the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006
- any Codes of Practice issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission
- plus any amendments to the above legislation.

Discrimination may be direct or indirect, and can take different forms, for example:

- treating any individual less favourably than others on grounds of a protected characteristic (sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, marital status or civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity or gender reassignment)

- expecting a person, solely on the grounds stated above, to comply with requirements that are different to the requirements for others, for any reason whatsoever
- imposing on an individual requirements that are in effect more onerous than they are on others. This would include applying a condition (which is not warranted by the requirements of the position) which makes it more difficult for members of a particular group to comply than others not of that group
- harassment ie unwanted conduct which has "the purpose, intentionally or unintentionally, of violating dignity, or which creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment" for the individual
- victimisation - ie treating a person less favourably because he or she has committed a "protected act". "Protected acts" include previous legal proceedings brought against the employer or the perpetrator, or the giving of evidence at a disciplinary or grievance hearing or at tribunal, or making complaints about the perpetrator or the employer or their alleged discriminatory practices.
- discrimination by association, ie someone is discriminated against because he/she associates with someone who possesses a protected characteristic
- discrimination by perception, ie discrimination on the grounds that the person is perceived as belonging to a particular group, eg sexual orientation, religion or belief, irrespective of whether or not this is correct
- any other act or omission of an act, which has the effect of disadvantaging one person against another, purely on the above grounds.

On all occasions where those in control of employees are required to make judgements between them, for example disciplinary matters, selection for training, promotion, pay increases, awards etc it is essential that merit, experience, skills and temperament are considered as objectively as possible.

Responsibility for this policy

The overall responsibility for implementing and monitoring the effectiveness of this policy rests with Waterman Group's HR Director.

Directors and managers have a crucial role to play in promoting equality of opportunity in their own areas of responsibility.

All employees, irrespective of their job or seniority, will be given guidance and instruction, through our induction and other training, as to their responsibility and role in promoting equality of opportunity and not discriminating unfairly or harassing colleagues or job applicants, nor encouraging others to do so or tolerating such behaviour. Disciplinary action, including dismissal, may be taken against any employee found guilty of unfair discrimination or harassment.

Recruitment and selection

We aim, through written instruction, appropriate training and supervision, to ensure that all those who are responsible for recruitment and selection are familiar with this policy and apply it in conjunction with our recruitment policy.

Selection will be conducted on an objective basis and will focus on the applicants' suitability for the job and their ability to fulfil the job requirements. Our interest is in the skills, abilities, qualifications, aptitude and the potential of individuals to do their jobs.

Person specifications will be reviewed to ensure that criteria are not applied which are discriminatory, either directly or indirectly, and that they do not impose any condition or requirement which cannot be justified by the demands of the post. Questions asked of candidates will relate to information that will help assess their ability to do the job. Questions about marriage plans or family intentions or any other issues which may give rise to suspicions of unlawful discrimination should not be asked. If selection tests are used in the recruitment process, these will be specifically related to the job and measure an individual's actual, or inherent, ability to do or train for the job.

Job adverts should encourage applications from all types of candidates and should not be stereotyped. All adverts will state: "Waterman is an equal opportunities employer and values diversity". Reference to this policy will also be made on job and person descriptions.

When advertising a position which has traditionally been done by one sex, adverts should specify they are open to both sexes.

Training and development

Waterman recognises that equal opportunity responsibilities do not end at selection, and is committed to ensure that wherever possible all employees receive the widest possible range of development opportunities for advancement.

All employees will be encouraged to discuss their career prospects and training needs with their manager. Opportunities for promotion and training will be communicated and made available to everyone on a fair and equal basis.

The provision of training will be reviewed to ensure that provisions are made where necessary to enable part-time workers, any shift or remote workers or those returning to work following a break to benefit from training. No age limits apply for entry to training or development schemes which are open to all employees.

Terms and conditions of employment

We will ensure that all of our policies including compensation, benefits and any other relevant issues associated with terms and conditions of employment, are formulated and applied without regard to sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, marital status or civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, gender reassignment or any other characteristic unrelated to the performance of the job.

These will be reviewed regularly to ensure there is no discrimination. Length of service as a qualifying criterion for benefits will not exceed five years unless clearly justifiable.

Grievances, disputes and disciplinary procedure

Employees who believe they have been discriminated against and have not been able to resolve this informally are advised to use our internal grievance procedure. An employee who brings a complaint of discrimination must not be less favourably treated.

Harassment or bullying will not be tolerated, and any individual who feels that he/she has been subjected to harassment or bullying should refer to our bullying and harassment policy. Equally, anyone who witnesses incidents of harassment or bullying should report this to his/her manager, HR or an appropriate senior member of staff.

When dealing with general disciplinary matters, care is to be taken that employees or workers who have, or are perceived to have, or are associated with someone who has, a protected characteristic, are not dismissed or disciplined for performance or behaviour which could be overlooked or condoned in other employees or workers.

Positive action

We also recognise that passive policies will not reverse the discrimination experienced by many groups of people. To this end, if certain groups are under-represented within our business we will actively seek to encourage applications from those groups.

The decision as to which applicant is offered a post (either recruitment or promotion) must be based entirely on the merit of the individual.

However, where two candidates are equally qualified and suitable in all other respects, we may decide to offer the post to a candidate who is from a group that is under-represented in our workforce at that particular level.

Communication of this policy

All job applicants, employees and workers will be made aware of this policy and a copy will be included within the Employee Handbook, given to all employees on joining Waterman. Clients and suppliers may also be made aware of this policy.

In addition, employees will be reminded of the policy through such means as advertisements, application forms, posters, training courses and memos.

HR policies and procedures

Our HR policies and procedures will be reviewed regularly to improve, amend or adapt current practices to promote equality of opportunity within our business.

Implementation, monitoring and review of this policy

This policy will take effect from 1 July 2018.

Waterman Group HR Director has overall responsibility for implementing and monitoring this policy, which will be reviewed on a regular basis following its implementation and may be changed from time to time.

Relevant data will be collected to support this policy. Personal details provided by employees or job applicants for the purposes of equal opportunity monitoring are confidential, will be kept apart from all other records and not used for any other purpose. Any queries or comments about this policy should be addressed to Waterman Group HR.

James Bland



Group HR Director

01 January 2022