



## 6. EQUALITY DIVERSITY & INCLUSION POLICY

### 1.0 Aims and Scope

- 1.1 Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce is committed to promoting equality, valuing diversity, creating an inclusive environment and combating any unfair treatment. It is the Chamber's policy to respect the diversity of all members, employees, prospective employees, partners, contractors and suppliers and to treat them fairly and equally.
- 1.2 This policy sets out the Chamber's approach to delivering equality and diversity throughout all its activities as an employer. It aims to ensure that the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 are met and identifies where best practice can be implemented.

### 2.0 Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy Statement

- 2.1 Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce recognises that its success is a direct result of the experience, quality and contribution of all its employees. We are therefore committed to recruiting and retaining the best employees who possess the skills, attitudes, expertise and motivation to meet our objectives. We believe that this is best achieved by maximising the potential of each individual and striving to be an employer of choice. This means developing the talents of all our employees whilst recognising and respecting their differences.
- 2.2 These principles apply to all the Chamber's employment practices including recruitment, selection, training, promotion, pay and benefits, appraisal and all other terms and conditions of employment. Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce will:
  - 2.2.1 Create a working environment where discrimination is not acceptable, and colleagues feel empowered to challenge it
  - 2.2.2 Offer fair treatment in every aspect of working life, from written procedures through to every decision made
  - 2.2.3 Promote an inclusive culture in which each colleague is treated with respect and dignity and the value of a diverse workforce is recognised
  - 2.2.4 Not tolerate discrimination, victimisation or harassment in any form
  - 2.2.5 Take formal disciplinary action against any employee who breaches the requirements of this Policy

### 3.0 Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.1 Everyone at the Chamber has a shared responsibility to ensure that this Equality and Diversity Policy is adhered to. Specific responsibilities are as follows:
  - 3.1.1 **Board/Committee:** The Audit and Governance Committee is responsible for approving this Policy and has ultimate responsibility for monitoring outcomes and ensuring the Policy delivers its aims. All members of the Board lead by example and reinforce the standards required.

3.1.2 **Managers:** Managers are responsible for implementing and enforcing this Policy and ensuring all team members are aware of their responsibilities. Managers encourage each employee to reach their full potential and deal appropriately with any breach of this Policy. In conjunction with Human Resources, managers ensure that all employees are trained and made aware of their responsibilities under this Policy.

3.1.3 **Employees:** All employees have an individual responsibility for ensuring equality of opportunity and dignity at work and adherence to this Policy. This is to be achieved by respecting the right of all colleagues to work in an environment free from prejudice, behaving in the right way and challenging any behaviour which falls short of these expectations.

#### 4.0 Legal Requirements

4.1 The Equality Act 2010 defines nine protected characteristics, and the Chamber's policy in relation to each of them is as follows:

##### 4.1.1 Age:

4.1.1.1 The Equality Act protects employees from discrimination, harassment and victimisation because of age, which may include because they are younger or older than a comparable employee.

4.1.1.2 Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce values age diversity within the workplace and will challenge age stereotyping and recognise the benefits of a mixed age workforce, in terms of the breadth of skill, knowledge and life experience that this can bring.

4.1.1.3 The Chamber has no compulsory retirement age and will ensure that all HR policies and procedures offer equal access to employee benefits and learning and development opportunities regardless of age.

##### 4.2 Disability

4.2.1 Under the Equality Act, a person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a long term (usually lasting more than a year) and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

4.2.2 The Chamber will keep under review the provisions for disabled employees to ensure reasonable adjustments are put in place wherever possible. Reasonable adjustments help to ensure that workplace requirements or practices do not disadvantage employees or potential employees who have a disability. Where an employee becomes disabled during the course of their employment, the Chamber will make every effort to make reasonable adjustments in order that the employee can continue working.

4.2.3 The Chamber is committed to utilising the Government's 'Disability Confident' scheme to inform its approach to the employment of disabled people.

### **4.3 Gender**

- 4.3.1 The Equality Act protects both male and female employees from discrimination, harassment and victimisation due to gender.
- 4.3.2 The Chamber will ensure that women and men are fully represented and rewarded for their contribution at all levels of the organisation by challenging gender stereotypes; supporting employees in balancing their life at work and home and generally ensuring that there is equality of opportunity between male and female employees.
- 4.3.3 Pay rates will be monitored by gender to ensure there are no gender pay gaps and other terms and conditions of employment will be applied equally to all employees.
- 4.3.4 Employees will be protected against sexual harassment, which is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature and/or relates to the protected characteristics of sex and/or gender reassignment.

### **4.4 Race**

- 4.4.1 The Equality Act protects employees from discrimination, harassment and victimisation because of their race. Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce will ensure that all employees are treated equally regardless of their colour, ethnic origin, national origin or nationality. Any racial discrimination and harassment will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.
- 4.4.2 As far as possible, the Chamber will seek to ensure that its employee base is representative of the community it serves and will ensure that all employees understand, respect and value different racial and cultural backgrounds and perspectives.

### **4.5 Religion and Belief**

- 4.5.1 The Equality Act protects employees from discrimination, harassment and victimisation because of their religion or belief. In the Act, religion means any religion with a clear structure and belief system. Belief means any religious or philosophical belief. Denominations or sects within a religion can be considered a protected religion or religious belief. A belief must satisfy various criteria including that it is a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour, worthy of respect in a democratic society and does not conflict with the fundamental rights of others.
- 4.5.2 The Chamber believes that everyone has the right to hold their own religious beliefs or other philosophical beliefs or to have no religion or belief. Employees will be treated fairly and consistently regardless of religious belief.

### **4.6 Sexual Orientation**

- 4.6.1 The Equality Act protects employees from discrimination, harassment and victimisation because of their sexual orientation. It applies equally to bisexual, gay, heterosexual and lesbian orientations.
- 4.6.2 The Chamber will ensure that employees are treated fairly in the workplace irrespective of their sexual orientation by respecting different life styles and challenging any negative stereotypical views.

#### **4.7 Gender Reassignment**

4.7.1 The Equality Act protects employees from discrimination, harassment and victimisation relating to gender reassignment. It is discriminatory to treat a transsexual employee less favourably for being absent from work because they propose to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment. An employer must not treat them any different than it would if they were absent due to illness or injury.

4.7.2 The Chamber will ensure that the rights of transgender employees are respected and will support managers in dealing effectively with issues which may arise when an employee undergoes reassignment.

#### **4.8 Marriage and Civil Partnership**

4.8.1 The Equality Act protects from direct discrimination, indirect discrimination and victimisation because of marriage and civil partnership.

4.8.2 The Chamber will ensure that all employees are treated equally and fairly in the workplace irrespective of marital, civil partnership or family status.

#### **4.9 Pregnancy and Maternity**

4.9.1 The Equality Act protects an employee from direct discrimination and victimisation because of their pregnancy, or for taking/seeking to take maternity leave. For example, pregnancy related illness must not be taken into account when considering other sickness absence or making a decision about employment. A woman who is pregnant or on maternity leave must not be treated unfavourably as a result.

4.9.2 The Chamber will ensure that employees suffer not detriment directly as a result of pregnancy and/or maternity leave.

#### **4.10 Types of Discrimination**

4.10.1 The Equality Act identifies four main types of discrimination:

#### **4.11 Direct Discrimination**

4.11.1 Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably directly because of:

4.11.1.1 A protected characteristic they possess

4.11.1.2 A protected characteristic of someone they are associated with

4.11.1.3 A protected characteristic they are thought to have regardless of whether this is correct or not

4.12 Direct discrimination in all forms could involve a decision not to employ someone, to dismiss them, withhold promotion or training, offer poorer terms and conditions or deny contractual benefits because of a protected characteristic.

#### **4.13 Indirect Discrimination**

- 4.13.1 Indirect discrimination is usually less obvious than direct discrimination and can often be unintended. In law, it is where a provision, criterion or practice is applied equally to a group of employees/job applicants, but has or will have the effect of putting those who share a certain protected characteristic at a disadvantage when compared to others, and the employer is unable to justify it.
- 4.13.2 An employee or applicant must show how they have been personally disadvantaged, as well as how the discrimination has or would disadvantage other employees or job candidates with the same protected characteristic.

#### **4.14 Harassment**

- 4.14.1 Harassment is unwanted conduct which has the purpose of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the individual.
- 4.14.2 Harassment includes bullying, nicknames, banter, gossip, inappropriate questions, exclusion, insults or unwanted physical contact. It can be verbal, written or physical and is based on the victim's perception of the unwanted behaviour and whether it is reasonable for the victim to feel that way.

#### **4.15 Victimisation**

- 4.15.1 Victimisation is when an employee is treated less favourably than others for:
  - 4.15.1.1 Making an allegation of discrimination and/or
  - 4.15.1.2 Supporting a complainant of discrimination and/or
  - 4.15.1.3 Giving evidence relating to a complaint about discrimination and/or
  - 4.15.1.4 Raising a grievance concerning equality or discrimination and/or
  - 4.15.1.5 Doing anything else for the purposes of or in connection with the Equality Act 2010
- 4.15.2 An employee is protected under the Equality Act if they make an allegation of victimisation in good faith, even if it proves to be inaccurate.
- 4.15.3 Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce will not tolerate discrimination in any form; will treat any such activity very seriously and will take formal disciplinary action against any employee found to have acted in such a way.

### **5.0 Human Resources**

- 5.1 Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce has a comprehensive range of Human Resources policies, procedures and practices in place which support the effective implementation of this policy. The key aspects are as follows:

## **5.2 Recruitment and Selection**

- 5.2.1 The Chamber has a robust recruitment process in place which aims to ensure that all recruitment decisions are based solely on the necessary and justifiable job requirements and individual's ability and suitability for the job role.
- 5.2.2 Job descriptions and person specifications are put together by line managers and HR for every job to be filled. Jobs are normally advertised internally first and when they are then advertised externally, the media used will aim to ensure that a wide range of potentially suitable applicants have the opportunity to apply.
- 5.2.3 Selection methods, including interviews will be conducted in accordance with the Chamber's Recruitment Policy which provides for a consistent approach for all candidates, designed to ensure that no discrimination takes place.

## **5.3 Training**

- 5.3.1 The Chamber is committed to getting the best from all its employees through an appraisal process which is designed to identify training needs to inform the annual training programme. This ensures that all employees have the opportunity to take part in job specific training as well as broader personal development designed to support succession planning and career progression. The appraisal process is linked to clear and consistent criteria linked to the core values and job competencies.

## **5.4 Career Progression**

- 5.4.1 The Chamber believes in nurturing its own talent where possible. When career progression opportunities become available and it is necessary to select from a number of employees, fair and consistent criteria will be applied to ensure that the process is free from discrimination and is based on objective assessments of competence. Promotion opportunities will be open to all employees who may wish to express an interest.

## **5.5 Flexible Working**

- 5.5.1 The Chamber recognises the benefits of flexibility in working arrangements for both employees and the business and will consider all requests for flexible working in accordance with a fair and consistent process. All employees working under flexible arrangements will be treated fairly and consistently in comparison to full time employees and will receive the same opportunities for personal development. The treatment of pay and benefits for those on different hours of work or working patterns will be consistent and pro rata of the full-time entitlement.

## **5.6 Particular Requirements**

- 5.6.1 Where a disabled person or anyone with other particular requirements applies for a job with the Chamber, the application will always be considered based on relevant skills, experience and knowledge. If a disabled person is recruited or an existing employee becomes disabled, every effort will be made to make reasonable adjustments to enable the individual carry out the job effectively.

**5.7 Dignity at Work**

5.7.1 Whilst it is the aim to resolve issues relating to employment with the Chamber, a Dignity at Work Policy is in place so that concerns can be dealt with equitably when an informal approach has not been successful, or where the concern is more serious.

5.7.2 Any employee who feels they have been discriminated against, bullied or harassed or believes they have suffered any other detriment because of a protected characteristic should raise the matter under the Dignity at Work Policy if an informal approach has not resolved the issue or the matter is too serious to be dealt with informally.

**5.7.3 Discipline**

5.7.3.1 Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce takes a serious view of discrimination and breaches of dignity at work. Any such actions will be regarded as misconduct and will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure.