

POLICY STATEMENT:

Promoting and embedding equality and diversity in our culture and practices is pivotal to being an employer and a provider of choice. We also have a moral and legal responsibility to develop and support learners to be responsible members of society. We will therefore take every reasonable step towards ensuring that equality and diversity is at the heart of everything we do.

We will treat all staff, learners and visitors with respect and dignity. We unequivocally oppose all forms of prejudice and will not tolerate any discrimination on the grounds of disability, marital or civil partnership status; race; colour; ethnicity; nationality; gender and gender identity, trade union activity; age; religion or belief, pregnancy, maternity, paternity or sexual orientation.

In carrying out our activities we will consistently pay due regard to:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination ensuring inclusion for all
- Advancing equality of opportunity
- Fostering good relations between people from diverse backgrounds

PURPOSE AND SCOPE:

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate our commitment to upholding and valuing the principles of diversity, inclusion, fair treatment and equality of opportunity.

The policy outlines our commitment to the protected characteristics as specified in the Equality Act 2010 as well as the operational steps that the Group takes to advance and monitor equality within the organisation.

The policy applies to all members of staff and learners, visitors, contractors, any other persons associated with the functions of Opportunity Learning Academy.

Subcontractors are expected to work in accordance with this policy and evidence how they meet any equality objectives.

This policy covers all sites on which we carry out our activities.

DETAILS:

1. Definition of Terms

Discrimination is defined as an act which has the effect of treating a person less favourably because of factors related to their personal characteristics such as disability or sexual orientation, and unrelated to their merit. It can be direct (against an individual) or indirect (against a group of individuals that share the same protected characteristic). Discrimination on the basis of perception and association is also illegal.

Diversity encompasses all forms of difference in individuals even if they are not covered by legislative acts, such as height and weight

Extremism can be defined as ideologies or beliefs considered to be far outside the mainstream attitudes of a society, generally to the extent that there is a violation of common moral standards. Extremism can take many forms, including political, religious and economic.

Harassment is unwanted conduct which may create the effect (intentionally or unintentionally) of affecting an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment which interferes with an individual's learning or working environment. Harassment may be persistent or an isolated incident and may be by an individual against an individual or involve groups of people.

Stereotyping is defined as a standardised mental picture that one person or group of people holds in common about another person or group of people and can be either positive or negative. Positive Action is the deliberate introduction of measures to eliminate or reduce discrimination, or its effects. It is not about special treatment for any one particular group, but the fair treatment of all people. It is distinct from positive discrimination which is unlawful.

2. Responsibilities

It is the duty of every member of staff, learners and contractors to avoid discriminatory practices, to accept personal responsibility for the application of the policy and to bring any potential or actual infringements to the attention of management so that they can be addressed. Specific responsibilities are as follows:

2.1 The Academy Manager is responsible for:

- Ensuring we meet all the duties under relevant legislation
- Giving a consistent lead on all equality issues
- Promoting the equality policy both internally and externally
- Taking action against staff or learners who discriminate, harass or victimise others for reasons of race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, gender reassignment, maternity and paternity, marriage or civil partnership.

2.2 Staff are responsible for:

- Making sure the equality and diversity policy and its procedures are followed

- Putting the policy into practice, championing equality and diversity and acting as role models to ensure that it is promoted and embedded at every opportunity
- Making sure all the staff know their responsibilities and receive support and training to carry these out
- Advancing equality of opportunity
- Always operating within this policy
- Challenging inappropriate language and behaviours
- Completing mandatory equality and diversity training

2.3 Contractors are responsible for:

- following the Equality Act 2010 and any equality conditions in contracts or agreements

2.4 Learners are responsible for:

- following the Equality and Diversity Policy
- behaving in a manner that is in accordance with the requirements of the Policy

3. Meeting the needs of learners

3.1 Information, advice and guidance is available to all learners in accessible formats that meets their individual needs. The ethos of information, advice and guidance within Opportunity Learning Academy is to challenge stereotypes within society, provide impartial support and to help remove barriers to individual achievement.

3.2 All applicants to Opportunity Learning Academy will receive a fair interview process relevant to their needs, with reasonable adjustments made where necessary. Admissions and enrolment procedures will be supportive and as straightforward as possible.

3.3 Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities will have the same rights of access as other learners. Guidance and support will be provided to enable such learners to be integrated into the full range of training according to capability.

3.4 Opportunity Learning Academy will endeavour to offer individual and flexible training opportunities to those that request and/or need them.

3.5 Training materials will be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that they do not promote sexism, racism, or any other form of discrimination.

3.6 Opportunity Learning Academy has a robust Safeguarding Policy which supports all learners and ensures a safe and fair learning environment which is free from all forms of discrimination.

4. Staffing and recruitment

4.1 Opportunity Learning Academy embraces diversity in all its aspects and aims to employ a workforce, which reflects at every level, the community it serves.

4.2 In seeking to achieve a balanced workforce at all levels, we will ensure that no employee, job applicant or candidate for promotion will be disadvantaged or treated less favourably because of conditions or requirements that are not related to the job.

4.3 We welcome the skills and contributions of all: terminology used in the recruitment process is inclusive and reasonable adjustments at interview are offered for neurodivergent candidates.

4.4 We will aim to ensure that all staff are recruited, selected, trained and promoted solely on the basis of ability and the requirements of the job. All staff will be made aware of the equality policies at Opportunity Learning Academy.

5. Staff development and training

5.1 Staff are expected to complete training in equality and diversity when they commence employment at Opportunity Learning Academy and to refresh this regularly. Staff induction provides new staff with awareness about the culture of the Academy and staffs' roles and responsibilities in ensuring equality and diversity is upheld.

5.2 The Professional Development Plan is created annually and reflects the ethos of equality and diversity with a range of learning and development opportunities offered to staff.

5.3 All staff have the same rights to training opportunities whether they are full time, part time or on maternity, paternity or adoption leave. Training and development activities will be scheduled at a variety of times and on different day to accommodate a range of staff needs.

6. Implementation of the Policy

6.1 The responsibility for making the Policy work in practice rests with all managers, staff supervisors, representatives, individual staff and learners.

7. Monitoring and review

7.1 We will use the two main forms of monitoring, i.e. of the composition of the existing workforce and the recruitment process, looking at the workforce with reference to the majority of the legally defined protected characteristics (ethnicity, disability, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation and gender reassignment) so that equality gaps can be identified and addressed where possible. Opportunity Learning Academy will take Positive Action where appropriate to narrow and eliminate any gaps.

7.2 We will also categorise staff according to grade, contract type, i.e. whether full-time, permanent or temporary, age, length of time in post, place of work and salary. Records should also be kept of training, appraisals, promotions, re-grading and discretionary pay awards.

8. General

8.1 Staff and learners are encouraged and supported in reporting any instances of discrimination. We will ensure that all allegations are fully investigated, and that confidentiality is maintained throughout any investigation.

8.2 If a learner believes they have not been treated unfairly, due to prejudice, or discrimination, they should raise their complaint through the Complaints Procedure.

Policy/Process Review Date

This policy/process is reviewed every 12 months with the next review date being 30th April 2023