

Equal Opportunities Policy

Introduction

Hoare Lea is committed to treating people fairly, recognising their abilities and valuing their opinions. Hoare Lea also recognises that it has a responsibility to ensure that current and prospective employees as well as clients are treated fairly and with respect at all times.

The Equal Opportunities Policy forms part of this commitment. It highlights the need to ensure fair treatment and non discriminatory practice in all areas of Hoare Lea's employment policy and practice.

In line with this commitment Hoare Lea encourages diversity amongst its workforce and will challenge inappropriate behavior and attitudes.

The firm will not discriminate on the grounds of race, gender, disability, nationality, religion, age, sexual orientation, family status or any other irrelevant factor and will build a culture that values meritocracy, openness, fairness and transparency.

All employees are responsible for the promotion and advancement of this policy. Behaviour, actions or words that transgress the policy will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in line with the firm's harassment and disciplinary policies.

The policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to reflect changes in the law, demographics and internal business requirements.

Aim

The aim of the Equal Opportunities Policy is to ensure that Hoare Lea provides equality of opportunity in all aspects of employment. It also aims to ensure that Hoare Lea recognises the diversity of its workforce and makes full use of the talents and resources available.

The Policy gives an overview of Equal Opportunities legislation and its impact on employment practice. It details the responsibilities placed on line managers and employees to ensure that the Policy is effective. It outlines the action that must be taken to ensure that discrimination does not occur in the areas of recruitment, performance management, promotion, career development, the application of terms and conditions of employment and in liaisons with non Hoare Lea employees such as contractors and clients. The policy also states the need for effective workforce monitoring and the need to regularly review and monitor its practical application.

The Legal Framework.

The Equality Act 2010, which came into force on 1 October 2010 replaces previous equal opportunities legislation in order to create a more consistent and effective framework.

The Equality Act describes the legal requirements placed on employers to ensure equality of opportunity in their treatment of job applicants, employees and clients. It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership. These terms for the various strands of discrimination are referred to as 'protected characteristics'.

Discrimination after employment may also be unlawful, e.g. refusing to give a reference for a reason related to one of the protected characteristics.

Discrimination - The Definition

Discrimination is defined in Equal Opportunities legislation and it falls into these headings.

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Direct Discrimination

This consists of treating a person less favourably than another/others on the basis of one or more the protected characteristics listed above e.g. age, gender, etc.

Examples of direct discrimination are; not employing women because they may take maternity leave; not promoting Asian staff because of their ethnic origin and not providing disabled employees with equal access to training opportunities because of their disability.

Indirect Discrimination

This occurs when a condition or requirement is applied for all but in reality that condition adversely affects a greater proportion of the members of one group than the members of another group and it is found that the condition or requirement cannot be justified.

Examples of indirect discrimination are; requiring specific British qualifications for posts without allowing for equivalent qualifications from other countries, changing working patterns to patterns that conflict with caring responsibilities.

Associative Discrimination

This occurs when an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for association with another individual who fulfils one or more the protected characteristics listed above, e.g. they are disabled.

An example of associative discrimination would be declining a promotion for an employee because she has caring responsibilities for a disabled partner.

Perceptive Discrimination

This occurs when an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that he or she has a particular protected characteristic when he or she does not, in fact, have that characteristic.

An example of perceptive discrimination would be rejecting a job application submitted by a white person whom the employer wrongly assumes to be black because they have an African name, or where someone is verbally abused because he is perceived to be homosexual, even though he is actually heterosexual.

Victimisation

This occurs where an individual is treated less favourably than another person because they have asserted a right to equality or they have supported another person's claim of alleged unlawful discrimination.

Harassment

Harassment on the grounds of any of the criteria listed at above is a form of unlawful discrimination because it is regarded as less favourable treatment. Harassment is normally defined as behaviour which is unwanted and offensive, which creates an offensive, humiliating or intimidating working environment and which affects the dignity of people at work.

Third-party Harassment

This occurs where an employee is harassed by third parties such as clients or customers.

Failure to make reasonable adjustments

Where a physical feature, a criterion or a practice puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage, and the employer has failed to make reasonable adjustments to enable the disabled person to overcome the disadvantage, the employer may be found to have discriminated against a disabled individual.

Clients, suppliers and other people not employed by the firm

The firm will not discriminate unlawfully against customers using or seeking to use goods, facilities or services provided by the firm.

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Employees should report any bullying or harassment by clients, suppliers, visitors or others to their manager who will take appropriate action.

Responsibilities

The HR Group and Partners have specific responsibility for ensuring that the Equal Opportunities Policy is implemented, monitored and reviewed regularly.

To ensure that the policy is effective and successfully achieves its stated aim all line managers have a responsibility and obligation to ensure that Hoare Lea's employment policies and procedures are applied in a fair and non discriminatory way.

Line managers must also ensure that employees under their supervision are aware of the Equal Opportunities Policy and apply the standards of behaviour expected of them by the firm and under the law.

Line Managers have a responsibility to deal with any breach of the policy using the appropriate procedures. Complaints of discrimination including victimisation and harassment must also be investigated and dealt with promptly in line with the firm's harassment and disciplinary procedures.

All employees have a responsibility to treat others fairly and with respect, employees must not unlawfully discriminate or assist others to discriminate, employees must observe the requirements of the Equal Opportunities policy and apply its principles accordingly.

Policies and Procedures

Recruitment

Hoare Lea is committed to ensuring that the most suitably qualified and experienced candidates are appointed to positions within the firm on the basis of job related criteria.

- All employees involved in the recruitment and selection process will receive appropriate training to ensure that they understand their role in relation to the Equal Opportunities Policy and the need to ensure fair and non discriminatory practice
- Advertising and recruitment activity will be aimed at encouraging applicants from all sections of the labour market.
- Recruitment literature and advertisements will indicate that Hoare Lea has an Equal Opportunities Policy and is committed to being an Equal Opportunities employer.
- The use of employment agencies will be examined and reviewed to ensure that they operate an effective Equal Opportunities Policy.
- Selection methods will be reviewed and monitored to ensure that they do not have a disproportionately adverse effect on members from a particular group.
- Selection will be determined by objective assessment based on justifiable job related criteria.
- The recruitment process will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.

Promotion and Transfer

Hoare Lea is committed to ensuring that employees are selected for promotion and transfer on the basis of merit and objective assessment against job related criteria. Employees may be identified for promotion or transfer by the application of performance management systems and succession planning, internal recruitment to posts will be conducted fairly and consistently.

Career Development and Training

Hoare Lea will ensure that the provision of career development and training opportunities is fair and consistent. Access to training will not be denied on the basis of unjustifiable criteria, e.g. number of hours worked, gender, etc.

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All forms of training activity will be monitored to ensure that training is free from bias and where relevant reference is made to Hoare Lea's Equal Opportunities Policy.

Performance Management

Hoare Lea will monitor the application of the performance management of employees to ensure it is fair and non discriminatory. The criteria used for assessment will also be subject to review.

Redundancy Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures

Hoare Lea will monitor the application of the redundancy, disciplinary and grievance procedures to ensure that they are applied consistently and fairly. The redundancy procedure will be reviewed where necessary to ensure that the criteria used for selection are non discriminatory.

Terms and Conditions of Employment

Hoare Lea's existing agreements, outlining terms and conditions of employment, will be applied to employees in a fair and consistent way. All policies will be subject to review to ensure that they are non discriminatory.

Equal Opportunities Training

All line managers will be made aware of the Equal Opportunities Policy to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities and obligations under it.

In addition all employees involved in training and the recruitment and selection process will receive awareness training in Equal Opportunities legislation and the Equal Opportunities Policy to ensure that they understand their responsibilities and obligations.

To ensure that all employees are aware of the Equal Opportunities policy and their responsibility to treat individuals fairly and with respect, appropriate information will be given. The Employee Handbook received by all employees will also include the Equal Opportunities Policy.

Monitoring and Review

The practical application of the Equal Opportunities Policy will be monitored on a regular basis to ensure that it meets its stated aim.

All aspects of HR policy and practice will be monitored and reviewed to ensure that equality of opportunity is provided, regular analysis and monitoring of the composition and distribution of employees within Hoare Lea will also be undertaken.

The Equal Opportunities Policy will be subject to annual review.

Data Protection

Hoare Lea is committed to protecting the privacy and security of its employees personal information. Our Data Protection policy describes how we collect and use personal information about you during and after your working relationship with us, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (**GDPR**).