



Equal Opportunity Policy

Equality of Opportunity

- extends to all matters relating to employment, including recruitment, performance appraisal reviews, assessment for promotion, disciplinary action, pay reviews, terms and conditions, grievances, etc.
- covers all employees, or potential employees, and embraces the principle that all people shall be treated equally, regardless of their gender, ethnic origin, nationality, colour, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, religion or belief, disability, or offending background unless unequal, or different treatment can be shown to be justified and is appropriate.
- As a matter of principle, equality in opportunity and treatment applies equally to Suppliers, Customers and others directly associated with the conduct of business.

It is the Practice's clear objective and policy to embrace all of the principles of "equality of opportunity" described above. All employees are required to operate within the framework of this policy, and any conduct which is seen to be contrary to its aims will be investigated, and disciplinary action, which could include dismissal, may be taken.

The Partners have overall responsibility for implementation, review, monitoring, and ensuring corrective action where necessary.

Procedure

Implementation and Review

The Practice will regularly review its practices, policies and procedures, (including induction and training) governing all aspects of employment, including recruitment, promotion, disciplinary action, etc to ensure that there are no inherently discriminatory practices evident.

Where such reviews throw certain practices into question, barriers to fulfilment of equal opportunities exist and where discrimination may be evident, albeit unintentional, then such barriers and/or practices will be removed and/or changed so as to remove any inappropriate discrimination or unfair or unequal treatment.

Monitoring

The Practice will take measures to ensure that its Equal Opportunities Policy is observed, and will ensure that all those involved in the selection process (for example) are aware of the obligations and duties imposed by relevant employment legislation (including Equal Opportunities, Discrimination and Data protection). In order to satisfy these obligations and duties and to monitor the effectiveness of this policy, certain personal sensitive data will be collected from Job Applicants. This information will not be used in order to select individuals for employment, but some sensitive personal data (regarding criminal convictions and physical/mental health) may be used in order to verify the safety of proceeding with either an application or a job offer.

The Data Protection Act sets out a series of conditions, at least one of which has to be met before an employer can collect, store, use, disclose or otherwise process sensitive personal data.

The Information Commissioner, in the guidance document "The Employment Practices Data Protection Code – recruitment and selection" (March 2002) has provided guidance as to what constitutes sensitive personal data. Sensitive personal data are information concerning an individual's:

- Racial or ethnic origin
- Political opinions
- Religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature
- Trade Union membership
- Physical or mental health or condition
- Sexual life
- Commission or alleged commission of any offence, or
- Proceedings for any offence committed or alleged to have been committed, the disposal of such proceedings or the sentence of any court in such proceedings

In addition to the above, the collection of information about an individual's age, sex, or marital status is potentially suspect if it is used to support unlawful discrimination.

In ensuring that relevant information is made available during the recruitment and selection process, and in order to collect information which allows monitoring of the equal opportunities policy of the Practice, sensitive personal data will be collected separately from all other information at the application stage. This information will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be used as part of the selection process. However certain information (typically from information regarding physical/mental health or criminal records) may come to light which could result in the application process being halted, or an offer being withdrawn. Personal data collected will include:

- Criminal record
- Physical and mental health, including details about any disability
- Ethnic origin
- Age
- Gender
- Marital status

All Job Applicants will be asked to consent to the disclosure of such information.

Positive Action

Selection for employment or promotion is based solely on merit, having regard to the requirements of the job. However, should obvious inequalities become apparent, and some form of positive action be considered desirable, then such action will be taken.

Grievances

Should an employee or job applicant believe that he or she has received less favourable treatment which runs contrary to the governing principles of the Equal Opportunities Policy, or has been the subject of harassment or victimisation, then they are asked to use either the Practice's Grievance Procedure, or refer to the complaints procedure outlined in the Policy "Dignity at Work".

Signature:



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