



Equality and Diversity Strategy

1. INTRODUCTION:

- 1.1 Cognus Limited is an equal opportunities employer. We are committed to equality of opportunity for everyone, free from unfair and unlawful discrimination.

As a Company we endeavour to ensure that no applicant, member of staff or a service user receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be relevant to day to day performance of his/her role.

We are committed to ensure that no one is victimised or subjected to any form of bullying or harassment.

- 1.2 The Managing Director has the overall responsibility for implementing and monitoring the Equality and Diversity Strategy and, as part of this process, all personnel policies and procedures are administered with the objective of promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating unfair or unlawful discrimination.
- 1.3 We value people as individuals with diverse opinions, cultures, lifestyles and circumstances. All employees are covered by this scheme and it applies to all areas of employment including recruitment, selection, remuneration, training, deployment, career development, and promotion. These areas are monitored and policies and practices are amended accordingly to ensure that no unfair or unlawful discrimination, intentional, unintentional, direct or indirect, overt or latent exists within the Company.
- 1.4 All employees, workers or self-employed contractors whether part-time, full-time or temporary, will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, training, or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the Company.

- 1.5 We believe that equality of opportunity, valuing diversity and compliance with the law is to the benefit of all individuals in our Company as it seeks to develop the skills and abilities of its people. While specific responsibility for eliminating discrimination and providing equality of opportunity lies with managers and supervisors, individuals at all levels have a responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect. The personal commitment of every employee to this scheme and application of its principles are essential to eliminate discrimination and provide equality throughout the Company.

2. OUR COMMITMENT AS AN EMPLOYER:

The Company is committed to:

- Creating an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of our staff are recognised and valued.
- Every employee, worker or self-employed contractor is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated at any level.
- Providing training, development and progression opportunities to all staff.
- Understanding equality in the workplace is good management practice and makes sound business sense.
- Reviewing all our employment practices and procedures to ensure fairness.

3. OUR COMMITMENT AS A SERVICE PROVIDER:

The Company is committed to:

- Providing services to which all clients are entitled regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, offending past, caring responsibilities or social class.
- Making sure our services are delivered equally and meet the diverse needs of our service users and clients by assessing and meeting the diverse needs of our clients.
- Fully supporting this policy by senior management and ensuring agreement has been reached with employee representatives.
- Monitoring and reviewing this policy annually.
- Having clear procedures that enable our clients, candidates for jobs and employees to raise a grievance or make a complaint if they feel they have been unfairly treated.
- Treating breaches of our equality and diversity policy as misconduct which could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

4. THE COMPANY'S EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STATEMENT:

Document: Equality and Diversity Strategy

Author: Amir Gill

Creation Date: 05/09/2018

Version: 1.0

Revision Date: 31/08/2021

Intended Audience: Cognus Limited

Classification: Private - Accessible to everyone within Cognus

4.1 AGE:

We will:

- Ensure that people of all ages are treated with respect and dignity.
- Ensure that people of working age are given equal access to our employment, training, development and promotion opportunities.
- Challenge discriminatory assumptions about younger and older people.

4.2 DISABILITY:

We will:

- Provide any reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled people have access to our services and employment opportunities.
- Challenge discriminatory assumptions about disabled people at every level.
- Seek to continue to improve access to information by ensuring availability of loop systems, braille facilities, alternative formatting and sign language interpretation.

4.3 RACE:

We will:

- Challenge racism wherever it occurs.
- Respond swiftly and sensitively to racist incidents.
- Actively promote race equality in the Company.

4.4 GENDER:

We will:

- Challenge discriminatory assumptions about women and men.
- Take positive action to redress the negative effects of discrimination against women and men.
- Offer equal access for women and men to representation, services, employment, training and pay and encourage other organisations to do the same.

4.5 SEXUAL ORIENTATION:

We will:

- Ensure that we take account of the needs of lesbians, gay men and bisexual colleagues and service users.
- Promote positive images of lesbians, gay men and bisexual colleagues and service users.

4.6 RELIGION OR BELIEF:

We will:

- Ensure that employees' religion or beliefs and related observances are respected and accommodated wherever possible.
- Respect people's beliefs where the expression of those beliefs does not impinge on the legitimate rights of others.

4.7 PREGNANCY OR MATERNITY:

We will:

- Ensure that people are treated with respect and dignity and that a positive image is promoted regardless of pregnancy or maternity.
- Challenge discriminatory assumptions about the pregnancy or maternity of our employees and service users.
- Ensure that no individual is disadvantaged and that we take account of the needs of our employees' pregnancy or maternity.

4.8 MARRIAGE OF CIVIL PARTNERSHIP:

We will:

- Challenge discriminatory assumptions about the marriage or civil partnership of our employees.
- Ensure that no individual is disadvantaged and that we take account the needs of our employees' marriage or civil partnership.

4.9 GENDER REASSIGNMENT:

We will:

- Ensure that people going through gender reassignment are treated with respect and dignity.
- Provide support to prevent discrimination against transsexual people who have or who are about to undergo gender reassignment.

4.10 EX-OFFENDERS:

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We will:

- Prevent discrimination against our employees regardless of their offending background (except where there is a known risk to children or vulnerable adults).

4.11 EQUAL PAY:

We will:

- Ensure that all employees, male or female, have the right to the same contractual pay and benefits for carrying out the same work, work rated as equivalent work or work of equal value.

5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF COMPANY'S POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

- 5.1 We consider an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to be an effective and improvement tool. It assists the Company in ensuring that our key personnel responsible for creating policies and processes have thought about the needs and impacts of these in relation to the protected characteristics as defined by the Equalities Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.
- 5.2 It enables a systematic approach to identifying and recording actions and any gaps. It also ensures that the Company have documented evidence that our policy and decision makers have paid **due regard** to the protected characteristics in relation to the decisions made.
- 5.3 We understand that the word "policy" is used to cover the wide range of strategies, contracts and other areas that are covered by the Equalities Act 2010. It is also important to note that an equality assessment is an ongoing responsibility – not something that can be done once and then put aside.

Appendix 1

RECORDING EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF POLICIES, SERVICES AND FUNCTIONS

1.	Department and/or Team	
2.	Name of policy, project service/function, contract or strategy being analysed	
3.	Name and contact details of staff completing the assessment	
4.	Brief Description of policy being analysed (Summarise the aims, objectives and purpose of the policy)	
5.	Is this a new policy or a review of an existing one?	
6.	Data & Engagement – what information did you gather and use and who have you consulted?	

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7.	Findings – Did you discover any adverse or positive impact on any of the following 9 equality strands or protected characteristics?	Identified Impacts	Actions
	Age (younger/older)		
	Disability (e.g. physical/sensory/unseen)		
	Gender/Sex (female/male)		
	Transgender (including process of gender re-assignment)		
	Race/Ethnicity/Culture (Asian, Chinese, White, Black, Other and categories within these)		
	Religion / Belief (Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Jewish, Hindu etc.)		
	Sexual Orientation (lesbian, gay, bisexual)		

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	Pregnancy and Maternity		
	Other (family circumstance, socio economic circumstance etc)		
10.	How does the policy fit with the Company's wider objectives and priorities?		
11.	If you have discovered some inequalities/adverse impact what are you going to do to reduce/eliminate them? NB: Positive impacts should also be recorded.		
12.	How and when will you monitor whether the adverse impact has been eliminated or reduced?		
Signed:		Date:	
Full name:		Post title	