



Equality, Diversity And Inclusion Policy

'Five Rivers Group is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment'

Policy Owner	People Partner
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Table of Contents

1 Policy	2
1.1 Scope	2
2. Our commitment to you	2
3. What we expect from you	4
4. Discrimination	4
4.1 Different types of discrimination under the Equality Act 2010	5
5. Harassment and sexual harassment	6
6. Victimisation	6
7. Bullying	6
8. Recruitment	7
9. Career development	7
10. Recruiting people with a disability	7
11. Talking about disability	8
12. Reasonable adjustments	8
13. Support	8
14. Training	8
15. Children and young people placed in the care of the Company	8
16. Reporting Discrimination - What You Should Do	9
17. Monitoring and review	9
18. Data protection	10
18.1 Disclosure of Information	10

1 Policy

Our organisation is made up of brilliant people. Each of us is unique, whether in terms of our background, personal characteristics, experience, skills or motivations. And we value our people for the differences they bring to the table. These differences - this diversity - is powerful.

Fostering an inclusive culture helps each of us to benefit from a wider range of these different perspectives, experiences and skills. We believe that this creates a happier, more productive working environment for us all.

To support this inclusive culture, this policy:

- outlines our commitment throughout the employment lifecycle to equality, diversity and inclusion and sets out how we put this commitment into practice
- explains the behaviours we expect of our people in support of this commitment;

1.1 Scope

This policy applies to anyone working for us. This includes employees, workers, contractors, volunteers, interns and apprentices. The policy also relates to job applicants, and is relevant to all stages of the employment relationship.

2. Our commitment to you

We believe that a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion not only benefits our organisation but supports wellbeing and enables our people to work better because they can be themselves and feel that they belong.

We are committed to promoting a working environment based on dignity, trust and respect, and one that is free from discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation.

We ensure that our recruitment, promotion and retention procedures do not treat people less favourably because of their: disability; gender, gender identity or gender reassignment status, marital status, race, racial group, ethnic or national origin, or nationality, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, paternity, caring responsibilities, part-time status or fixed-term status.

We will strive to ensure:

- Everyone in our organisation understands their responsibility to assist us in meeting our commitment to provide equal opportunities in employment and avoid unlawful discrimination.
- That recruitment and selection processes are free from discrimination by:
 - Building our recruitment processes to attract diverse candidates and ensure our retention policies support differences. As a result,

candidates applying for roles and people throughout roles in the organisation reflect the community the organisation serves.

- Ensuring hiring managers have the tools to source candidates from diverse backgrounds.
 - Challenging and working with line managers to make role profiles and person specifications as inclusive as possible; this will help to attract a diverse range of people who are not deterred by unnecessary requirements. For example, ask if a particular qualification or number of years of experience is necessary and whether suitability for the job could be demonstrated through skills and behaviours.
 - Internal and external selection processes are fair, including objective criteria for selecting people for promotion.
 - Checking job descriptions, role profiles and person specifications to make sure the language used is inclusive rather than exclusive.
 - That in advance of any selection tests, including interviews, there should be a process in place to ask candidates if they require any reasonable adjustments.
- Employees receive training on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and Unconscious Bias. There is a specific course designed for managers on Unconscious Bias
 - There are regular opportunities to recognise and celebrate different protected characteristics, people from other communities, such as carers, and people from different socio-economic backgrounds, for example, "Armed Forces Day", "Children's Mental Health Week ", or "Anti-bullying Week". A targeted activity calendar using notable dates such as Black History Month and International Women's Day. The rationale is to demonstrate that the organisation recognises, celebrates and supports diversity.
 - Line managers have the skills and competence to engage with difference, demonstrating the organisation's commitment to diversity on an ongoing basis.
 - Internal communications share success stories, showing role models and individuals from different backgrounds or who have overcome obstacles and difficulties.
 - Our brand reflects the organisation's commitment to attracting and retaining diverse talent.
 - People Team monitors progress on diversity through qualitative and quantitative measures, including collecting and using data on recruitment, access to training, promotion, performance management ratings and staff turnover, broken down by protected characteristics and other backgrounds.

3. What we expect from you

We expect you, and every one of our people, to take personal responsibility for observing, upholding, promoting and applying this policy. Our culture is made in the day-to-day working interactions between us so creating the right environment is a responsibility that we all share.

Cultivating this culture does not happen by accident but requires ongoing commitment and nurturing. The reality is that we live in a world where areas of difference (whether gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or others) often translate to biases, challenges and barriers that may not be faced by others. And the more areas of difference a person brings, the more this effect can be compounded. In this way, the experiences of a black woman with a disability may be very different to the experiences of a black woman without a disability and very different from the experiences of a white woman. This way of looking at diversity and inclusion is known as "intersectionality".

We expect you to treat your colleagues and third parties fairly and with dignity, trust and respect. Sometimes, this may mean allowing for different views and viewpoints and making space for others to contribute.

By embedding such values and constructively challenging inappropriate comments or ways of working, you can help us achieve and maintain a truly inclusive workplace culture.

Any dealings that you have with colleagues or third parties must be free from any form of discrimination, harassment, victimisation or bullying.

If any of our people is found to have committed, authorised or condoned an act of discrimination, harassment, victimisation or bullying, we will take action against them including (for those to whom it applies) under our Disciplinary procedure.

You should be aware that you can be personally liable for discrimination and harassment.

4. Discrimination

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination because of certain protected characteristics. These are:

- disability;
- sex;
- gender reassignment;
- marital or civil partnership status;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sexual orientation;
- age; and

- pregnancy or maternity.

Discrimination can be intentional or unintentional and may occur directly, indirectly, by association, or by perception.

There are also two specific types of discrimination that apply only to disability: "discrimination arising from disability" and "failing to make reasonable adjustments".

Discrimination is not always obvious and can be subtle and unconscious. This stems from a person's general assumptions about the abilities, interests and characteristics of a particular group that influences how they treat those people (known as "unconscious bias"). Such assumptions or prejudices may cause them to apply requirements or conditions that put those in particular groups at a disadvantage.

Examples include:

- steering employees into particular types of work on the basis of stereotypical assumptions without considering the particular attributes and abilities of individuals;
- recruiting or promoting individuals into particular roles because of assumptions about the reactions or preferences of other employees or clients; and
- using different standards for different groups of employees to judge performance.

4.1 Different types of discrimination under the Equality Act 2010

- **Direct discrimination:** Treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic compared with someone who does not have that characteristic (for example choosing not to recruit someone because they are disabled and you think they "wouldn't fit in" to the team).
- **Indirect discrimination:** Where a policy, procedure or way of working that applies to everyone puts people with a particular protected characteristic at a disadvantage, compared with people who do not have that characteristic, unless there is a good reason to justify it. An example is introducing a requirement for all staff to finish work at 6pm. It is arguable that female employees, who statistically bear the larger share of childcare responsibilities could be at a disadvantage if the new working hours prevent them from collecting their children from school or nursery.
- **Associative discrimination:** Treating someone less favourably because they are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic, for example because their partner is transgender.
- **Discrimination by perception:** Treating someone less favourably because you perceive them to have a protected characteristic even if they do not, for example choosing not to promote someone because you mistakenly perceive them to be gay.

- **Discrimination arising from disability:** Treating someone unfavourably because of something connected with that person's disability and where such treatment is not justified. Examples include:
 - dismissing or failing to pay a bonus to someone because of their disability-related absence; or
 - disciplining someone for losing their temper where such loss of temper was out of character and was due to severe pain caused by them having cancer.
- **Failing to make reasonable adjustments:** Employers are legally obliged to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that aspects of employment, or the employer's premises, do not put a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage. Failing to comply with this duty is unlawful. Examples of reasonable adjustments might include:
 - allocating some of the disabled person's duties to a colleague;
 - changing their working hours or place of work;
 - adjusting procedures for assessing job candidates; and
 - modifying disciplinary and grievance procedures.

5. Harassment and sexual harassment

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of:

- violating someone else's dignity; or
- creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for someone else.

Sexual harassment is:

- conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment; and
- less favourable treatment related to sex or gender reassignment that occurs because of a rejection of, or submission to, sexual conduct.

6. Victimization

Victimization is treating another person detrimentally either because that person has made a complaint of discrimination or harassment, or because they have supported someone else who has made such a complaint, for example by giving a witness statement that supports the allegations.

7. Bullying

There is no legal definition of bullying. However, we regard it as conduct that is offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting, or an abuse or misuse of power, and

usually persistent, that has the effect of undermining, humiliating or injuring the recipient.

Bullying can be physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct. It is not necessarily face to face and can be done by email, phone calls, online or on social media. Bullying may occur at work or outside work.

If the bullying relates to a person's protected characteristic, it may also constitute harassment and, therefore, will be unlawful (see Harassment).

8. Recruitment

We take reasonable and appropriate steps to encourage job applications from as diverse a range of people as possible.

Anyone making a decision about recruitment must not discriminate in any way and must have attended appropriate diversity and inclusion training.

Every decision-maker should challenge themselves, and other members of the recruitment selection panel, to make sure that any stereotypes, unconscious bias or prejudice do not play any part in recruitment decisions.

Role Profiles will be limited to requirements necessary for the effective performance of the job and to comply with Regulatory requirements. Candidates for employment or promotion will be assessed objectively against the requirements for the job, taking into account any reasonable adjustments that may be required for candidates with a disability. Disability and personal or home commitments will not form the basis of employment decisions except where evidentially necessary.

9. Career development

Any decision you make relating to a person's promotion or career development must be free from discrimination.

We ensure that selection criteria and processes for recruitment and promotion are reviewed on a regular basis so that there is no discriminatory impact on a certain group.

10. Recruiting people with a disability

The recruitment team will consider disability in advance of a recruitment campaign so that advertising, application forms and assessments, arrangements for interviews, job descriptions and employee specifications, and selection criteria are appropriate and as inclusive as possible.

We will ask applicants at the outset if they require any reasonable adjustments to be made to the recruitment process. These may include ensuring easy access to the premises for an interview, providing a suitable chair for an interview with a candidate suffering from back problems.

If you are involved in the interview process, you must not ask job applicants about their health or disability except with prior approval from the recruitment team. Such

approval is given only in exceptional circumstances and where there are specific legal grounds for doing so.

11. Talking about disability

We understand that some people find it hard to discuss their disabilities and that disability can be invisible.

Psychological safety, where people feel able to speak up about their experiences without fear of negative consequences, is paramount to ensuring disability inclusion.

However, this is only possible if we treat people with dignity, trust and respect and we expect everyone to uphold these values.

We do not tolerate ableist language in our organisation. Ableist language is language that is negative, inappropriate or offensive towards people with a disability and may take the form of jokes or "banter". If you adopt such language, we will take action against you including (for those to whom it applies) under our Disciplinary procedure.

12. Reasonable adjustments

If you have a disability, you do not have to tell us. However, we would encourage you to let us know so that we can support you, for example by making reasonable adjustments to our premises or to aspects of your role, or to our working practices.

If you are experiencing difficulties at work because of your disability, please speak to your line manager to discuss potential reasonable adjustments that may alleviate or minimise such difficulties. We may need to discuss your needs with you and your medical adviser to help us get the right support in place.

13. Support

If you have a disability, or you care for someone with a disability, and need emotional support or help with practical issues, please contact our employee assistance programme for free, confidential advice. Details of how to access this service are on [our intranet].

14. Training

We are committed to ensuring all employees recognise the importance of equal opportunities and provide training in equality and diversity to all levels of employees as part of their induction.

Managers involved in recruiting and selecting employees will also undertake training on recruitment and selection to ensure they understand their responsibilities.

We will provide training to all existing and new employees to help them understand their rights and responsibilities under the Dignity at Work policy and what they can do to help create a working environment free of bullying and harassment.

15. Children and young people placed in the care of the Company

We are committed to ensuring that all children and young people have equal worth and equal rights and a belief in each child or young person's potential.

16. Reporting Discrimination - What You Should Do

If you consider that you may have been unlawfully discriminated against, you should use our Grievance procedure to make a complaint. If the complaint involves bullying or harassment, the grievance procedure is modified and set out in the Dignity at Work policy.

If a person using the Company's services or a Contractor considers they have been unlawfully discriminated against, they should use the Company's Complaints procedure.

We will take any complaint seriously and will seek to resolve any grievance that it upholds. You will not be penalised for raising a grievance or complaint or be subjected to victimisation because of raising the grievance or complaint.

If the grievance is untrue and/or malicious, you should be aware that the Disciplinary policy could be instigated regarding your action.

We recommend that the complaint is first raised through the Grievance procedure to enable us to address the discriminatory practice and seek a resolution to the complaint.

Any employee who feels they have been subjected to discrimination may wish to resolve the matter informally in the first instance. In some cases, it may be sufficient to explain clearly to the person(s) engaged in the discriminatory conduct that the behaviour is unwelcome and that it offends or makes you uncomfortable. You should keep a record of incidents, detailing when, where, what occurred and any witnesses (if any).

Where an employee cannot resolve a complaint within a reasonable time on an informal basis, or you feel it cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then you should raise the complaint to your manager through the Grievance procedure.

17. Monitoring and review

We will monitor the ethnicity, sex, and age composition of the existing workforce and applicants for jobs (including promotion), as well as the number of people with disabilities within these groups. We will consider and take any appropriate action to address any problems that may be identified because of the monitoring process.

This policy will be monitored regularly by the Company and as necessary by the Executive People Director and the Policy and Procedures Review Group (PPRG) to ensure that it remains current and reflects the needs and practices of the Company and changes in the law.

We will monitor the ethnicity and sex composition of the existing workforce, job applicants (including promotion), and the number of people with disabilities within these groups. It will review its equal opportunities policy following the results shown by the monitoring.

The organisation treats personal data collected for reviewing equality of opportunity in recruitment and selection under its data protection policy. Information about how

data is used and the basis for processing is provided in the organisation's privacy notice issued to applicants and employees.

18. Data protection

The Five Rivers Group supports the objectives of the United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) and other legislation relating to Data Processing, including the Human Rights Act 1998, the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and the regulations that underpin our services. The Five Rivers Group has a statutory obligation to process personal data in accordance with the provisions of the United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation (UKGDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Every member of The Five Rivers Group has an obligation to ensure that the information they process (use) is collected, maintained and disclosed in accordance with the United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation (UKGDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018, the Five Rivers Group Data Protection Policy and The Five Rivers Group Data Retention Policy.

18.1 Disclosure of Information

It is a criminal offence for a person to knowingly or recklessly sell, disclose or retain personal information outside of the Five Rivers Group under section 170 DPA 2018 without a legitimate purpose and legal basis. The Five Rivers Group considers these actions unauthorised and will take all necessary action to ensure personal data is not disclosed, retained or sold without a valid legal reason including referral to the criminal investigations team of the information commissioner's office (CRIT ICO).