



# Stanway

## Parish Council

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## Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

### 1) Introduction

Stanway Parish Council is an equal opportunities employer and “public authority” as defined in the Human Rights Act 1998. We are committed to equality as defined in the Equality Act 2010 and the fundamental freedoms and rights laid out in the Human Rights Act 1998. To this end, Stanway Parish Council endeavors to provide services and follows practices which are free from unfair and unlawful discrimination.

The aim of this policy is to ensure no job applicant, member of staff, Councillor or member of the public 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. It seeks also to ensure that no person is victimised or subjected to any form of bullying or harassment. We value people as individuals with diverse opinions, cultures, lifestyles and circumstances.

### 2) Principles

All employees have a responsibility to apply good equality, diverse and inclusivity practices across our business. All employees, irrespective of their job or seniority, should familiarise themselves with this policy, and be aware of their responsibility and role in promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion and in not discriminating unfairly or harassing colleagues, job applicants or ex-employees, nor encouraging others to do so or tolerating such behaviour.

Employees are also encouraged to challenge any unacceptable behaviour should they either witness or experience it directly. Disciplinary action, including dismissal, may be taken against any employee found guilty of unfair discrimination, harassment and/or victimisation.

Employees should be aware that not only are we, as the employer, liable for any cases of discrimination or harassment that occur, but individuals may also be held personally liable for their own acts and behaviour.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that all individuals within their team/department receive fair treatment throughout the course of their employment.

We will also obtain commitments from other persons or organisations such as consultants, subcontractors or agencies that they will also comply with this policy in their dealings with us and our employees.

We fully accept our responsibilities under current legislation, but we aim to go beyond this by:

- recognising that everyone has a right to their distinctive and diverse identity
- have a workforce which generally reflects the <specify, e.g. "clients/customers/students/residents"> we serve
- understanding how ED&I can improve our ability to deliver better services
- providing services that are responsive to our <specify, eg "clients'/customers'/students'/residents"> needs
- providing all employees with the necessary training and development they need to contribute to our goals
- Ensuring we offer a supportive, open environment for all employees so that they can use their talents fully and where they are treated fairly and with dignity and respect, in an environment free from abuse or offensive behaviour, bullying or harassment or intimidation. This is regardless of any protected characteristic held, their social background or caring responsibilities they may have, or any other individual characteristic which may unfairly affect their opportunities in life.

We also recognise the benefits of helping our employees to lead a healthy work life balance, and that work life balance is unique to each individual.

Learning to work with people's differences, visible or not, enables us to work together effectively and helps us to anticipate and meet the needs of all of our <specify, eg "clients/customers/students/residents">; to recruit, retain and develop the best people; to fulfil our legal commitments; and to act responsibly in the communities of which we are a part.

### **3) Our Commitment as an Employer**

All employees are covered by this policy and it applies to all areas of employment including recruitment, selection, training, deployment, career development, performance and promotion. These areas are monitored and policies and practices are amended if necessary to ensure that no unfair or unlawful discrimination, intentional, unintentional, direct or indirect, overt or latent exists.

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 Council.

Equality of opportunity, valuing diversity and compliance with the law is to the benefit of all individuals in the Council 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 the senior management team, individuals at all levels have a responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect. The personal commitment of every employee to this policy and application of its principles are essential to eliminate discrimination and provide equality throughout the Council.

- i) To create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of our staff are

recognised and valued.

- ii) 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.
- iii) Training, development and progression opportunities are available to all staff.
- iv) Equality in the workplace is good management practice and makes sound business sense.
- v) We will review all our employment practices and procedures to ensure fairness.
- vi) Breaches of our equality and diversity policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings.
- vii) The Clerk has particular responsibility for implementing and monitoring the Equality and Diversity Policy 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

#### **4) Our Commitment as a Parish Council “Public Authority”**

We aim to provide services to which all residents, members of the public, employees, Councillors and subcontractors 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.

We will make sure that our services are delivered equitably and meet the diverse needs of our residents and members of the public by assessing and meeting the diverse needs of all end users. This includes, but is not limited to the Council Office, Council meetings in the Community Centre, Comb Meadow Burial Ground and all Stanway Parish owned and managed playgrounds and public spaces.

#### **5) Types of discrimination**

##### **Definition**

Discrimination is unfair treatment on the grounds of a “protected characteristic” (age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race (including nationality, ethnic or national origin), religion or philosophical belief, sex or sexual orientation) and it is usually against the law.

##### **Direct discrimination**

This occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic.

##### **Indirect discrimination**

This is where the application of a provision (policy), criterion or practice (PCP) is discriminatory in relation to a protected characteristic which an individual has, and:

- it is (or would be) applied equally to others who do not have that characteristic
- it puts (or would put) those who share the individual’s characteristic at a particular disadvantage to those who do not have the characteristic
- it puts (or would put) the individual at that disadvantage

- it cannot be shown that the PCP is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

### **Discrimination by association**

This is discrimination against a person because they associate with someone who possesses a protected characteristic (e.g. discrimination against an employee without a disability themselves, but who has a child with a disability).

### **Discrimination by perception**

This is discrimination against a person because the discriminator perceives the person possesses that protected characteristic, even if the perception is incorrect.

### **Harassment**

This occurs when a person is subjected to unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating their dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person. Harassment can be regarded as behaviour that is offensive, frightening or in any way distressing and it is the impact on the individual that is important. It may be intentional, obvious, or violent, but it can also be unintentional or subtle and insidious.

Forms of harassment can include, but not limited to:

- racial slurs
- personal insults
- derogatory jokes and banter
- offensive or insensitive messages (including email)
- isolation or non-cooperation and exclusion
- 'outing' someone as transgender
- asking intrusive questions about someone's gender identity or transition
- persistent and/or malicious use of the incorrect pronoun or 'deadnaming'

For further details, see our bullying and harassment policy, a copy of which is <specify location, eg "included in the Employee Handbook">.

Harassment may be persistent, or an isolated incident and can take many forms, from relatively mild 'banter' to actual physical violence.

Employees may not always realise that their behaviour constitutes bullying or harassment, but they must recognise that what is acceptable to one person may not be acceptable to another. The fact that bullying or harassment was not intended does not mean that it cannot have occurred; however, bullying or harassment will not have taken place if the claimant's perception of the conduct in question is unreasonable in all the circumstances.

The person complaining of bullying or harassment need not necessarily be the person towards which the behaviour is directed. For example, a person who overhears comments made to someone else, and who is offended by those comments, may still make a complaint of bullying or harassment.

Examples of behaviour that may constitute harassment or bullying include (but are not limited to):

- **unwanted physical conduct** - such as unnecessary touching, patting, pinching, brushing against another person's body; insulting behaviour or obscene gestures; physical threats, aggressive behaviour and/or assault.

- **unwanted verbal conduct** - such as unwelcome advances; patronising titles or nicknames; persistent and/or malicious use of the incorrect pronoun or 'deadnaming'; offensive or insulting comments; 'outing' someone as transgender; propositions or remarks; innuendo; lewd or suggestive comments; over-familiar behaviour; slogans or songs; insensitive jokes, gossip and slander (including speculation about a person's private life and sexual activities); banter or abusive/offensive language which is either threatening or refers to a person's sex/gender, race (including colour and ethnic or national origins), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, marital status or civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity or gender reassignment.
- **unwanted non-verbal conduct** - such as racially or gender based graffiti or graffiti referring to an individual's characteristics or private life; abusive or offensive gestures; leering, whistling, creation, distribution or display of suggestive or offensive pictures, objects or written materials (including "pin-up" calendars) or videos through any means.
- **bullying** - includes unwanted physical contact or assault but also verbal bullying such as insulting or threatening comments; comments intended to undermine, belittle, embarrass or humiliate the recipient; personal abuse, either in public or private, which humiliates or demeans the individual involved.
- **virtual bullying** - includes distribution of unwanted emails, texts, images or humiliating data published on social networking internet sites or abusing our technology or using the employee's own technology to contact a colleague in an intimidating or malicious manner.
- **coercion** - including threats of dismissal or loss of promotion etc for refusal of sexual (or other) favours (or promises made in return for sexual or other favours); pressure to participate in political or religious groups etc.
- **isolation or non-co-operation at work** - deliberate exclusion from communications including group emails, conversations or social activities; setting unrealistic deadlines; substituting responsible tasks with menial or trivial ones; withholding information or giving false information; constantly undervaluing effort.

Such conduct is employment related if, for example, submission to, or rejection of, the conduct is used as a basis for an employment decision; or if the conduct interferes with the affected person's work performance; or if it creates an intimidating hostile, humiliating or offensive working environment.

Bullying or harassment can be a single serious incident or persistent and repeated, continuing after the person subjected to it makes it clear that they wish it to stop.

**Third party harassment and discrimination** refers to harassment and/or discrimination of an employee by any person who is not one of our employees. Third party harassers and discriminators may include:

- customers or clients
- suppliers and
- independent contractors and consultants.

Any employee who believes that they have been the victim of third-party harassment and/or discrimination should immediately inform their manager of the incident and we will take such steps as are reasonably practicable to prevent any recurrence. For the purposes of third-party harassment or discrimination, it is immaterial whether the harasser and/or discriminator is a different person in each instance of harassment and/or discrimination.

If an employee harasses and/or discriminates against a “client”/“customer”>, supplier or an independent contractor or consultant the employee will be subject to disciplinary action.

Victimisation

**Victimisation** occurs when a person is treated less favourably because they have committed, or it is believed they may commit a "protected act". "Protected acts" include bringing legal proceedings related to discrimination against the employer or the perpetrator, or the giving of evidence at a disciplinary or grievance hearing or at tribunal, or making complaints about the perpetrator or the employer about their alleged discriminatory practices, etc.

## 6) Further guidance on unlawful discrimination

**Age** – note that this covers people of all ages and age groups, and someone’s perceived age. Age-related bands are still however permitted in the National Minimum Wage bands and when calculating statutory redundancy payments.

**Disability** - it is unlawful to treat a person with a disability unfavourably because of something ‘arising in consequence of their disability’. Reasonable adjustments (see below) must be made if these would enable the person with a disability to access any services or the ability to be employed, trained, or promoted to the same extent as a person without a disability. A person with a disability is defined as: “someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”.

- “substantial” means neither minor nor trivial
- “long term” means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least 12 months (there are specific rules covering recurring or fluctuating conditions)
- “normal day-to-day activities” include everyday things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping.

People with progressive conditions, such as HIV, cancer and multiple sclerosis, are covered from the point of diagnosis rather than from the point when the condition has some adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

**Race** – this includes colour, nationality and ethnic origin. It is unlawful to treat a person less favourably on grounds of the colour of someone’s skin, nationality or ethnic origin.

**Religion or belief** – this covers not only any religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief but also the lack of any religion or belief. A philosophical or political belief is not covered unless it is similar to a religious belief.

**Sex/Gender** – this covers all genders. However, in the field of employment, a Genuine Occupational Requirement (GOR) can be lawful if a person of a particular gender is specifically required for a job.

Sexual orientation – this covers any sexual orientation, including gay, heterosexual and bisexual.

Gender reassignment – an employee is protected from discrimination on the grounds of gender reassignment if they are proposing to undergo a process or part of a process, are currently undergoing a process or part of a process or have undergone a process or part of a process. Furthermore, employees who choose to not undergo medical procedures when transitioning will also be protected.

**Part-time workers** – a part-time worker is defined as someone who is ‘not identifiable as a full-time worker’. Part-time workers are entitled to be treated on the same basis and are entitled to the same benefits, pro-rata, as their full-time colleagues.

**Fixed-term employees** - a ‘fixed-term employee’ is one with a contract of employment which is due to end when a specified date is reached, a specified event does or does not happen or a specified task has been completed. It is unlawful to treat a fixed-term employee less favourably than a comparable permanent employee, unless this is objectively justifiable. The use of successive fixed term contracts for any individual is limited to four years.

**Equal pay** - individuals should receive equal pay for work of equal value where work is the same or rated as equivalent regardless of the hours worked or their gender.

**Genuine Occupational Requirement (GOR)** - in very limited circumstances it will be lawful to treat people differently if it is a genuine occupational requirement that the job holder must possess a particular protected characteristic. When deciding if this applies, we will consider the nature of the work and the context in which it is carried out.

## 7) Responsibilities

### **Managers' responsibility**

The <specify job titles> have overall responsibility for ensuring the implementation of this policy. As employers, we are liable for the actions of our employees and workers and therefore all our managers, supervisors and team leaders are responsible for the successful implementation of this policy within their own departments and should take steps to ensure that people working for them understand and follow this policy.

### **Employees' responsibility**

All our employees are required to comply with this policy, together with our associated policies (see below).

Any employee who witnesses behaviour or decisions that seem to be contrary to this policy should challenge these or raise the issue with <specify whom, eg “their manager or a member of the HR team”>.

## 8) The working environment

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that our working environment does not prevent people from taking up positions for which they are suitably qualified. This may include physical adaptations or more flexible ways of working, including home working (where appropriate and practical).

We also encourage the participation of all employees to ensure that, wherever possible, our employment practices recognise and meet their needs and will involve our staff in determining what can be done to make sure they develop and use their abilities at work.

## 9) Employment policies

Our employment policies and procedures will be continually reviewed to ensure compliance with this policy, to reflect current best practice and to remove barriers experienced by members of disadvantaged social groups in seeking employment with us and working for us.

## 10) Equal Opportunity Policy Statements

Stanway Parish Council has clear procedures that enable members of the public, candidates for jobs and employees to raise a grievance or make a complaint if they feel they have been unfairly treated.

This policy is fully supported by the senior management team and will be monitored and reviewed annually.

This policy identifies protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010. These characteristics include, but are not limited to the following:-

### 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; and
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about younger and older people.

### 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; and
- seek to continue to improve access to information by ensuring availability of: loop systems; Braille facilities; alternative formatting; and sign language interpretation.

### RACE

We will:

- challenge racism wherever it occurs;
- respond swiftly and sensitively to racists incidents; and
- actively promote race equality in the Council.

### 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; and
- provide support to prevent discrimination against transsexual people who have or who are about to undergo gender reassignment.

## **SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

We will:

- ensure that we take account of the needs of lesbians and gay men; and
- promote positive images of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals.

## **RELIGION OR BELIEF**

We will:

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

## **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
- ensure that no individual is disadvantaged and that we take account of the needs of our employees' pregnancy or maternity.

## **MARRIAGE OR CIVIL PARTNERSHIP**

We will:

- Ensure that people are treated with respect and dignity and that a positive image is promoted regardless of marriage or civil partnership;
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about the marriage or civil partnership of our employees; and
- ensure that no individual is disadvantaged and that we take account of the needs of our employees' marriage or civil partnership.

## **EX-OFFENDERS**

We will:

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

## **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

## 11) Reasonable adjustments for those with a disability

All employers have a duty to consider and make reasonable adjustments to facilitate the employment of a person with a disability. These may include:

- making adjustments to premises
- re-allocating some of an employee's duties
- transferring an employee to a role better suited to their ability
- relocating an employee to a more suitable office or location
- giving an employee time off work for medical treatment or rehabilitation
- providing training or mentoring for an employee
- supplying or modifying equipment, instruction and training manuals for an employee.

We will consider and make any other reasonable adjustment to the employment arrangements or our premises if these substantially disadvantage an employee / applicant with a disability. However, a number of factors will be taken into account in deciding if it is reasonable to make any changes. These include:

- the extent to which an alteration will improve the situation for the employee / applicant with a disability
- how easy it is to make the change
- the cost of the measure, both financially and in terms of the disruption it will cause
- our resources
- any financial or other help that may be available.

If an employee has a disability, or becomes disabled during the course of their employment, and feels that any such adjustments are appropriate, they should discuss this with <specify whom, eg "their manager"> in the first instance.

## 12) Gender reassignment

Transgender or 'trans' is an umbrella term for somebody who experiences gender incongruence, gender diversity or gender dysphoria, meaning they do not align to the sex they were assigned at birth. It includes someone who:

- intends to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment
- identifies that their gender is not the one assigned at birth. This is both someone who is planning, or has had medical interventions, as well as someone who does not plan or has not had medical interventions
- is non-binary, meaning they do not solely consider themselves to be male or female. They may or may not have had medical interventions to align their body with their non-binary gender identity.

The company will support employees who inform us of their intention to transition by working them to create their own personal transition plan. We are mindful that for someone who is transitioning,

there will be many practical steps that will need considering to help them through it. We also respect that our discussions with the employee are best when they are led by the employee themselves. We support their personal choices in how they wish to manage their transition within the workplace and both the employee, and their line manager will jointly agree the support measures and practical actions that may be needed.

Please refer to our Trans and Gender Equality Policy for further guidance and information.

### **13) Recruitment and promotion**

Our recruitment and promotion process must result in the selection of the most suitable person for the job, whether this on a full-time, part-time, casual, temporary, seasonal or contract basis. Our focus is on the skills, abilities, qualifications, aptitude, and potential of individuals to do their jobs.

Our recruitment procedures are kept under review and are developed as necessary so that we can continue to encourage applications from, and the employment of people from a range of backgrounds.

We aim to ensure that our recruitment practices are free from unlawful discriminatory criteria. Questions relating to a protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race (including nationality, ethnic or national origin), religion or philosophical belief, sex or sexual orientation), but also current or future family responsibilities, or unrelated criminal convictions will not form part of our selection process (unless a Genuine Occupational Requirement applies to the vacant role, or such questions are directly relevant to assessing a candidate's experience of the duties of the particular vacancy).

Job descriptions will properly reflect the responsibilities of the jobholder and person specifications will include only requirements that are necessary and justifiable for the effective performance of the job.

All adverts will be carefully worded to ensure that no intent of either direct or indirect discrimination is interpreted nor is there indication of stereotyping of roles. They will normally state "We are an equal opportunity employer and value diversity and inclusion". When advertising a position which has traditionally been done by one gender, adverts should specify they are open to all genders.

We will ensure that our job adverts encourage applications from all suitably qualified and experienced people, through either internal and/or external advertising.

We will provide full and fair consideration for all job applicants, based on merit and ability. All managers involved in recruitment will be trained appropriately.

Selection criteria and procedures are intended to ensure that individuals are selected, promoted, and treated based on their individual relevant merit, ability, and suitability for the post. Membership of an under-represented group will not influence the appointment. Shortlisting and interviewing will

normally be carried out by more than one person, to minimise the risk of conscious or unconscious bias.

The selection process will be carried out consistently for all jobs at all levels and will be fair and non-discriminatory. Interviews will be undertaken with an unbiased approach towards candidates and only questions which relate to the job, and which are non-discriminatory will be asked. Questions about marriage plans; family intentions; religious or political commitments: "(unless a Genuine Occupational Requirement applies to the vacant role)">; caring responsibilities <optional: "(unless such questions are directly relevant to assessing a candidate's experience of the duties of the particular vacancy)">; intention to join our pension scheme or to opt out; or about any other issues which may give rise to suspicions of unlawful discrimination should not be asked.

Procedures for testing or assessment will be reviewed so as not to disadvantage any applicant and will be specifically related to the job and measure an individual's actual, or inherent, ability to do or train for the job.

We will ensure that other opportunities such as work experience and apprenticeships that we may offer, are open to people from a wide range of backgrounds and we will work to create good education/industrial links to encourage a broad range of applicants.

#### **14) Terms and conditions of employment**

We will ensure that all our employment policies including compensation, benefits and any other relevant issues associated with terms and conditions of employment, are formulated, and applied in such a way as to remove/minimise any discrimination on the grounds of a protected characteristic or indeed any other characteristic unrelated to the performance of the job.

These will be reviewed regularly to ensure there is no discrimination. Length of service as a qualifying criterion for additional or improved benefits will not exceed five years unless clearly justifiable.

Employees will not be subjected to any detriment if they wish to join our pension scheme, nor will they be offered any inducement not to do so. This would include refusing promotion or training to someone who decided not to opt-out, or refusing or reducing a pay increase if it would bring the worker within the band of earnings that would make them eligible for auto-enrolment etc.

#### **15) Training and diversity awareness**

We are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity in terms of access to training to increase employees' knowledge and skills and to provide them with opportunities to develop their potential. All employees are encouraged to discuss their career prospects and training needs with their manager on a regular basis. Opportunities for promotion and training will be communicated and made available to everyone on a fair and equal basis.

The provision of training will be reviewed to ensure that part-time workers, shift or remote workers or those returning to work following a break are able to benefit from training.

It is our policy not to unfairly discriminate in the provision of training. No age limits apply for entry to training or development schemes - these are open to all employees.

We will ensure that this aim is implemented through:

- continuous review and updating of training courses and literature
- ensuring training materials are free from bias and do not discriminate, e.g., by showing Minority Groups or people with a disability in lower skilled roles only
- ensuring promotion and transfer criteria are justifiable
- ensuring assessment criteria is transparent and unbiased
- ensuring staff conducting appraisal interviews, salary reviews and bonus reviews are aware of their obligations to carry these out fairly and consistently in line with this policy.

Appropriate training will be provided to enable staff to perform their jobs effectively.

Induction training will be tailored to individual needs but will in all cases include awareness of our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion policy and how it applies to individuals. We will then continue to take specific steps to raise awareness of ED&I throughout employment and within the business.

We will ensure that those involved in our recruitment and selection process are provided with ED&I training.

Any information produced will be developed and disseminated in ways which bring diversity issues to the attention of all employees and those who have dealings with our business. A wide range of cultures will be displayed and celebrated in our publicity material.

## **16) Career development, training, and redeployment**

We recognise that our ability to meet our residents diverse needs is improved by having a workforce which has the range of skills and understanding to achieve our objectives. We will take all appropriate steps to ensure that all employees receive fair consideration of their training and development needs and promotion opportunities to enable them to develop their full potential within our business. Standard training modules, reference manuals and training materials will be updated where necessary.

Any employees whose circumstances change whilst employed by us (for example, who become disabled, who take family leave, or who face new caring responsibilities) will be given full support to maintain or return to a job appropriate to their experience and abilities.

## **17) Flexible and hybrid working**

We will consider any requests for flexible and hybrid working in a way which aims to balance the needs of the individual and our business. For further details, see our flexible working policy [optional

and our Hybrid Working Policy], a copy of which is <specify location, eg “included in the Employee Handbook”.

## **18) Retirement**

We have no fixed retirement age and anyone who wishes to work beyond State Pension Age may choose to do so. <or> We have an Employer Justified Retirement Age (EJRA) of <specify age> for the following groups of staff: <specify>. No fixed retirement age applies to other staff and anyone who wishes to work beyond State Pension Age may choose to do so.

## **19) References**

It is our policy not to provide references for any employees. <or>We will not discriminate against individuals who have left our organisation, either by failing to provide references that are based on accurate, factual information or by failing to provide a reference when we would normally do so.

## **20) Involvement**

We encourage the participation of all employees to ensure that, wherever possible, our employment practices recognise and meet their needs and will involve our staff in determining what can be done to make sure they develop and use their abilities at work.

The company’s [insert name of an ED&I working group] ensures that employees across the business can contribute to building and maintaining an equal, diverse and inclusive workplace culture. Employees can apply to join this working group by contacting [insert job title].

## **21) Positive action**

We may decide to provide specific training or development opportunities aimed at under-represented groups to enable them to compete equally for job opportunities, and we will do this wherever we feel it may be necessary to promote our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy.

Positive discrimination (selecting a candidate purely on grounds of membership of a minority group) is unlawful (except for employees on maternity leave or at risk of redundancy, where special rules apply). However, in exceptional and limited circumstances, employers are permitted to take positive action in favour of under-represented groups in the workforce, but this is only when choosing between candidates who are otherwise equally qualified.

## **22) Complaints**

Harassment, discrimination, and bullying will not be tolerated. We recognise that making a complaint can be embarrassing and stressful. Sometimes the complainant simply wants the conduct or behaviour to stop and sometimes they want stronger action to be taken and therefore to take account of this we offer various routes of action.

When dealing with general disciplinary matters, care is to be taken that employees or workers who have, are perceived to have, or are associated with someone who has, a protected characteristic, are not dismissed or disciplined for performance or behaviour which could be overlooked or condoned in other employees or workers.

Employees who believe they have either been discriminated against or have witnessed discrimination, should bring this to our attention as soon as possible, either informally or formally in accordance with our grievance procedure or bullying and harassment policy and procedure. An employee who, in good faith, brings a complaint of discrimination must not be victimised or less favourably treated as a result. (However, false allegations that are found to have been made in bad faith will be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure.)

### **23) Breach of this policy**

Any employee who feels they have been treated in a manner contrary to this policy should raise this either formally through the grievance procedure, or informally with <specify ,eg “a senior manager, or a member of the HR team”>.

Any breaches of this policy by employees will be fully investigated and may lead to disciplinary action.