



Equal Opportunities Policy

INTRODUCTION

The Synergy Group believes in the principles of social justice and the active promotion of genuine equal opportunity for all and has committed itself to a policy of equality of opportunity, not only in its employment, working and personnel practices, but also in all the services for which it is responsible.

To ensure that this commitment becomes a reality, The Synergy Group adopts a programme of action that seeks to eliminate unlawful and unfair discrimination and promotes positive action to overcome the effects of discrimination. The Synergy Group believes that the implementation of this Policy and its associated Codes of Practice will maximise the effective use of human resources and efficient delivery of services.

Although the overall responsibility for achieving, promoting and providing equality of opportunity rests with the employer employees at every level have a responsibility to own and promote the Policy.

This document, therefore, outlines The Synergy Group's Equal Opportunities in Employment Policy, the obligations under existing legislation and its intention to abide by and comply, not only with the requirements, but also the spirit of the legislation.

Although a written policy is no guarantee for action, it indicates The Synergy Group's commitment to Equal Opportunity. This written policy aims to:

- ensure that all The Synergy Group employees are aware of the existence of the Policy, its aims and objectives and their role in its implementation;
- ensure that all existing and potential employees and users of services are aware of their rights and responsibilities under the law and in respect of The Synergy Group's Equal Opportunities Policy;
- provide the necessary encouragement and guidance to employees to implement the Policy.



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN RECRUITMENT AND EMPLOYMENT POLICY STATEMENT

All candidates and temporary workers will be assessed, interviewed (where applicable) and submitted to clients of The Synergy Group on the basis of their ability and merits and according to the requirements of the vacancy or assignment. No one will be disadvantaged by any condition or requirement, which is not justified by the genuine needs of the job.

It is the intention of The Synergy Group's recruitment and selection procedure to advertise vacancies that exists and all individuals to be given the opportunity to apply for them. The selection process is vital to ensure that a structured and common approach is followed for all candidates incorporating objective and job related criteria of assessment. The Synergy Group will ensure that decisions taken in respect of recruitment and selection are not discriminatory.

The Synergy Group will ensure that all existing and potential employees, all candidates and temporary workers will not be discriminated against on the grounds of gender, trans-gender status, race, disability, colour, ethnic and national origin, nationality, marital status, civil partnership status, pregnancy, responsibility for dependants, religion, belief, sexual orientation, trade union activity and age.

THE LEGISLATION OUTLINED

The relevant Acts of Parliament are:

Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (including amendments of 2005):

This Act makes it unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly on the grounds of gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity leave, marital status or civil partnerships, or to apply requirements or conditions which have a disproportionately disadvantageous effect on people where these cannot be justified. It also applies to discriminatory employment advertising and makes it unlawful to apply pressure to discriminate or to aid discrimination by another person.

Equal Pay Act 1970 (incorporating amendments of 1983):

The Equal Pay Act 1970 provides the right of women and men to equal treatment in relation to contractual terms and conditions of employment when they are employed on the same or broadly similar work, or on work that though different, is of equal value.

Race Relations Act 1976 (Amended):

This Act makes it unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly on the grounds of colour, race, nationality (including citizenship), or ethnic or national origin, or to apply requirements or conditions which have a disproportionately disadvantageous effect on people of a particular racial group and which cannot be justified on non-racial grounds. The law covers people from all racial groups, including white people. In 2000, the Act was amended and now includes public functions not previously covered, even if those functions are carried out by a private business. It also applies to discriminatory employment advertising and makes it unlawful to apply pressure to discriminate or to aid discrimination by another person.

The Employment Equality Regulations 2003 (including amendments of 2006)

The Groups recruitment and selection procedures, as well as employment practices – such as dress codes and disciplinary procedures will treat everyone the same regardless of religion, belief or their sexual orientation.

The regulations:

- Religion or Belief
Protecting individuals from discrimination on the grounds of all religion or belief or philosophical belief.
- Sexual Orientation
Protecting individuals from discrimination on grounds connected with sexual orientation – including 'orientation towards someone of the same sex (gay or lesbian), opposite sex (heterosexual) or both sexes (bisexual).

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006

These regulations prohibit discrimination and harassment on ground of age in employment.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995:

This Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against a disabled person for a reason which relates to the disabled persons disability in respect of selection arrangements, recruitment, promotion, training, terms of employment, benefits, working conditions, dismissals and other detriments.

Definition of Disability within the DDA:

- Physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities.
- Long term illnesses – lasting 12 months or more are included.
- Progressive conditions covered.
- Registered disabled automatically included.
- Covers disability controlled by medication.
- Covers mental and physical disabilities.

This revised 1995 Act repealed parts of the 1944 Act e.g. the quota system no longer applies and disabled people are no longer required to register their disability.

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974:

This Act provides that if a convicted person completes a specified period without being convicted of further offences, the conviction can be regarded as 'spent'. These sentences then do not have to be revealed and may not be used as grounds for exclusion from employment or promotion. (Certain occupations are exempted).

Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1992/Employment Rights Act 1996/Employment Relations Act 1999):

This Act makes it unlawful to refuse employment, dismiss or discriminate in terms of pay, promotion, transfer or opportunities for training because of an individual's membership or non membership of a trade union or to subject them to any detriment relating to their trade union activities.

It is prohibited to compile, disseminate and use lists recording individual's trade union memberships and activities with a view to discriminating in recruitment or in employment (no blacklisting).

It is unlawful to discriminate against an individual by excluding, rejecting or dismissing from employment that person because of their trade union membership, non-membership or activities.

Direct Discrimination

Results from treating a person less favourably on the grounds of gender, trans-gender status, race, disability, colour, ethnic and national origin, nationality, marital status, civil partnership status, pregnancy, responsibility for dependants, religion, belief, sexual orientation, trade union activity and age.

Indirect Discrimination

Results from setting an unnecessary condition or requirement that result in fewer people in minority groups being able to comply with that condition or requirement. Indirect discrimination can be intentional or unintentional; it is not the motive behind the condition but the effect that the condition has on opportunities for all persons.

Victimisation

Occurs if a person is given less favourable treatment than others, because she/he has exercised her/his rights under the policy or the relevant legislation.

Harassment

Is defined as any behaviour, deliberate or otherwise, directed at an individual, that is found to be offensive or objectionable to the recipient and that might threaten an employee's job security or create an intimidating environment.

Genuine Occupational Qualification - (GOQ)

These are the only limited exceptions to the rule of no discrimination and allow The Synergy Group to specify race or sex where there is a genuine occupational qualification for the position.

For example:

- where considerations of decency or privacy require the job to be held by a man or woman e.g. a female attendant in a ladies toilet;
- for reasons of authenticity e.g. employing a black person to play the part of a black character in the theatre or television or films.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE LEGISLATION TO THE SYNERGY GROUP AND ITS EMPLOYEES

Acts of discrimination are declared unlawful, and harassment on grounds of sex, trans-gender status, race, religion, belief, sexual orientation, age or disability can constitute a criminal offence under the relevant anti-discrimination statutes and may result in imprisonment. Both The Synergy Group and its employees could be rendered liable to legal proceedings for contravening these legal requirements.

The Synergy Group will take the necessary steps to prevent any acts of discrimination. However if an employee is responsible for any acts of discrimination they may find themselves liable for that unlawful act. This applies principally to the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. It is essential therefore that all people bound by this Policy are aware of their obligations under the law, as ignorance is not a defence.

PROGRAMME OF ACTION

Advertising, Recruitment and Selection

It is unlawful to advertise anywhere or anything that indicates an intention to discriminate on the grounds of gender, trans-gender status, race, disability, colour, ethnic and national origin, nationality, marital status, civil partnership status, pregnancy, responsibility for dependants, religion, belief, sexual orientation, trade union activity and age.



The Synergy Group will ensure that the criteria for selection and progression are determined solely on the basis of the requirements of the position.

Individuals will be selected and appointed solely on the basis of their relevant, assessable experience and abilities.

Training and Development

The Synergy Group will provide the training required to implement this Equal Opportunities Policy.

The Synergy Group will ensure that all employees will have equal and direct access to training and development opportunities regardless of their gender, trans-gender status, race, disability, colour, ethnic and national origin, nationality, marital status, civil partnership status, pregnancy, responsibility for dependants, religion, belief, sexual orientation, trade union activity and age.

Grievance

The Synergy Group will ensure that all individuals are aware of the grievance procedure for internal and external vacancies in the event that they consider they have been discriminated against in the recruitment and selection process.

The Synergy Group will treat seriously and take prompt action on any employee grievance concerning discrimination, victimisation or harassment.

Discipline

The Synergy Group take seriously acts of discrimination, victimisation and harassment as defined in this document committed by employees of the organisation whether this be against another employee, candidate, temporary worker or client. If a complaint is received this will be fully investigated and will result in disciplinary action where appropriate.

DIVERSITY

The Synergy Group believes in the principles of and is committed to the promotion of equality and diversity in all areas not only in its employment, working and personnel practices, but also in all the services for which it is responsible.

The success of any business depends upon its employees. By recruiting and developing staff from all backgrounds and sexes we can ensure that we gain an insight into different markets and generate better ideas and prospects to meet both the needs of our customers and our business. The Synergy Group welcomes and supports this vision and continues to challenge behaviours and attitudes that prevent it from achieving this. Using fair and objective employment practices our aim is to ensure that:

- All future and current employees are treated fairly.
- All employees work in an environment free from harassment and bullying or any type of unwanted behaviour, whether based on gender, trans-gender



status, race, disability, colour, ethnic and national origin, nationality, marital status, civil partnership status, pregnancy, religion, belief, and age.

- All employees have an equal opportunity to fulfil their career full potential.

The Synergy Group's recruitment policy aims to ensure that its workforce reflects the diversity of the communities in which we work.

Gender

Women and men are represented and rewarded for their contribution at all levels of the business through:

- Challenging gender stereotypes
- Supporting employees in balancing their life at work and at home
- Supporting employees who become pregnant and working with them to facilitate their return to work after their maternity leave.

Marital Status

All employees are treated fairly and equally in the workplace irrespective of their marital, civil partnership or family status.

Race

We aim to ensure that the racial and cultural diversity of our communities is represented at all levels of the Group through:

- Challenging racial stereotypes
- Understanding, respecting and valuing different racial and cultural backgrounds and views.

Disability

The abilities of disabled people will be recognised and valued at all levels of the Group through:

- Challenging stereotypes about people with disabilities
- Focusing on what the employee can do
- Making appropriate adjustments in the workplace to assist employees with disabilities achieve their full potential

Age

Age diversity within the workforce is promoted and valued through:

- Challenging age stereotyping



- Recognising the benefit of a mixed age workforce

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

The Synergy Group will ensure that its Equal Opportunities Policy is implemented at all levels and all locations within the Group.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J Fraser", with a long, sweeping underline.

Signed – Julia Fraser
Position – Managing Director