

Equal Opportunity Policy

Introduction

South West Group is committed to building an organisation that makes full use of the talents, skills, experience, and different cultural perspectives available in a multi-ethnic society, and where people feel they are respected and valued, and can achieve their potential regardless of race, colour, nationality, national or ethnic origins.

South West Group will follow the recommendations of the CRE's statutory *Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Employment* in all its employment policies, procedures and practices.

This policy applies to all aspects of employment, from recruitment to dismissal and former workers' rights.

The aims of this policy are to ensure that:

- No one receives less favourable treatment, on grounds of race, colour, nationality, or ethnic or national origins, or is disadvantaged by any conditions, requirements, provisions, criteria, procedures or practices that cannot be justified on non-racial grounds, or victimised for taking action against racial discrimination or harassment, or instructed or put under pressure to discriminate against, or harass, someone on racial grounds;
- The organisation is free of unwanted conduct that violates the dignity of workers or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, offensive or humiliating environment;
- Opportunities for employment, training and promotion are equally open to candidates from all racial groups; and
- Selection for employment, promotion, transfer and training, and access to benefits, facilities and services, will be fair and equitable, and based solely on merit.

We will take the following steps to put the policy into practice and make sure it is achieving its ends:

- The policy will be a priority for the organisation.
- Alister Pook, Director, will be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the policy.
- The policy will be communicated to all workers and job applicants, and will be placed on the organisation's intranet, share drives and website.
- Workers and their representatives and trade unions will be consulted regularly about the policy, and about related action plans and strategies.
- All workers will be trained on the policy; on their rights and responsibilities under the policy, and on how the policy will affect the way they carry out their duties. No one will be in any doubt about what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable conduct in the organisation.

Equal Opportunity Policy (cont.)

We will take the following steps to put the policy into practice and make sure it is achieving its ends (cont.):

- Managers and workers in key decision-making areas will be trained on the discriminatory effects that provisions, practices, requirements, conditions, and criteria can have on some racial groups, and the importance of being able to justify decisions to apply them.
- Complaints about racial discrimination or harassment in the course of employment will be regarded seriously, and may result in disciplinary sanctions, and even dismissal. The complaints procedure will be published in a form that is easily accessible.
- Opportunities for employment, promotion, transfer and training will be advertised widely, internally and externally, and all applicants will be welcomed, irrespective of race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins.
- All workers will be encouraged to develop their skills and qualifications, and to take advantage of promotion and development opportunities in the organisation.
- Selection criteria will be entirely related to the job or training opportunity.
- Information on the ethnic and racial backgrounds of workers and applicants for employment, promotion and training will be collected and analysed, to monitor each stage of the recruitment process. The information will be held in strictest confidence and will only be used to promote equality of opportunity and prevent unlawful racial discrimination.
- If the data show that people from a particular racial group are under-represented in particular areas of work, lawful positive action training and encouragement will be considered for workers and others from that group, to improve their chances of applying successfully for vacancies in these areas.
- Grievances, disciplinary action, performance assessment, and terminations of employment, for whatever reason, will also be monitored by racial group.
- Requirements, conditions, provisions, criteria and practices will be reviewed regularly, in the light of the monitoring results, and revised, if they are found to, or might, discriminate unlawfully on racial grounds.
- All contracts between South West Group and contractors to supply goods, materials or services will include a clause prohibiting unlawful racial discrimination or harassment by contractors and their staff, and by any sub-contractors and their staff. The clause will also encourage contractors and potential contractors to provide equality of opportunity in their employment practices.
- An equal opportunities action plan will be drawn up, with racial equality targets and timetables, to show what steps the organisation plans to take to achieve equality of opportunity.
- The effectiveness of the policy and the plan will be monitored regularly. A report on progress will be produced each year, and published via the intranet, the website, the staff newsletter, notice boards, and the annual report.
- Customers and clients will be made aware of the policy, and of their right to fair and equal treatment, irrespective of race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins.

Equal Opportunity Policy (cont.)

Endorsement

*This policy has been endorsed by Alister Pook and has the full support of the management/board.
The policy was approved on 11th March 2011, following consultation with senior managers, workers,
workers' representatives and trade unions.*

Overall responsibility for the effectiveness of this policy lies with Alister Pook.

*All staff are responsible for familiarising themselves with this policy. Managers must also make sure their
workers know about, and follow, the policy.*

For further information, please contact Alister Pook.