

Equal Opportunities Policy

The A1 Group aims to be an equal opportunities employer and set out below is its policy for this purpose.

This policy covers all aspects of employment, from vacancy advertising (internally and externally), selection, recruitment and training to all conditions of service and reasons for termination of employment.

The A1 Group does not and will not discriminate on the basis of race, religion or similar belief, colour, nationality, national or ethnic origin, sex, marital or family status, sexual orientation, sex change status, age, disability or against employees working on a fixed term or part time basis.

All dealings with colleagues, customers and suppliers must be conducted in a proper and appropriate manner. We are committed to the law and to the practice and promotion of equal opportunity in each and every aspect of employment. All employees are urged to comply with this policy. Breach of this policy is a disciplinary offence which will be investigated and dealt with in accordance with the A1 Group Disciplinary Policy. The disciplinary action taken will depend upon the breach but can include summary (instant) dismissal in serious cases.

If you wish to complain about a breach of this policy there are two avenues available to you:

Informal

If you believe that this policy has been breached, you should either discuss it with your Departmental Director or the HR Consultant who will investigate the issue in confidence.

Formal

If the policy is still not observed, or if an informal approach is not appropriate, you should make a Formal complaint to your Departmental Director, by utilising the A1 Group Grievance Procedure. If it is not appropriate to bring it to their attention in this way you should approach the HR Consultant. Once a formal complaint has been made, an investigation will be made by the A1 Group.

Strict confidentiality will be observed and where witnesses are interviewed, they will be requested to keep the matter confidential. Those conducting the investigation will not be connected with the allegations and will make every effort to conduct the investigation speedily. The complainant and those alleged to have breached the policy will have the right to be accompanied to any interviews by a colleague during the investigation and the person(s) alleged to have breached the policy will be given full details of the nature of the complaint and the opportunity to respond.

The A1 Group may decide to suspend the person(s) alleged to have breached the policy on full pay during the investigation or temporarily transfer him or her away from the complainant.

Disciplinary action will be taken against any employee who is found to have breached this policy. Disciplinary action may include instant dismissal for serious or repeated breaches of this policy. In other cases, it may include a formal warning. Disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the A1 Group Disciplinary Policy and this policy.

If, when upholding a complaint, the A1 Group determines that it is necessary and practicable to relocate one of the parties, wherever practicable the complainant shall be given the opportunity to decide whether they would like to remain in their location or move.

Where a breach is found to have occurred, the A1 Group will monitor the situation to ensure that the breach does not continue. It is also a disciplinary offence to victimise or retaliate against an employee who has complained in good faith about a breach of this policy. Further, it is a disciplinary offence to make malicious or vexatious allegations under this policy.

Legislative Background

Under Equality Act 2010 it is unlawful to:

- Discriminate directly against anyone and treat him/her less favourably than others on the grounds of the protected characteristics of: age (unless this can be justified as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim), disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion and belief (including lack of belief), sex, sexual orientation and pregnancy or maternity. This also includes discrimination based on perception of the person e.g. a belief that someone is gay or a belief that someone is disabled even if this is not actually true.
- Discriminate against someone for reasons relating to their association with a person on the grounds of the protected characteristics of race, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, disability, gender reassignment, sex, pregnancy or maternity and e.g. discriminating against an employee/student because they have a disabled dependant.
- Discriminate indirectly against anyone by applying a criterion, provision or practice which disadvantages people with a protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion and belief (including lack of belief), sex, sexual orientation and pregnancy or maternity) unless the person applying the provision can justify it as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- Subject someone to harassment for reasons relating to age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion and belief (including lack of belief), sex, sexual orientation and pregnancy or maternity. This includes behaviour that an individual finds offensive on these grounds even if the behaviour is not directed at the individual. It also includes failure of an employer to take reasonable steps to protect an employee from persistent (3 occasions or more) third party harassment.
- Victimise someone because s/he has made, or intends to make, a complaint or allegation or has given or intends to give evidence in relation to a complaint of discrimination in line with the Equality Act.

Types of discrimination (protected Characteristics)

Our Policy in accordance with The 2010 Act also extends some of these protections to characteristics that previously were not covered by equality legislation. Employers and business owners now need to be aware of the **NINE different types of discrimination under the new legislation.**

These are:

- Age
- Gender reassignment
- Being married or in a civil partnership
- Being pregnant or on maternity leave
- Disability
- Race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

These are called 'protected characteristics' and you're protected from discrimination:

- At work
- In education
- As a consumer
- When using public services
- When buying or renting property
- As a member or guest of a private club or association

Objectives:

The aim of this policy is to ensure that in carrying out its activities the A1 Group will have due regard to:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Advancing equality of opportunity, across all the activities of the business between different groups.
- Fostering good relations between people of a diverse background.

In the implementation of this policy the A1 Group will aim:

- To develop and promote a culture of equality and diversity throughout the institution.
- To develop and promote a culture of dignity, courtesy and respect.
- To support all staff and students, including provision of relevant support relating to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief (including lack of belief), sex and sexual orientation.
- To work to prevent all forms of unlawful discrimination.
- To deal with all forms of discrimination consistently and effectively.
- To ensure that the Equal Opportunities policy influences and informs the culture of the A1 Group Limited

Definitions:

Equal opportunities: refers to the elimination of unlawful and unfair direct and indirect discrimination of particular groups and promoting equal access, treatment and outcomes that take into account specific needs of individuals.

Diversity: encompasses visible and non-visible individual differences that includes, but is not limited to, differences protected by anti-discrimination legislation. Appreciating diversity is about valuing differences and recognising that everyone through their unique mixture of skills and experience has their own valuable contribution to make.

Roles and Responsibilities:

It is incumbent upon all members of the business community to behave with dignity, courtesy and respect and to act in a manner that does not unlawfully discriminate at all times. The Managing Director has overall responsibility for implementation of the policy in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Role of Staff

- Actively to encourage non-discriminatory practices and to report any incidences of behaviour that fail to comply with this policy.
- To support the aims of the A1 Group's Equal Opportunities and Limited and Equality and Diversity policy.
- To undertake appropriate equality and diversity training.

Role of Human Resources

- To provide appropriate equality and diversity awareness and training for all staff.
- To ensure that recruitment advertising, selection and appointment procedures, performance management processes and disciplinary grievance processes are fair and transparent and are consistently applied.
- To monitor employment equality data, monitoring activity, as appropriate.
- To ensure that all members of staff receive the appropriate equality and diversity training.
- To investigate all matters of alleged discrimination, harassment and inappropriate behaviour promptly and thoroughly.
- To ensure that selection and appointment procedures, performance management processes, staff development opportunities and disciplinary and grievance processes are fairly and consistently applied to all staff.
- To treat all applications for flexible practices on a fair and equitable basis and to provide reasonable and objective reasons when such requests must be refused.
- To advise on the provision of appropriate training and awareness-raising in relation to all equal opportunities and diversity matters.
- To provide leadership in the operation and implementation of the Equality and Diversity policy and to monitor and improve the policy and procedures.

Application of the Policy: Staff

Recruitment and Selection

- Recruitment advertising will encourage applications from all sectors of the community reflecting the A1 Groups commitment to equality and diversity.
- Recruitment advertising will appear in publications appropriate to the audience capable of producing the best candidates (subject to budget considerations).
- Job descriptions, person specifications and recruitment advertisements will be written on the basis of the essential and justifiable requirements of the position.
- Short listing, appointment and rejection decisions will be transparent and justifiable and will be supported by written comments.

Grading and Promotion

- All grading and promotions criteria and procedures will be free from prejudice and must be applied equitably and consistently.

Staff Development

- All staff will have equal access to induction, personal and career development opportunities and facilities.

Performance Management

- Probation and appraisal procedures will be clear and transparent and will be applied fairly across all staff.

Discipline and Grievance

- Disciplinary and grievance procedures will be applied fairly and transparently for all staff.
- Allegations of discrimination, harassment or inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with under the appropriate disciplinary procedures for staff.

Training

Equality and diversity awareness raising and training will be mandatory for all staff. Information will be provided to all students in order to raise awareness of equality and diversity and the contents of this policy.

Communication

This policy will normally be available at any A1 Group's offices. It will also be available in printed form on request and, if requested, will be made available in different formats (e.g. large print, audio). Anyone requiring a copy of the policy in another language should contact the A1 Group to discuss their requirements.

Confidentiality

Any information disclosed to the A1 Group in relation Equal Opportunities, equality and diversity issues will be kept strictly confidential in accordance with legislative requirements.

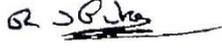
Breach of Policy

Contravention of the Equal Opportunities and Equality and Diversity policy will be treated as a disciplinary matter and offenders will be dealt with under the A1 Group's Disciplinary policy for staff.

Revision

The Company will make all employees aware of this Company Policy.

Signed:



Date: 1/1/24

Russell Pike - **Managing Director A1 Group**

Next Review date 1st January 2025