Equality & Diversity Policy

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1. Policy

This policy is designed to implement the commitment of MAST to equal opportunities and diversity. It is the responsibility of every employee to ensure his or her own conduct conforms to the expected standards and reflects these policy statements.

2. Scope

The aim of this is to encourage harmony and respect amongst individuals so as to promote good working practices with a view to maximising the performance and employee well-being.

If equal opportunities are not applied then valuable talent and potential are wasted. When discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation takes place, they bring about a climate of fear, insecurity and poor work performance. As well as being unlawful it affects profitability and morale. It is therefore vital that every employee understands his or her responsibilities.

Equal Opportunity is taken very seriously by MAST and wilful failure to apply this policy or evidence of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation will result in disciplinary action which may include dismissal.

3. Definitions

3.1 Diversity is about understanding, recognising, respecting and valuing differences.

3.2 Equality is about managing differences so that everyone has equality of opportunity through a fair and consistent approach to the application of rules, policies and procedures.
We recognise that sometimes this will mean treating people differently. This commitment is relevant to all we do, how we manage ourselves and how we deliver our services.

MAST will adhere to the provisions set out in the Equality Act 2010, Public Sector Equality Duty (where applicable) Human Rights Act 1998 and Employment Rights Act 1996

4. Equal Opportunities Statement

MAST is firmly committed to equality of treatment and opportunity. You have the right to work without fear of intimidation, harassment or victimization.
Equality of opportunity means treating people fairly and with dignity and respect, recognising their abilities and valuing their opinions.

- Equality is an ethos based on trust and consideration and provides the key to the partnerships we establish and our commitment to teamwork. It is reflected in the values to which MAST ascribes. We all have a responsibility to ensure that we treat our colleagues, contractors, suppliers and customers with dignity and respect.
- Discrimination, harassment or victimisation on grounds of sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, age, marital status, ethnic origin, gender, nationality, religion or disability is illegal and unfair, and will not be tolerated by MAST.

It is MAST's policy to treat all its applicants, employees and customers fairly, regardless of their gender, ethnic origin, nationality, age, marital status or disability. MAST will monitor the application of this policy including the composition of the workforce and take such actions as to ensure this policy is fully effective.

If you have any concerns about equal opportunities, contact your immediate manager. He/she will talk to you in confidence. You can also contact the Human Resources Manager in confidence to be advised on the next steps appropriate to your situation.

5. Equal Opportunities

5.1 Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation are protected characteristics.

5.2 Employees, other workers and applicants for employment who have one or more of the protected characteristics are protected from all forms of unlawful discrimination in the workplace, including: direct and indirect discrimination; discrimination by association; discrimination by perception; discrimination arising from disability; harassment; and victimisation.

5.3 MAST seeks to employ a workforce that reflects the diverse community at large because MAST values the individual contribution of people irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

5.4 MAST will use its best endeavours to provide a working environment free from unlawful discrimination because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

5.5 MAST undertakes to review periodically its recruitment and selection criteria and procedures to maintain a system where individuals are selected, solely on the basis of their merits and abilities.

5.6 MAST undertakes to review is employment practices, policies and procedures, including opportunities for training and promotion, pay and benefits, discipline and selection for redundancy, to ensure that it avoids all forms of unlawful discrimination in the workplace.

5.7 All employees will be treated with dignity and respect.

5.8 MAST will make reasonable adjustments to its recruitment and selection arrangements and procedures to ensure that no applicant for employment is disadvantaged because of a disability. Whenever reasonable and practicable, MAST will make adjustments to retain disabled workers in its workforce. This may include making reasonable adjustments to working arrangements and practices, making changes to the physical environment and/or providing auxiliary aids and services.

5.9 MAST will not tolerate acts which breach this policy and all instances of such behaviour or alleged behaviour will be taken seriously, fully investigated and may be subject to disciplinary procedures.

5.10 MAST will provide training in equal opportunities and undertakes to distribute and publicise this policy statement to all employees and elsewhere as from time to time appropriate.

5.11 MAST will monitor and review the operation of this policy and will implement any changes required by law or to improve its effectiveness.

5.12 Any employee who believes that they may have been subjected to treatment that breaches this policy may raise the matter through the grievance procedure.

6 Dignity at work

MAST believes that the dignity of every person must be respected. Harassment and victimisation are forms of unlawful discrimination, which are unacceptable and will be regarded as gross misconduct. The highest standards of conduct are required of everyone regardless of seniority**.**

7 Discrimination

It is unlawful to discriminate against someone based on a protected characteristic. Discrimination can take place in many forms:

a. Direct Discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourable from others due to a particular characteristic.

b. Indirect Discrimination is when a working condition, practice or rule disadvantages one group of people more than another. Whether this is done on purpose of not, it is still unlawful, unless it is justified by the job requirements.
If there is any doubt about any type of discrimination in the workplace, please refer to Human Resources.

c. Discrimination by Association is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with someone who possesses a protected characteristic.

d. Discrimination by Perception is direct discrimination against someone because others think they have a protected characteristic, even if it is found to be untrue.

8 Harassment

Harassment is defined as unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Unwanted conduct of this nature can constitute harassment of an individual even if it is directed at another person.
Harassment can take a number of forms:

a. Harassment may be unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic. However, a person does not have to possess a protected characteristic to be a victim of harassment. Individuals who are subjected to harassment because of their association with someone who has a protected characteristic can also be victims. It is also possible for someone to be subjected to harassment

because colleagues wrongly believe they have a protected characteristic. Unwanted conduct can include any kind of action or inaction, behaviour, exclusion, written or spoken words, jokes, imagery, or physical contact that the victim finds objectionable or offensive.

b. Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. This can include any unsolicited or unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, such as: making sexual advances; touching; staring; making inappropriate comments; telling sexual jokes; displaying or sending pornographic photographs or other materials of a sexual nature.
c. Harassment can also be less favourable treatment of someone because they have rejected or submitted to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or conduct related to sex or gender reassignment.

Condoning any form of harassment may be harassment in itself.

d. MAST accepts its responsibility for protecting employees from harassment by third parties, such as clients, customers and visitors. Employees are required to report any incidents of third party harassment immediately to their manager or Human Resources.

9 Victimisation

a. Victimisation occurs when someone is subjected to detrimental treatment because they have (or are thought to have) brought proceedings under the Equality Act, given evidence or information in support of proceedings or made allegations about any breach of the Act.
b. Harassment and victimisation will be regarded as gross misconduct for disciplinary purposes. Accordingly, employees found to be guilty of harassment or victimisation (after investigation) run a serious risk of summary dismissal.
c. Equally, an allegation of harassment must not be made lightly. If it is found that an individual has made an allegation of harassment without foundation and maliciously or has given false evidence or information in relation to an allegation, then this will also be regarded as gross misconduct for disciplinary purposes.
d. All complaints of harassment or victimisation should be made to your manager through the grievance procedure unless the complaint is regarding this person when you should complain to that person's superior.

10 Bullying

Bullying is a form of harassment. Bullying may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying or harassment may be by an individual against an individual (perhaps by someone in a position of authority such as a manager or supervisor) or involve groups of people. It may be obvious or it may be insidious. Whatever form it takes, it is unwarranted and unwelcome to the individual.

a. Examples of bullying/harassing behaviour include:
   - spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone by word or behaviour (particularly on the grounds of age, race, sex, disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief)
   - copying memos that are critical about someone to others who do not need to know
   - ridiculing or demeaning someone – picking on them or setting them up to fail
   - exclusion or victimisation
   - unfair treatment
   - overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position
   - unwelcome sexual advances – touching, standing too close, the display of offensive materials, asking for sexual favours, making decisions on the basis of sexual advances being accepted or rejected
   - making threats or comments about job security without foundation
   - deliberately undermining a competent worker by overloading and constant criticism
   - preventing individuals progressing by intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities.

b. Bullying and harassment are not necessarily face to face. They may also occur in written communications, email, phone, and automatic supervision methods if these are not applied to all workers.

11 Reporting

Employees who feel they have been unfairly treated contrary to this policy should raise their concerns

with managers in order to get them addressed. If matters are not addressed the individual can raise a grievance using the normal grievance procedure. All complaints will be investigated thoroughly and without delay.

a. Contravention of this policy by way of harassment of or discrimination against a colleague will be considered a disciplinary offence and dealt with under the disciplinary procedure. Employees should feel confident that raising a grievance will not have an adverse effect on them, and that MAST will protect them from victimisation.

Signed



Phillip Cable LLM
CEO
DATED 01 JULY 2026