



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Family:	Human Resources
Manager Responsible:	Lorraine Donoghue
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Policy Statement

The Skills Network (TSN) celebrates and values diversity and aims to promote the benefits of diversity in all our business activities. Fostering an inclusive culture helps each of us benefit from a wider range of different perspectives, experiences and skills. The principles of equality and diversity are at the heart of our business and are supported by appropriate policies, procedures and good practice.

Scope

This policy applies to all individuals involved with TSN; including colleagues, learners, visitors and individuals contracted to provide services.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment and we reserve the right to amend or withdraw it at any time.

This policy covers equality and diversity in relation to the protected characteristics as described by the Equality Act 2010. These are: age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Our Commitment to you

We believe that a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion not only benefits our organization, but it also supports wellbeing and enables our people to work better because they can be themselves and feel that they belong.

We will:

- Ensure that all individuals are treated fairly and with dignity and respect.
- Create and promote an inclusive and positive culture and environment, fostering good relations and challenging and preventing prejudice, discrimination and harassment.
- Enable all colleagues to achieve their full potential, to contribute fully and derive maximum benefit and enjoyment from their involvement with TSN.
- Promote awareness, understanding and involvement in equality and diversity matters among colleagues and learners.
- Ensure our policies, procedures and practices comply with relevant legislation.

What we expect from you

We expect all our colleagues to take personal responsibility for observing, upholding, promoting and applying this policy. We expect you to treat your colleagues and third parties (including learners, customers, contractors, suppliers and consultants) fairly with dignity, trust and respect.

Cultivating a culture that celebrates and embraces diversity requires ongoing commitment and nurturing. By embedding these values and constructively challenging inappropriate comments, behaviours or ways of working, you can help us achieve and maintain a truly inclusive workplace culture.

If any of our colleagues are found to have committed, authorised or condoned an act of discrimination, harassment, victimization or bullying, action will be taken under our disciplinary procedure.

Definitions

Discrimination

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination because of certain prohibited characteristics; including: disability, age, gender reassignment, sex, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership, race, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity.

Discrimination can be intentional or unintentional and may occur directly or indirectly, by association or by perception. Discrimination is not always obvious and can be subtle and unconscious, which stems from a person's general assumption about the abilities, interests and characteristics of a particular group that influences how they treat people (known as "unconscious bias").

Direct discrimination: treating someone less favorably because of a protected characteristic, compared with someone who does not have that protected characteristic. This also applies when someone is treated less favorable because it is assumed that they have a protected characteristic or is associated with someone who has a protected characteristic.

It is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of a protected characteristic:

- in the terms on which TSN offers to provide any of its services;
- by refusing or deliberately omitting to provide any of its services;
- in the way it provides any of its services.

Indirect discrimination: Where a policy, procedure or way of working that applies to everyone puts people with a particular characteristic at a disadvantage, compared with people who do not have that characteristic, unless there is a justifiable reason.

Indirect discrimination would also occur if TSN accepted and acted upon an indirectly discriminatory instruction from an employer or service user. The Skills Network will use its best endeavors to comply with the Act and will not accept instructions from clients or service users that will result in unlawful discrimination.

Associative discrimination: Treating someone less favorably because they are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic.

Perceptive discrimination: Treating someone less favorably because you perceive them to have a protected characteristic even if they do not.

Discrimination arising from disability: Treating someone unfavorably because of something connected with that person's disability and where such treatment is not justified.

Failing to make reasonable adjustments: Employers are legally obligated to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that aspects of employment, or the employer's premises, do not put a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage. Failing to comply with this duty is unlawful.

Harassment and sexual harassment

Under the Act, harassment is defined as unwanted conduct that relates to a protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.

Sexual harassment is conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It also includes less favorable treatment related to sex or gender reassignment that occurs because of a rejection of, or submission to, sexual conduct.

The Skills Network is committed to providing a work environment free from unlawful harassment.

Examples of prohibited harassment are:

1. verbal or written conduct containing derogatory jokes or comments;
2. slurs or unwanted sexual advances;
3. visual conduct such as derogatory or sexually orientated posters;
4. photographs, cartoons, drawings or gestures which some may find offensive;
5. physical conduct such as assault, unwanted touching, or any interference because of sex, race or any other protected characteristic basis;
6. threats and demands to submit to sexual requests as a condition of continued employment or to avoid some other loss, and offers of employment benefits in return for sexual favours;
7. retaliation for having reported or threatened to report harassment.

Victimisation

Victimisation is treating another person detrimentally either because that person has made a complaint of discrimination or harassment, or because they have supported someone else who has made a complaint, for example by giving a witness statement that supports the allegations.

Bullying

There is no legal definition of bullying. However, we regard it as conduct that is offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting or an abuse or misuse of power, and usually persistent, that has the effect of undermining, humiliating or injuring the recipient.

Bullying can be physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct. It is not necessary face to face and can be done by email, phone calls, online or on social media. Bullying may occur at work or outside of work.

If the bullying relates to a person's protected characteristic, it may also constitute harassment and, therefore, will be unlawful. You should refer to our Bullying and Harassment Policy for further information on our procedure for reporting bullying.

Implementation and Monitoring

In monitoring and progressing the policy, TSN will:

- consult colleagues and other stakeholders;
- consider any relevant information from internal or external sources.

TSN shares responsibility for the successful application of this policy, with specific responsibility on individuals who are professionally involved in staff support, development and management.

- TSN will provide relevant equality and diversity training to all colleagues.

- TSN will seek to ensure that all individuals have equal access to all facilities. Adjustments to working and learning practices will be considered wherever reasonably possible in order to accommodate a more diverse community.
- Where data relevant to EDI or protected characteristics is gathered/ stored, it will be done so in line with GDPR guidelines.
- TSN will ensure that effective support and complaints mechanisms are available for people suffering discrimination.

Employment

We aim to employ a workforce that reflects, at every level, the community which it serves.

In seeking to achieve a balanced workforce at all levels, we will ensure that no colleague, job applicant or candidate for promotion will be disadvantaged or treated less favourably because of conditions or requirements that are not related to the job.

All colleagues will treat each other in a fair and respectful manner that is free from discrimination.

Reasonable adjustments will be made to working arrangements and premises to ensure equal access for employees or potential colleagues who have a disability or a particular health concern.

Curriculum, Learning and Student Support

- TSN is committed to promoting equality and diversity through its Learning Programmes.
- Equality and diversity will be fully integrated into the learning experience, and will be evident in curriculum planning, delivery and assessment.
- Leaders and managers will monitor learner performance by protected characteristics and set actions to narrow any achievement gaps between different groups of learners.
- The curriculum offered will be regularly reviewed to ensure it is culturally sensitive and reflects the EDI agenda.
- All resources used will be free from discriminatory or stereotypical assumptions or images.
- All learners will receive information on equality and diversity, Prevent and British Values as part of their induction.
- Work based learners will be empowered and supported to challenge practices and behaviours in the workplace, which they feel contravene TSN policy in relation to Equality and Diversity.
- TSN recognises that support services enable learners to gain access to the curriculum, stay on programme and achieve to the best of their ability. All learners have access to a Learner Support Advisor to provide support, advice and guidance and to arrange any reasonable adjustments where necessary.

External partners working with TSN must comply with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and have appropriate policies and procedures in place regarding equality and diversity.

When drawing up contracts and service specifications, the company will ensure that external partners are made aware of their legal duties in relation to equality and that they are specifically required to comply with all equality legislation when delivering services on behalf of the company.

Visitors, Contractors and Sub-contractors

Visitors, contractors and sub-contractors must comply with the company's Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

Staff meeting visitors or employing contractors and sub- contractors are responsible for making them aware of the Equality and Diversity Policy.

The Public Sector Equality Duty

As an organisation that works with several public sector organisations, TSN understands and complies with the public sector equality duty set out by the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011.

Under this duty public bodies and others carrying out public functions have a duty to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Unacceptable Actions and Behaviour

This policy aims to ensure equality of opportunity and fair treatment for everyone. It is based on the principle that people have the right to their own beliefs and do not engage in activities or acts which interfere with the rights or beliefs of others.

Any attempt to coerce or threaten others to comply with a particular belief system (eg through unauthorised distribution of literature, threats or offensive remarks) may result in disciplinary action.

Any form of bullying, harassment or victimisation of any individual will not be tolerated. Allegations will be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately under the relevant procedure.

Any colleague found guilty of unlawful discrimination or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action including, where appropriate, dismissal for gross misconduct. Appropriate action will be taken against any member of the public, visitor or service provider involved in unlawful discrimination or harassment.

Complaints

If an individual believes that they have been unlawfully harassed or discriminated against, they should report this immediately, in line with the appropriate procedure.

Individuals outside of the organisation should send their complaints to complaints@theskillsnetwork.com in line with the company's complaints policy.

Colleagues of TSN should submit any complaints in line with the Company's Grievance Policy and Procedure.

Publishing the policy

This policy will be published on the Company website and intranet and will be reflected throughout various documentation and practices. A variety of alternative formats will be available on request.



