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## Highfield Equality and Diversity Policy

## 1. **Introduction**

- 1.1 This policy is aimed at all parties involved in the design, delivery and award of Highfield qualifications, be their involvement direct or indirect. This includes, staff, consultants, its Centres, tutors, learners; (collectively referred hereafter as “Clients”) and other stakeholders who are delivering/enrolled on or have undertaken a Highfield qualification/unit.
- 1.2 Highfield is committed to equality and diversity and has developed a strategy which underpins the values of mutual respect, responsibility and teamwork. Equality and diversity are key to our global identity and an integral part of our aim to continue being an Awarding Body of choice.

## 2. **Equality and Diversity Policy**

- 2.1 Everyone has a part to play in ensuring we (Highfield and its Clients) achieve equality of opportunity. We believe that a positive attitude towards equality and diversity is right for Highfield, our people, our Clients and our business suppliers. This means that we must encourage all our people to welcome diversity and respect each person's individuality.
- 2.2 Equality is an on-going process. It is about the policies, systems and processes we use in the employment cycle, from recruitment and beyond, to ensure that everyone is treated equally according to their merits and abilities and given a fair chance to fulfil their potential. Highfield expects its Clients to show the same commitment to Equality as we do. Equality is an integral part of achieving diversity.
- 2.3 Highfield regards any form of direct or indirect discrimination, victimisation or harassment as a potentially serious disciplinary offence. Highfield would expect all its Clients to share this value and implement this within day-to-day working life.
- 2.4 Highfield has a zero-tolerance approach with any organisation or person who demonstrates behaviours relating to inequality and will not hesitate to take appropriate action on confirmed cases. We believe everyone has the right to be treated fairly and equally and to enjoy a working environment free from discrimination or harassment.
- 2.5 This policy details Highfield’s approach to equal opportunities and covers discrimination, harassment/bullying and victimisation. Our definitions of these activities are outlined below followed by the process to adopt should members of Highfield or Clients feel that this policy is not being adhered to.

- 2.6 It should be noted that this policy applies to all Clients whether permanent, temporary, full time, part time, Workers or self-employed as well as and other third parties dealt with by the Company.

### 3. **Highfield's Responsibility**

- 3.1 Highfield's vision, in terms of equality and diversity, is not only to comply with legislation but to take a progressive approach to ensure all employees of Highfield and its Clients share and operate in the same approach.
- 3.2 Managing equality and diversity means valuing and utilizing the differences our people bring to business, regardless of sex, pregnancy or maternity, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion and belief, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, age or gender reassignment and that no one is ever disadvantaged.
- 3.3 Highfield commits to incorporating specific and appropriate duties in respect of implementing the equal opportunities policies into job descriptions and work objectives of all staff.
- 3.4 Highfield will provide equality training and guidance as appropriate to our staff; including as part of staffs' induction training as well as going on further on-going courses as identified via our internal staff performance review arrangements.
- 3.5 We recognise that a willing and committed workforce, where there is equality for all, where difference is visibly welcomed and people are actively included is a key ingredient in our recipe for success - working in partnership with a diverse client base in a diverse number of locations, delivering a diverse range of top quality legal solutions. The sole purpose of this policy is to ensure Highfield and its Clients share this view and that it is implemented at all times during our professional relationship.
- 3.6 "We are defined by our people. They are our global identity as an organisation. Our brand is based on relationships and our people and customers define our relationships. Diversity at Highfield goes to the heart of the Highfield values ".

**Jason Sprenger, Highfield Chief Executive**

### 4. **Qualification Development**

- 4.1 During the development of Highfield qualifications, Highfield will ensure that learners with protected characteristics will not be disadvantaged. Furthermore, any barriers to entry will only be set in place if they directly relate to the purpose of the qualification and/or unit.

- 4.2 The nature of any such features or barriers will be stated and the inclusion of the requirements that create the barrier justified in terms why they are required for the particular unit(s) and/or qualification(s).

## 5. **Client Responsibility**

- 5.1 It is important that Highfield and its Clients are fully aware of the contents of this policy.

- 5.2 It is equally as important all learners undertaking training leading to Highfield qualifications are fully aware of the contents of this policy e.g. via their introduction when first embarking on Highfield qualifications.

- 5.3 Highfield expects its Centres to enable learners to have equal access to training and assessment for Highfield qualifications, irrespective of their sex, pregnancy or maternity, marital status, sexual orientation, age, religion, colour, race, nationality, ethnic origin or disability. Assessment for any qualification must be undertaken without discrimination.

- 5.4 Centres are required to have a policy in place to ensure that such discrimination does not occur either directly, indirectly or as a result of pressure from any other body. This policy must apply to all satellite/associated venues and it is expected there are arrangements in place to monitor its application and effectiveness.

- 5.5 In the event a learner makes a formal complaint to a Highfield Centre relating to issues of inequality which can't be resolved, the learner must be made aware, by the Centre, of their right to direct their complaint to Highfield via the arrangements outlined in our Complaints Procedure.

## 6. **Promotion of Equality**

- 6.1 It is Highfield's policy that no member of staff, agency worker, Approved Centre, Nominated Tutor, contractor, self-employed consultant, job applicant or ex-employee, client or third party receives less favourable treatment as provided for under the Equality Act 2010. Highfield and its Clients are therefore expected to operate in this exact same manner. Examples of discrimination include, but are in no way limited to the following:

6.1.1 because of colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins on grounds of sex, pregnancy or maternity, civil partnerships, marital status, and gender reassignment;

6.1.2 because of a disability;

6.1.3 because of age or perceived age;

- 6.1.4 because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation (which includes bisexual, heterosexual or homosexual);
  - 6.1.5 because of or related to their actual or perceived religion or belief;
  - 6.1.6 or is disadvantaged in relation to any of the above characteristics as a result of any criterion policy or practice which cannot be shown to be justifiable; and
  - 6.1.7 or is disadvantaged because of her pregnancy or maternity.
- 6.2 This policy applies to all aspects of employment and working practices including: recruitment, promotion, assessment, performance management, development, reward and recognition, termination and post-employment
- 6.3 Highfield and its Clients will promote an environment which enables it to utilise and develop the widest possible sources of talent; regardless of any other factor

## 7. **Breach of Diversity & Equality Policy**

- 7.1 Highfield will not tolerate any victimisation, harassment, discrimination and/or breach of its policy on equality and will take disciplinary action against offenders whom are internal members of staff. Should any Client be involved in any victimisation, harassment, discrimination and/or breach of this policy, Highfield will not hesitate to issue sanctions in accordance with its Sanctions Policy. Where possible, this may include (but is not limited to) Centre/Tutor status termination. Highfield and its Clients are reminded that unlawful discrimination can lead to criminal and civil proceedings being taken against them individually.

## 8. **What is Equality?**

- 8.1 Equality is not treating people differently for a reason relating to a protected characteristic. The protected characteristics are sex (including those undergoing gender reassignment), pregnancy and maternity, marital status and civil partnership, age, race (including ethnic or national origin, colour and nationality), disability, sexual orientation or religion and belief.
- 8.2 Equality is also about providing assistance in order to provide all persons with the same opportunity.
- 8.3 If we need to highlight differences between people (for instance at recruitment or promotion, or in the performance management process), then this must be done on the basis of objective criteria that are relevant to the needs and aims of the exercise being carried out. These must be applied consistently to all people involved.

## 9. **What does Discrimination mean?**

9.1 Discrimination may occur when a judgement or decision about a person is made on the basis of the differences that can be seen or may be assumed to be present.

9.2 When decisions about suitability or ability are made without the benefit of relevant objective information, the resulting decision may reflect the prejudices held by the decision maker or stereotyping and may therefore be discriminatory

## 10. **What does Harassment mean?**

10.1 Harassment is generally defined as when a person behaves in a way that another person finds unreasonable, unwelcome and offensive, which creates an intimidating, hostile or humiliating working environment, adversely affecting an individual's dignity. It is the person who is subjected to or the recipient of the behaviour who determines whether this behaviour is acceptable or not.

10.2 Harassment may take different forms.

10.3 Harassment can be either deliberate or unintentional.

10.4 In some circumstances harassment may be a criminal offence.

## 11. **What is Victimisation?**

11.1 Victimisation is a form of discrimination where an individual is the subject of less favourable treatment because the discriminator knows or suspects that an individual has done or intends to bring a discrimination claim or give evidence against them in a discrimination claim or has made an allegation of discrimination.

## 12. **The Process in Dealing with Claims of Unfair Treatment**

12.1 If someone considers the treatment they have received amounts to discrimination, harassment, or victimisation in line with the definitions contained in this policy, where possible you should make it clear to the person concerned that their behaviour is unacceptable and offensive and you should ask them to stop. Often this is enough to stop the treatment and prevent it happening again.

12.2 If the problem persists or the person feels unable to make a complaint directly to the individual they should (and Highfield encourage this) make a formal complaint in line with the applicable Complaints Procedure (if the complaint is

from a learner and relates to a Centre, the learner should utilise the Centre's Complaints Procedure in the first instance).

- 12.3 In line with clause 5.5 above, in the event a learner makes a formal complaint to a Highfield Centre relating to issues of inequality which can't be resolved, the learner must be made aware, by the Centre, of their right to direct their complaint to Highfield via the arrangements outlined in our Complaints Procedure.
- 12.4 Highfield recognises that it may be difficult for individuals experiencing discrimination or harassment to bring the matter formally into the open. However, if you process outlined is not followed it will not be possible for the management of the complaint to take the appropriate action.
- 12.5 Any complaint raised with Highfield will be treated in complete confidence and will always be treated seriously and fully investigated.
- 12.6 All investigations will be carried out in the strictest confidence and all the people who are part of the investigation will be expected to respect this confidentiality; whether this be Highfield or its Clients. Only once the facts have been established will a course of action be recommended.
- 12.7 As part of the investigation, the complainant/relevant persons may well be asked to attend a formal interview to provide evidence.

### 13. **What happens then?**

- 13.1 Where evidence suggests that any actions have been carried out in full knowledge of their unfair nature or their impact to the individual, disciplinary action will be taken in line with Highfield's Disciplinary Procedure/Sanction Policy; if applicable.
- 13.2 Additionally, any person, whether Highfield or Client, found to be inciting, encouraging or condoning discriminatory actions or behaviour will themselves be subject to punitive action.
- 13.3 If the investigation finds that the allegations have been made maliciously or to slight a person's reputation, the accuser may be subject to disciplinary and/or punitive action.
- 13.4 When the investigation is complete, the complainant will be informed of the outcome in person and/or writing.

#### 14. **What if I am accused of Discrimination/Harassment/Victimisation?**

14.1 Listen carefully if you are approached about your behaviour. Whether this comes from your manager, another member of staff, your tutor or the person directly affected, try to understand what you are doing that is causing offence. This is a serious matter.

#### 15. **Review Arrangements**

15.1 Highfield is committed to complying with all current and relevant legislation and, which, at the time of writing, includes, but is not limited to, the Equality Act 2010, the Equality Act 2004 and the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012.

15.2 As part of Highfield's commitment to Equality & Diversity, we will review the policy annually and revise it as and when necessary in response to Centre and learner feedback, changes in our practices, actions from the regulatory authorities or external agencies or changes in legislation.

15.3 As part of the learner registration and certification processes for Highfield qualifications and units, Highfield may collect information on diversity, requests for special considerations, access arrangements and feedback from learners, Clients and other stakeholders.

15.4 All relevant issues identified that suggest that our provision or services may have unnecessarily impacted on learners will be reported back to our Quality Assurance Manager. The Quality Assurance Manager is responsible for ensuring that relevant staff introduce, as appropriate, amendments to provision and/or services where necessary and in accordance with our documented procedures for development and reviewing units and qualifications.

15.5 Details of our ongoing reviews will be made available to the qualification regulators, upon request.

15.6 If you would like to provide any feedback with regards to the policy or have any queries regarding its content please contact us via the details provided at the end of the policy.

#### 16. **Contact Us**

16.1 If you have any queries regarding the contents of this policy, please do not hesitate to contact us on 0845 226 0350.

16.2 Alternatively, you can email [info@highfieldabc.com](mailto:info@highfieldabc.com) and we will endeavour to provide acknowledgment of your communication within our 24-hour service level agreement.