

Equality Diversity and Inclusion

Policy

Policy Author: Stuart Lowery	Policy Valid From: [Policy Valid From]
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Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. At Places for People (the Group) we are committed to promoting a culture of inclusion and belonging. This means creating an environment that welcomes and embraces diversity, enabling everyone to contribute to our success and develop to their own full potential.
- 1.2. We are a large organisation, providing lots of different services and we work with a wide variety of customers and communities. It's our people that make the difference to our success and we look for colleagues who bring different perspectives, talent, expertise, commitment and individuality. We're all unique, but together we belong to a winning team.
- 1.3. Diversity also makes good business sense. More diverse and inclusive organisations likely to attract and retain a wider pool of talent, therefore fostering innovation and resilience and as a result will perform better financially.
- 1.4. We want to celebrate difference and create a workplace where everyone is valued and respected and can be their true self. We take a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, harassment or bullying. You can find out more about this in our Respect policy, which should be read in conjunction with this policy.
- 1.5. The aim of this policy is to support all colleagues to understand our culture of inclusion and belonging and where we all play our own part in this. It sets out the expectations we can all have of each other, in line with our SPIRIT values.
- 1.6. Our commitment to inclusion and belonging is more than just a policy. Along with our SPIRIT values, it runs right through everything we do – starting with our recruitment process and continuing throughout the colleague lifecycle. We work hard to ensure everyone is offered equality of opportunity to achieve their full potential and thrive. The Group will take the necessary steps to ensure decisions we make relating to employment practices are objective, based solely upon objective criteria and individual merit.
- 1.7. We believe that equity, equality and diversity should be viewed as intrinsic to all of our work. Promoting and delivering on equality is not only good for meeting our legal obligations, it enhances our business performance, enables effective delivery of services, improves satisfaction and helps to create stronger communities. We will ensure that we raise awareness of inclusion and belonging issues through communications, training and colleague involvement.
- 1.8. This policy applies to all our colleagues, which means anyone who works for us regardless of their employment status. This policy does not form part of any colleague's contract of employment.

2. Some key terms used in this policy

Inclusion means valuing people’s differences and enabling everyone to thrive at work. An inclusive working environment is one in which everyone feels that they can be themselves, that their contribution matters and they are able to perform to their full potential, regardless of their background, identity or circumstances.

Belonging refers to the perception that you are part of a workgroup and an essential member of that group. Inclusive workplaces nurture employees’ social and emotional needs for connection with others. Belonging is the experience of community spirit—being part of a collective whole and treated with respect and dignity.

Diversity means ‘difference’ and is about recognising both individual and group differences, treating people as individuals and valuing the contribution that each of us can offer. It’s also about acknowledging the benefit of having a range of perspectives in decision-making and the workforce being representative of the organisation’s customers.

Equality is about creating a fair workplace, where everyone has the same chance to succeed.

Equity involves recognising that different employees face unique challenges at work. Inclusive workplaces recognise the varied needs of diverse talent and ensure that work practices accommodate for those differences to ensure all employees can contribute fully to work practices.

3. Our commitments to Inclusion and Belonging:

- We promote equality of opportunity for everyone and aim to build a culture of inclusion and belonging for all colleagues.
- We aim to create a workforce that is representative of our communities, which will give us greater insight into our customers’ needs and preferences.
- We want to create a genuinely inclusive workplace, where we embrace both the similarities and differences of all our colleagues.
- We value all our colleagues for their contribution, and we celebrate diversity in all aspects of our business.
- We recognise and work to support the unique and diverse needs of our customers and the communities we work in.
- We work with partners who support us in having a diverse and inclusive culture and can demonstrate this.
- We’re against all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination.
- We won’t tolerate bullying and harassment in any form.
- We have multiple ways for colleagues to speak up about issues, whether they are affecting them or someone else at work (please see the Respect policy).
- We won’t allow colleagues to wear, display or circulate emblems, badges, clothing, tattoos, posters, graffiti, images, or literature, where it might create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for anyone.

4. Equality and the Law

- 4.1. Our commitment to Inclusion and Belonging is supported by the Equality Act 2010. It is important for colleagues to understand that as well as the Group's expectations, we are all required by law to comply with this legislation.
- 4.2. The aim of the Equality Act is to improve equal opportunities and fairness for colleagues and job applicants. Under the Act, it is unlawful to discriminate against people at work. It also protects prospective colleagues against discrimination in the recruitment process and extends beyond someone's employment to include protection from discrimination in references or other post-employment acts. It's important to know that the Act also covers contract staff and agency workers.
- 4.3. Under the Act, the following characteristics are 'protected characteristics' and it is unlawful to discriminate, harass or victimise anyone on the basis of one or more protected characteristics. They are: Age Disability Gender Reassignment Marriage and Civil Partnership Pregnancy and Maternity Race Religion or Belief Sex Sexual Orientation.
- 4.4. The Group has a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, harassment or victimisation – whether this is related to a protected characteristic or something else. You can find out more in the Respect policy.

5. What is discrimination?

There are different ways in which discrimination can occur, as set out below.

- 5.1. **Direct Discrimination** occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have (see 'perceptive discrimination' below) or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic (see 'associative discrimination' below).
- 5.2. **Associative Discrimination** means direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person with a protected characteristic.
- 5.3. **Perceptive Discrimination** means direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person doesn't actually possess that characteristic.
- 5.4. **Indirect Discrimination** can occur if a condition, rule, policy or even a practice that applies to everyone is applied in a manner that disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic.
- 5.5. **Harassment** is unwanted conduct related to a relevant 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'. Colleagues are able to complain of behaviour they find offensive – even if it is not directed at them, the process for this is set out in the Respect policy.

- 5.6. **Victimisation** occurs when a colleague is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act, or because they are suspected of doing so. However, this doesn't apply if a complaint has been made maliciously or is untrue.

6. What is inclusion and belonging?

- 6.1. Inclusion is about working with an understanding that each of us is unique and recognising our individual differences. Belonging means we all behave in ways that support a culture where our colleagues feel valued and respected as individuals. This means colleagues show respect for each other's differences and uniqueness, and everyone is allowed to be themselves inclusive of:

- Gender
- Race or ethnicity
- Religion or religious belief
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy
- Gender identity
- Marital and civil partnership status
- Age
- Culture
- Educational or social background
- Physical and mental ability
- Caring responsibilities
- Thinking style
- Value systems
- Political opinion
- Physical appearance
- Any other differences.

- 6.2. Everyone that works at Places for People is a unique individual and we design our processes and people practices with intersectionality in mind. This takes into consideration that every colleague has their own preferences and needs.

- 6.3. Through being inclusive, we can ensure that we maximise the unique strengths, skills, talent, ideas and backgrounds each of us bring to work. To do this, we need to work together to create workplaces where everyone feels they are valued and respected. We can go further by giving everyone a voice, and benefit from understanding different perspectives; this in turn will lead us to improve our business and be more innovative in the ways we can deliver value to our customers.

7. Your responsibilities

- 7.1. We all have a responsibility to behave in a way that is respectful of other colleagues and our customers, and to understand that others' views and opinions may not always be the same as ours.
- 7.2. Here are other some things you can do to help create an inclusive workplace:
 - Try to understand other peoples' points of view and help them understand yours.
 - If you ever see inappropriate behaviour, challenge or report it (please refer to the Respect policy).
 - If you challenge others, do so in a respectful way.
 - Be aware of who is around you and communicate in a professional and sensitive manner. Understand that what is acceptable to one person may not be acceptable to another.
 - Be aware of different cultures and customs and respect the benefits that diversity can bring.
 - Respect the confidentiality of colleagues and customers.
 - Interact with customers, colleagues and suppliers in an ethical and lawful way and with respect at all times.
 - Take responsibility for your own actions.
 - Look for solutions to problems and try to resolve issues constructively.

8. What else does the Group have in place to promote inclusion and belonging?

- 8.1. The Group has an ongoing strategy for Inclusion and Belonging, as part of its overall People Strategy.
- 8.2. All colleagues are provided learning and development opportunities, including mandatory e-learning, to support the understanding of this policy and how it applies. Further information and guidance may be provided to colleagues depending on their role or business area.
- 8.3. The Group has developed an Inclusion and Belonging Working Group, to support the delivery of the Inclusion and Belonging Strategy and drive colleague involvement.

9. Disabilities and reasonable adjustments

- 9.1. We know that not all disabilities are visible, and that two colleagues with similar circumstances might find they need different support. You'll never suffer any disadvantage from telling us you've got a disability, so talk to your manager to make sure you get the support you need. We'll always treat this information sensitively and confidentially.
- 9.2. It's possible to make reasonable adjustments in three ways

- By making changes to your working arrangements - for example, agreeing for you to work part-time if your disability means you get tired easily, or making adjustments to absence triggers
- By making changes to the physical features of a building – for example, putting in a ramp for wheelchair access
- By providing extra equipment, technology or services – such as voice-activated software if you've got a visual impairment

9.3. To decide whether an adjustment is “reasonable”, your manager will consider:

- How effective the adjustment would be in removing a disadvantage.
- How practical the adjustment would be to implement.
- How much disruption it would cause to make the adjustment, including the effect on other colleagues.
- Whether the adjustment would create any health and safety risks.
- How expensive the adjustment would be to make.

9.4. Managers can also take further advice from the manager helpline, or discuss this further with their people lead.

10. Further information

The following policies are related to the Inclusion and Belonging Policy:

- Respect Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (for external-facing customers and stakeholders)
- Behaviour at Work Policy (Code of Conduct)
- Grievance Procedure

For digital learning content relevant to this policy please visit Places Academy.

Please speak to your people lead for further information about the application of this policy in your

Policy/Strategy Control Statement

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4	Author	Stuart Lowery
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Policy Applicable To

Business Area: People Services (Human Resources)
Applicable to: [Policy Applicable To]

Amendment Sheet Record

Revision Date	Description of Changes	Approved By	Date Approved
16/09/202	New policy to replace previous EDI policy.		

Please summarise the current policy requirements and how this is changed in the new policy.

[Policy Key Changes Summary]

Please explain the reason for changes/improvements/new policy.

Change to title only

Please explain any new actions required to put the policy changes into practice.

N/A