

POLICY :	Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy
DATE OF ISSUE:	01 September 2012
REVIEWED DATE:	25 Jan 2025
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DATE FOR REVIEW:	25 th Jan 2027
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EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY POLICY

Purpose

This policy confirms LHM Healthcare's commitment to equal opportunities and to valuing diversity in its workforce. It also outlines the fair employment practices and monitoring processes that it is committed to putting into place to support this.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees and potential employees of the Company, together with anyone else working on Company premises, including secondees, agency staff, contract workers, consultants and suppliers.

Version

Final

Consultation and Approval

Formally agreed by the Board of Directors

Cross References/Related Policies

- Bullying & Harassment Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Maternity and Adoption Leave Policy

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY POLICY

1. Policy Statement

LHM Healthcare Company is committed to building a workforce which reflects the diversity of the communities it serves, valuing the benefits brought by access to a wide range of individual backgrounds, experience and skills. It aims to create an organisation which promotes equality and is free from discrimination and harassment, where all staff can fulfill their full potential in an environment of fairness, dignity and respect.

Everyone working in or coming into contact with the Company will be treated fairly and valued equally, regardless of age, disability, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, gender, marital status, religion, beliefs, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, domestic circumstances, carer responsibilities, social and employment status, HIV status, political affiliation or trade union membership.

The Company will ensure that its employment practices comply fully with equal opportunities legislation (including that relating to sex, race, disability, equal pay, harassment, part time working, sexual orientation, and religion or belief), associated codes of conduct (on equal opportunities, age diversity, racial equality, disability discrimination and harassment).

Further information on the process for addressing discrimination, harassment and victimisation is available in the Company's Bullying & Harassment Policy.

2. Responsibilities

2.1 The Board of Directors

The Company Board, through the Managing Director has overall accountability for the implementation of this policy and in particular, a responsibility to:

- Foster a culture which embraces and values diversity and encourages equal opportunities best practice.
- Promote the use of this policy and ensure that training in its provisions is provided to managers and staff.
- Establish systems for monitoring the application of the policy and take action to rectify any inequalities or deficiencies.

2.2 Managers

Managers have a responsibility to:

- Maintain an environment which actively promotes equality and diversity and is free from discrimination.
- Ensure that staff understand this policy, are aware of their responsibilities under it and know how to raise any concerns.
- Apply all Company policies fairly, consistently and without discrimination, especially those relating to recruitment, training, performance management, sickness and redundancy.
- Make sure that all complaints of discrimination are properly investigated and dealt with immediately, sensitively and confidentially.

2.3 Employees

Employees have a responsibility to:

- Participate and co-operate in any measure introduced by the Company to implement this policy, promote equal opportunity and prevent discrimination.
- Treat all colleagues with dignity and respect and ensure they do not discriminate, either directly or indirectly, or induce others to practice discrimination.
- Challenge and report any discrimination they witness and support colleagues who are discriminated against in complaining about such behaviour.

3. **Fair Employment Practices**

3.1 Recruitment and Selection

The Company will ensure that job opportunities are publicised within the local community. All posts (unless being reserved for redeployment purposes or short term acting opportunities) will be advertised, normally both internally and externally (through the website and/or appropriate media). Advertisements will be expressed in clear language and will include a statement outlining the Company's commitment to equal opportunities.

Application forms will be simple and request only the minimum information for making a decision. Where applicants need help to complete their application or require information in a different format (for example, large print or on tape), the Company will make every effort to accommodate this request. Applicants will be asked to complete an Equal Opportunities Monitoring form as part of their application. These forms will be used for monitoring purposes only and will play no part in the selection process.

Selection for posts will be based on objective and justifiable criteria, which are directly related to the skills required to carry out the job description and which are laid out in the person specification for the post. These criteria must not unfairly exclude applicants of a particular group. If a manager believes that a Genuine Occupational Qualification may apply, then they should discuss this with the Managing Director.

Selection procedures (shortlisting and interviewing etc) will be carried out by more than one person. Wherever possible, the panel should reflect the diversity of the workforce. Ideally all members of the panel, but at least the Chair, must be trained, or otherwise assessed as competent, in non-discriminatory recruitment and selection procedures.

Where an applicant with a disability meets the selection criteria for the post, they will be guaranteed an interview (see section 4.6). Managers should always check whether shortlisted candidates have any particular requirements to enable them to participate in the interview/selection process.

Interviews must be conducted objectively and consistently, dealing only with applicant's suitability to fulfill the requirements of the post. Where tests or other selection methods are used, these must provide objective measures of the applicants' ability to do the job.

Shortlisting and interview records will be completed and kept for a period of one year. All applicants are entitled to request and be given reasons for their non-selection and this entitlement will be made clear in the documentation sent to them in the information pack.

3.1 Training and Development

All employees will have equal access to the development opportunities provided by the Company and will agree an annual personal development plan with their manager to enable them to carry out the effective performance of their job and reach their full personal potential.

Any selection criteria applied to training courses will be reviewed to ensure that they are not directly or indirectly discriminatory. Where possible, the Company will ensure that training programmes make provision for staff who work part time or have flexible working patterns.

The Company will support the establishment of networks for staff, where they are currently under-represented in the workforce and there are sufficient numbers, who would find a network useful for career development advice, guidance and support.

3.2 Promotion

With the exception of re-grading to reflect increased responsibilities, all promotions will be on the basis of applying for the post through the normal selection process. Internal candidates will be treated the same way as external candidates throughout the selection process.

3.3 Human Resources Policies/Terms and Conditions

Terms and conditions of employment and employee benefits will be those relating to the post and there will be no discrimination in the way they are applied. Equally, the Company's Human Resources Policies will be applied consistently and fairly to all staff.

In addition, the Company has a range of policies designed to support and encourage flexibility and diversity in the workplace. The provisions of these policies are available to all Company staff.

3.4 Cultural and Religious Needs

The Company recognises that some employees may have particular cultural or religious needs (for example, the need to observe prayer time and other religious rites, special dietary requirements or the need to wear specific clothing). Whenever it is reasonably practicable, the Company will endeavour to allow these needs to be met.

Where employees request block of annual and/or unpaid leave to visit relatives overseas, such requests will be considered sympathetically where possible.

3.5 Disability

The Company is committed to the employment of people with disabilities and to fulfilling the standards laid down under the Department of Work and Pensions' *Positive About Disabled People* disability symbol (Two Ticks). In line with one of the standards, all applicants with a disability who meet the minimum requirements for a post will be guaranteed an interview.

Where an applicant with a disability is the most suitable person for the job or a current member of staff becomes disabled, the Company will do what it can to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate them. This may include:

- Adjustments to the premises (for wheelchair access etc)
- Adjustments to or purchase of equipment (for example, to accommodate visual or hearing impairment)
- Reallocation of specific duties (where the applicant or employee is able to carry out the majority of the job requirements)
- Alterations to working hours

(Where a current employee becomes disabled, see the Company's Management of Sickness Absence Policy).

3.6 Tendering Arrangements

The Company will require any companies tendering for work to provide information about their Equal Opportunities and Diversity policy so that the Company can be confident that the companies have a robust approach in this area that meets the standards of the Company.

4. **Appeals and Complaints**

If a member of staff feels that they have been the victim of discrimination, then they have the right to raise this as a grievance under the Company's Grievance and Disputes Procedure. Complaints of harassment should be dealt with under the Company's Bullying & Harassment Policy. No member of staff who, in good faith, complains about discrimination or harassment, will be victimised or receive less favourable treatment for doing so.

External individuals, who have a complaint against the way they have been treated by the Company or its employees, should raise this under the Company's Complaints Procedure.

All reports of alleged discrimination will be investigated fully. Any employee who is found to have discriminated against others will be subject to disciplinary action under the Company's Disciplinary and Appeals Procedure. Serious breaches will be regarded as gross misconduct and will be liable to lead to dismissal.

5. **Monitoring the Policy**

In order to monitor the implementation of this policy, Trust Board will collect and analyse the following information:

- The profile of its current workforce by age, gender, contract type (full/part time), ethnic origin and disability.
- The profile of its job applicants and appointments by gender, contract type, ethnic origin and disability.
- Internal promotions by gender, contract type, ethnic origin and disability.
- Leavers from the Company by age, gender, contract type, ethnic origin, disability and reason for leaving.
- Participation in internal training programmes and proportions of staff with a personal development plan by gender, contract type, ethnic origin and disability.
- The use of formal disciplinary, sickness, grievance and harassment procedures by gender, contract type, ethnic origin and disability.

Annual Equal Opportunity Monitoring Reports will be provided to the Company Board to allow them to review progress.

6. **Implementing the Policy**

6.1 Communication

The content of this policy and progress reports on its implementation will be communicated to all staff through staff briefings.

In addition, team meetings will be used as a means of raising and discussing the issues covered in this policy on a periodic basis, to ensure that all staff remain fully aware of their responsibilities in relation to equal opportunities and diversity.

This policy will be held on the Company drive.

6.2 Training

All staff will receive information about this policy as part of their induction.

The Company will also make more detailed training on equality and diversity available to staff, both through organising specific equal opportunities programmes and through integrating equality issues into other existing courses (including management development programmes and training on the application of HR policies).

In addition, training in non-discriminatory recruitment and selection practices will be made available to managers and staff who participate in appointment panels (where they are not otherwise assessed as competent).

6.3 Annual Audit and Action Planning

The implementation of this policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Company Board using the information provided in the annual Equal Opportunities Monitoring Report and responses to the annual staff attitude survey.

Where this review would suggest that there are areas of this policy which are not being implemented effectively or where specific groups remain under-represented in the workforce, the Board of Directors will draw up an action plan outlining how these shortcomings will be addressed. This may include initiating specific audits of practice or taking permitted positive action (such as providing specific training or development opportunities, setting up support networks or targeted recruitment advertising).