

## Equality and Diversity Policy

### The Company

Solent Blind & Curtain Company recognises that its underlying success depends on recruiting and retaining the right people and encouraging them to reach their full potential.

Our Company recruits on merit. To get the best candidate for our business, we consider and recruit applicants from various sectors of the community and the nature of our workforce is a reflection of this. We do however recognise the need for all employees to possess the levels of skill and knowledge appropriate to the roles they perform in delivering the quality of service our clients expect. This approach and mutual respect creates a culture of co-operation and achievement that underpins the high quality of the service we offer.

### Statement of Intent

Solent Blind & Curtain Company are equality and diversity employers. The Companies' policy is to ensure that all job applicants and employees are treated equally. We do not discriminate against staff on the basis of 'protected characteristics'. Protected characteristics include gender, disability, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief, marital status or civil partner status, age and pregnancy and maternity. This policy applies equally to the treatment of our visitors, clients, customers and suppliers by our staff and the treatment of our staff by these third parties.

The Company values the diverse nature of our people and seeks to manage any diversity issues which arise in a fair and sensitive manner.

All staff have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and to treat colleagues with dignity at all times. The Company will not tolerate any discriminatory practices or behaviour.

This policy does not form part of an employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

### Core policy

In accordance with its statement, the Company commits itself to the following:

- The Company recognises that for them to be successful both now and in the future they need to develop the potential and ability of all employees to the full. In order for this to occur, all employees will be given equality of opportunity and encouragement to progress within the organisation
- All employees are asked to take responsibility for their personal involvement in the practical application of this policy

To facilitate this:

- Copies of this policy will be made available to all employees. All members of staff are responsible for the success of this policy and must ensure that they familiarise themselves with the policy and act in accordance with its aims and objectives
- Management have a specific responsibility to set appropriate standards of behaviour, to lead by example and to ensure that all employees adhere to the policy and provide aims and objectives to facilitate this.
- All legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and other legislation will be recognised
- This policy will be reviewed annually or as necessary from time to time
- Grievance procedures are provided for any employee who believes they have been treated unfairly or subjected to discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation. Issues can be raised through the grievance procedure in our employee handbook
- The disciplinary procedures in our employee handbook may be used where employees fail to observe their own responsibilities for this policy
- Management will assume the main responsibility for implementation and revision of this policy

## Forms of Discrimination - Principles

- Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally
- Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a 'protected characteristic'. The protected characteristics are set out in our Statement of Intent. Direct discrimination includes discrimination by association and discrimination by perception. Associative discrimination is where someone is treated less favourably than another person because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic. Discrimination by perception is where someone is treated less favourably because others think they possess a protected characteristic even if they do not actually possess that characteristic
- Indirect discrimination occurs where someone is subjected to an unjustified provision, criterion or practice which puts the, at a particular disadvantage because of a protected characteristic. Indirect discrimination can be justified if it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim
- It is also unlawful discrimination to treat a disabled person unfavourably because of something arising in consequence of their disability. This type of discrimination can be justified if you can show that the treatment is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim
- Discrimination also includes victimisation which is where someone is treated badly because they have made a complaint or supported a complaint or raised a grievance about discriminatory action and it also includes harassment which is where a person is subjected to unwanted conduct related to a relevant 'protected characteristic' which has the purpose or effect of violating that person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for him/her

## Equality and Diversity in Recruitment, Selection, Development and Training

### Recruitment and Selection

This policy applies to all aspects of our relationship with employees and to relations between employees at all levels. This includes job advertisements, recruitment and selection, training and development, opportunities for promotion, conditions of service, pay and benefits, conduct at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and termination of employment.

The intention of the Company is to recruit the most suitable person for any position in a fair and non-discriminatory manner. It is essential that recruitment and selection procedures are based on objective criteria related to the needs of the job, and that such criteria are applied equally at all stages during the process to all applicants at all levels within the organisation.

### Recruitment Procedures

- All advertisements should conform to the Companies' Standard. Recruitment and publicity literature will state that the Company is an equality and diversity opportunities employer
- Each role advertised should be accompanied by a full job description and person specification.
- Vacancies should be publicised appropriately to as wide a range of suitable candidates as possible, personal word of mouth recommendations should not be used as the sole method of recruitment
- Employment agencies, where their use is required, should be made aware that the Company is an equality and diversity employer. Job advertisements should avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage groups with a particular protected characteristic from applying
- Equal opportunity information gathered at application stage should be stored anonymously for reporting purposes only. It should not be used to form part of the short-listing process under any circumstances; short-listing should be done by merit of application and by no other means, disclosure of such information should be optional to candidates
- Applicants should not be asked about past or current pregnancy or future intentions related to pregnancy. Applicants should not be asked about matters concerning any 'protected characteristics' without the approval of management (who should first consider whether such matters are relevant and may be lawfully taken into account)
- Candidates will not be asked health-related questions before a job offer is made except where the question is necessary to decide whether any reasonable adjustments should be made to the selection process, to establish whether a candidate will be able to carry out a function that is intrinsic to the job or to monitor diversity amongst people applying for jobs
- Should a candidate with a disability be invited to attend for interview, the Company shall make any reasonable adjustments necessary to facilitate their attendance. Candidates should advise the Company where such adjustments are necessary
- We will take appropriate and reasonable steps to accommodate the requirements of candidates' religions, cultures and domestic responsibilities
- Reasons for rejection of all candidates should be recorded
- We are required by law to ensure that all employees are entitled to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status should not be based on appearance or apparent nationality. All prospective employees, regardless of nationality, must be able to produce

original documentation (such as passport) before employment starts, to satisfy current immigration legislation

## Selection

The following guidelines should be observed when short-listing and interviewing candidates:

- Short-listing criteria should be objective, based on those skills, experience and knowledge necessary to carry out the job. The requirement for formal academic or professional qualifications may be waived if candidates clearly demonstrate their suitability by other means. Willingness to undergo training should be taken into account
- Similarly, it should not be assumed that overseas degrees or diplomas are of a lower standard than their equivalents in the UK. If in doubt there are a number of agencies such as UCAS who are able to determine the level of equivalence of overseas qualifications
- Interview questions should be relevant to the job; care being taken to ensure that no assumptions are made or leading questions asked relating to personal circumstances and future plans.
- Company interview report forms should be completed
- Skills, knowledge, ability and competence will be the main criteria for selection and promotion

## Employee Development and Training

The Company wish to ensure that no employee is disadvantaged in the provision of appropriate training and development opportunities. The following procedures should be followed:

- All employees will have access to and be encouraged to take advantage of suitable training and development opportunities
- Decisions relating to career development should be based on objective criteria which are fairly applied. The ability to meet the requirements of the position successfully should be the main criterion for promotion

Training is provided in order to increase the knowledge and skills of employees and all training course materials and content will reflect the Companies' position as an equality and diversity employer.

## Disability

If you are disabled, or become disabled in the course of your employment, you are encouraged to tell us about your condition as soon as possible in order that you can be supported and consideration can be given to making reasonable adjustments.

## Bullying and Harassment

**Bullying** - Aggressive behaviour arising from any deliberate or unintentional act that causes physical or psychological distress to others.

**Harassment** - Unwanted conduct related to a relevant 'protected characteristic' which has the purpose or effect of violating a persons' dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for him/her.

The Company seeks to embed a culture which eliminates bullying and harassment. All employees should treat others with the respect and dignity that they would expect for themselves. Bullying and harassment of others in any form will not be tolerated and will be dealt with under the Companies' disciplinary procedures. Bullying or harassment may be considered as acts of gross misconduct which can lead to dismissal.

Employees should read and adopt the procedures detailed under the section 'How to make a complaint' where they consider acts of bullying or harassment have taken place.

## Victimisation

Victimisation occurs where an individual is subjected to a detriment because they have brought proceedings under the Equality Act 2010; or gave evidence or information in connection with proceedings under the Equality Act 2010; or done any other thing for the purposes of or in connection with the Equality Act 2010; or raised a grievance/allegation about discriminatory behaviour. It is unlawful and contrary to this policy to victimise individuals. Employees found guilty of victimisation or inducing others to discriminate in connection with their employment with the Company, or intentionally failing to comply with this policy will be subject to the Companies' disciplinary procedure.

## Human Rights

The Companies' business activities are pursued with respect for human rights. As such, we need to ensure and to demonstrate that we treat all employees fairly, legally, with respect and with dignity. It is not acceptable to abuse the human rights of either individuals or groups of individuals and the Company endeavours to operate in a manner consistent with the principles of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the core International Labour Organisation Conventions areas (freedom of association, collective bargaining, non-discrimination, prohibition of child labour and of forced labour).

We will not participate in, contribute to or obtain information from any blacklist or other similar service which undermines these principles.

## Part-time Work

We monitor the conditions of service of part-time employees and their progression to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits and training and promotion opportunities. We will ensure requests to alter working hours are dealt with appropriately.

## Management Responsibilities

The Equality and Diversity Policy depends upon not just the commitment of employees, but also of all directors and managers who will take a lead in implementing this policy and making themselves aware

of what the law requires of them. Management is responsible for ensuring that the workplace is free of discrimination (including harassment, bullying and victimisation) and must take prompt action to resolve complaints and prevent any further recurrence.

## Employee Responsibilities

The Company encourages all employees to take responsibility for their personal involvement in the practical application of this policy, and for creating a work environment which eliminates all forms of discrimination, bullying, harassment and victimisation.

Any employee found to have breached this Equality and Diversity Policy in their working relations with others will be subject to the disciplinary procedures detailed in the employee handbook.

## Monitoring

As part of the Companies' commitment to equality and diversity, monitoring will be carried out at the recruitment stage, and at subsequent intervals during the individual's career. The Companies' new employee form includes sections which enable all employees to declare their ethnic origin and any disability they may have. Information from monitoring will assist with a system of management reporting which assesses the success of its equality and diversity policy, and the periodic reviews of this policy.

Information provided by job applicants and employees for monitoring purposes will be used only for these purposes and will be dealt with in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

## How to Make a Complaint

If any employee feels they have a grievance under this Equality and Diversity Policy they are encouraged in the first instance (if they wish) to make the issue known to the employee responsible for the behaviour and request that it should cease. Employees may also seek the direction and guidance of from a director or member of management in attempting to resolve matters in an informal manner. Make any concerns known to management as soon as possible.

Where it does not prove possible to reconcile issues informally, or if any employee does not for any reason want a matter dealt with informally, employees have the right to a formal hearing using the Companies' grievance procedure. This procedure is set out in the employee handbook which is provided to all employees on commencement of employment. Additional copies can be obtained upon request.

Grievances linked to equality and diversity will be dealt with in the strictest confidence and will not prejudice the employee's current employment status or future career prospects. Vexatious allegations or a breach of this policy may however be considered a disciplinary offence.

Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated on confidence and fully investigated.

This policy will be communicated to all persons working for and on behalf on Solent Blind and Curtain Company.

This policy will be reviewed annually but the Company will continually endeavour to improve our practices.

Signed:



Position: Company Secretary

Date:

This revision dated: February 2017

Last revision dated: June 2016