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## EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

### Introduction:

We aim to provide high-quality services that meet customer needs and aspirations, supporting and developing our staff, and managing our resources effectively and responsibly working in partnership with stakeholders and local communities.

### Policy statement:

Optimum Heating Ltd have implemented a structured approach to Equality & Diversity and will continue to maintain and improve on our coordinated and structured approach to promoting equality of opportunity across all the protected characteristics e.g. race, sex, disability, age, gender identity/reassignment, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity.


This policy applies to all persons working for us or on our behalf in any capacity, including employees at all levels, directors, officers, agency workers, seconded workers, volunteers, agents, contractors and suppliers.

### Our commitment:

Through effective governance and operational management we are committed to promoting

- equality, diversity and social inclusion amongst our stakeholders, customers, clients, staff and all those we work with challenging and eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation treating everyone with dignity, fairness and respect at all times.
- providing responsive and accessible services that meet individual needs
- demonstrating our understanding of the different needs of our customers, including the relation to the protected characteristics and customers with special needs.
- working towards management and staff profiles which are representative of the communities we work in.
- reviewing and monitoring our equality, diversity and inclusion activities to ensure we do what we say we will do
- having due regard to:
  - eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
  - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
  - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
  - ensuring this policy and associated arrangements shall operate in accordance with statutory requirements. Full account will be taken of any guidance or codes of practice issued by the equality and Human Rights Commission, any government departments and other statutory or regulatory bodies.

We take seriously our legal duty to provide our services and employment opportunities fairly and without unlawful discrimination, and we keep to all relevant codes of practice.

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#### **MEETING THESE COMMITMENTS:**

##### **Our services:**

We meet these commitments by:

- promoting an environment that gives all we come into contact with an equal chance to live free of discrimination and prejudice
- removing any barriers that limit access to services and where possible tailor service delivery to meet individual needs
- providing accessible information and a variety of ways to suit all customers.
- ensuring that organisations providing services on our behalf, work in accordance with this policy.
- carrying out equality impact assessments of new and existing policies and practices to make sure that they are fully inclusive and monitor
- compare and benchmark our services against those provided by similar organisations building on good practice.

##### **Our Management and staff:**

We meet these commitments by:

- being an inclusive employer – our aim is that our staff and management reflect the diversity of the communities in which we work.
- maintaining an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all our staff and management are recognised and valued.
- developing and promoting recruitment policies and practices that give everyone equal access to employment opportunities with us.
- challenging and eliminating all discrimination.
- promoting dignity and respect to all.
- exercising zero tolerance of intimidation, bullying or harassment, and ensuring that everyone knows about their rights of protection.
- making sure that staff and management know and understand the purpose of this policy.
- setting performance targets to measure our progress in these areas.
- ensuring training, development and progression opportunities are available to all staff.


##### **Our procurement:**

We meet these commitments by:

- ensuring our procurement strategy and practices reflect our commitment to equality, diversity and social inclusion
- engaging with consultants, subcontractors and suppliers who share our values
- ensuring that our consultants, subcontractors and suppliers regularly review and monitor that their respective services take account of equality issues.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION AND COMMUNICATION**

##### **Responsibilities of management:**

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Responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation of the policy and operation of the arrangements will rest with the Managing Director. Directors and Managers who ensure that they and their staff operate within this policy and arrangements, and that all reasonable and practical steps are taken to avoid discrimination. Each manager will ensure that:

- all their staff are aware of the policy and the arrangements, and the reasons for the policy.
- grievances concerning discrimination are dealt with properly, fairly and as quickly as possible in accordance with our Policy (Staff Handbook).
- appropriate records are maintained.
- the policy and the arrangements are communicated to all respective partners, consultants, subcontractors and suppliers.
- that guidance and information on our approach and general information on equality, diversity and inclusion is available in each department/on each site as appropriate.

**Responsibilities of staff:**

Responsibility for ensuring that there is no unlawful discrimination rests with all staff and the attitudes of staff are crucial to the successful delivery of fair employment practices. In particular, all members of staff should:

- comply with the policy and arrangements
- not discriminate in their day to day activities or induce others to do so
- not victimise, harass or intimidate other staff, individuals or groups who have, or are perceived to have one of the protected characteristics.
- ensure no individual is discriminated against or harassed because of their association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.
- inform their manager if they become aware of any discriminatory practice.

**Equality training:**


Training will be given to all staff as part of our Induction process and repeated as necessary.

Training will be provided for managers on this policy and the associated arrangements. All managers who have an involvement in the recruitment and selection process will receive specialist training.

**Monitoring:**

The Management Team are responsible for monitoring the operation of the policy and the arrangements, by reviewing reports on periodic departmental audits, in respect of:

- employees – this will involve the routine collection and analysis of information on employees by race, sex, disability, age, gender identity/reassignment, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity, grade and length of service in current grade. Information regarding the number of staff who declare themselves as disabled will also be maintained.
- job applicants – there will also be regular assessments to measure the extent to which recruitment to first appointment, internal promotion and access to training/development opportunities affect equal opportunities for all groups.

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- the information collected for monitoring purposes will be treated as confidential and it will not be used for any other purpose. If monitoring shows that the company, or areas within it, are not representative, or that sections of our workforce are not progressing properly within the organisation, then an action plan will be developed to address these issues. This will include a review of recruitment and selection procedures, policies and practices as well as consideration of taking legal Positive Action.
- our service standards and customer involvement
- customer profiling/segmentation, with reference to targeting at-risk groups to match service provision to customer needs.
- procurement strategy and practices.
- equality impact assessments, considering alternative ideas and reporting on results/lessons learnt.
- harassment and bullying.
- reviewing the performance and setting of equality objectives at least every four years together with equality information annually, to demonstrate our compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

**Review:**

The effectiveness of this policy and associated arrangements will be reviewed every two years, or earlier in the event of significant social, demographic, legal or regulatory changes.

**ACTIONS IN DETAIL:**

**Religion or Belief:**

We will promote the understanding and mutual respect amongst those with or without religious beliefs.


We will comply with all legislation seeking to promote understanding and mutual respect between religious groups.

**Specifically:**

- we will avoid arranging appointments or meetings on days having religious significance for the individual/s concerned.
- we will assess our policies to ensure that they do not have an indirect or direct effect on any religious group.
- we will consider how we can work with local religious groups/agencies to promote understanding and mutual respect.
- We will work to eliminate religious intolerance among or against our staff, customers and contacts.
- we will provide guidance to staff to promote a better understanding of religious traditions found in the communities in which we work.
- we will request information regarding the religious, or other, beliefs held by the customer groups to which we are delivering a service.

**Race or ethnicity:**

We will promote good relations between varying ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds.

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We will implement all legislation seeking to eliminate discrimination and promote understanding, equality and good relations between people from varying ethnic origins, racial groups and cultural backgrounds.

- we will train staff to avoid the promotion of racial stereotypes.
- we will request information regarding the race and ethnicity of the customer groups and communities to which we are delivering a service.
- we will provide information in different languages (to be identified by the above).
- we will assess our policies to ensure they do not have an unequal effect (directly or indirectly) on any ethnic group/s.
- we will act quickly and effectively to challenge and eliminate harassment, bullying or prejudice.
- we will provide assistance wherever necessary to ensure everyone has fair and equal access to the services provided by us on behalf of the client.
- we will promote race equality amongst our staff, sub-contractors, suppliers and consultants and others that we may be working with.

**Disability:**

We will ensure that disabled people benefit from our services in the same way as all others.

We will ensure our staff, sub-contractors, suppliers, consultants and others that we are working with are aware of their obligations under the latest codes of practice and legislation.


We promote a positive attitude towards the disabled and ensure our staff are aware of our duty to make reasonable adaptations to facilities or to provide alternative facilities to enable disabled people to access services; this may be treating the disabled more favourably.

- we will monitor to ensure our policy is followed and is achieving the desired results.
- we will train staff to understand the definition of “disabled person” which includes physical disability, hearing loss, visual impairment, learning disability or mental health issues.
- we will request information regarding the disability status of the customers to which we are delivering a service in order that we can ensure the service takes their needs into account.
- we will encourage job applicants and staff to tell us about any disability.
- we will regularly review policies and procedures to ensure that the needs of disabled people are considered.
- We will regularly review our premises, facilities and literature and adapt them as necessary to ensure they are accessible to disabled people.
- we will train our staff to understand their obligations towards disabled people and the duty to make reasonable adjustments to the work or the environment.

**Sexuality:**

We will comply with all legislation that supports equality, diversity and the inclusion of people of different sexual orientation.

- we will train staff to promote positive attitudes towards gay, lesbian and transgender individuals and groups.
- we will ensure our policies recognize the rights of same sex partner relationships.

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- Promote equal opportunities for gay lesbian and transgender individuals and groups.
- we will request information regarding the sexual orientation of our customers to ensure that we are aware of any possible discrimination.
- we will take disciplinary action against staff who harass or discriminate against individuals due to their sexual orientation.
- we will review policies and procedures to improve equality of opportunity for gay, lesbian and transgender individuals.

#### **Age:**

We will not restrict people on the grounds of age and we will comply with all legislation and codes of practice.

- we will train staff in the law relating to age discrimination.
- we will ensure that our services are not unfairly allocated on the grounds of age.
- we will invite job applications from all qualified individuals regardless of age.
- we will ensure that there are no age limitations imposed by contracts we are requested to enter into.
- we will regularly review policies and procedures to ensure that they do not adversely affect staff or the recipients of our services.
- we will continue to employ and provide services to people of all ages.

#### **Gender & Gender reassignment:**

We will promote equal opportunities for all gender groups eliminating unlawful discrimination and harassment. We will ensure that our staff, customers and others we come into contact with are not discriminated against due to their gender whether it be male, female or transgender.


- we will review pay structures to ensure that we pay equally.
- we will set targets for achieving gender equality in representation at all levels within the organisation.
- we will train staff to promote positive attitudes towards all gender groups.
- we will assess the impact of current and proposed policies and procedures on gender equality.

#### **Marriage & civil partnership:**

We will promote equal opportunities for all partnerships eliminating unlawful discrimination and harassment. We will ensure that our staff, customers and others we come into contact with are not discriminated against due to the status of their partnership.

- we will review pay structures to ensure that we pay equally.
- we will train staff to promote positive attitudes towards all partnerships.
- we will assess the impact of current and proposed policies and procedures on partnership equality.

#### **Pregnancy & maternity:**

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We will not restrict people on the grounds of Pregnancy or maternity and we will comply with all legislation and codes of practice.

- we will train staff in the law relating to our obligations in respect Pregnancy & maternity.
- we will ensure that our services are not unfairly allocated on the grounds of Pregnancy or maternity.
- we will invite job applications from all qualified individuals.
- we will ensure that there are no limitations imposed by contracts we are requested to enter into.
- we will regularly review policies and procedures to ensure that they do not adversely affect staff or the recipients of our services.
- we will continue to employ and provide services to all.