

**Equal Opportunity Policy - England**

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<b>Version</b>	5
<b>Policy Contact</b>	Matthew Betteridge
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<b>Target Audience</b>	Staff & Agency Workers
<b>Approved by</b>	OneCall24 Policy Team

The purpose of this Equal Opportunities Policy is to communicate our commitment to equality of opportunity in employment, with the aims of ensuring that all employees and job applicants are treated fairly and equally, and supporting the One Call 24's (OC24's) objective of providing a working environment that is free from all forms of discrimination.

The policy applies to all staff within the Company, including employees and other workers, such as agency workers, temporary workers and contractors. All staff are expected to put this policy into practice.

Any questions about the policy should be directed to Matthew Betteridge.

OC24 is fully committed to providing equality in the workplace and all opportunities for, and during employment, will be afforded to individuals fairly and irrespective of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race including colour, ethnic or national origins and nationality, religion or belief or sexual orientation ("the protected characteristics"). OC24 aims to create a working environment that is free from discrimination and harassment in any form, in which all staff, clients and suppliers are treated with dignity and respect.

The Company will not unlawfully discriminate in the arrangements we make for recruitment and selection or in the opportunities afforded for employment, training or any other benefit. All decisions will be made fairly and objectively. OC24 aims, as far as reasonably practicable, to ensure that all our working practices are applied fairly and consistently and, where necessary, we will take reasonable steps to avoid or overcome any particular disadvantage these may cause and to promote equality.

OC24 has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and associated legislation and for observing relevant Codes of Practice.

The Policy Team is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the policy and for ensuring that all employment-related policies, procedures and practices adhere to this policy.

All staff have a responsibility not to discriminate or harass other staff clients, and suppliers and to report any such behaviour of which they become aware to the board of directors.

Managers and Directors are responsible for implementing the Equal Opportunities Policy and must apply the policy as part of their day-to-day management of the Company.

### **Forms of discrimination**

The following are forms of discrimination that this policy aims to avoid:

Direct Discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic that they either have or are thought to have. Direct discrimination can also occur by way of association, which is when a person is treated less favourably because, for example, their spouse or partner or other relative has the protected characteristic.

Indirect Discrimination occurs when a provision, criterion or practice is applied equally to everyone, but has a disproportionately adverse effect on people who share a particular protected characteristic. A person with the protected characteristic who is disadvantaged in that way has the right to complain.

To be justified the provision, criterion, or practice must be necessary for legitimate business reasons in circumstances where less discriminatory alternatives are not reasonably available.

Victimisation occurs where someone is treated unfavourably because he/she has raised a complaint under this policy or taken legal action, in relation to any alleged act of unlawful discrimination, against the Company or because he/she has supported someone else in doing this.

Harassment is unwanted conduct that violates an individual's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment can take many different forms and may involve inappropriate actions, behaviour, comments, emails or physical contact that causes offence or are objectionable.

Harassment may involve a single incident or persistent behaviour that extends over a period of time and can occur even if someone did not mean to cause offence. It also means that a person can be subjected to harassment by behaviour that is not aimed at them directly but which they nonetheless find unpleasant.

Harassment is always unacceptable and where it relates to a protected characteristic it will amount to an unlawful act of discrimination.

Discrimination arising from Disability - In addition to the above, it is unlawful to treat a person unfavourably because of something that is the result, effect or outcome of their disability, unless the treatment is necessary and can be objectively justified. Furthermore, employers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled applicants, employees or other workers are not substantially disadvantaged.

### **Creating equal opportunities in the workplace**

There are a number of ways in which OC24 aims to ensure equal opportunities in the workplace, including:

**Recruitment and selection**

Recruitment and selection procedures will be free from bias or discrimination. Recruitment procedures will be conducted objectively and will be based upon specific and reasonable job-related criteria. Decisions regarding an individual's suitability for a particular role will be based on aptitude and ability.

OC24 will consider making appropriate reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process to ensure that disabled applicants are not substantially disadvantaged.

**Career development and training**

All staff will be given an appropriate induction to enable them to fulfil the responsibilities of their role.

All employees will be encouraged to develop their full potential and we will not unreasonably deny an employee access to training or other career development opportunities. These will be determined objectively, taking into account the needs of the business and available resources.

Selection for promotion will be based on objective criteria and decisions will be made on the basis of merit.

**Employment policies and practices**

OC24 aims to ensure that employment policies and practices, including any rules or requirements, do not directly or indirectly discriminate and are applied in a non-discriminatory manner. In particular OC24 will ensure that all disciplinary decisions are fair and consistent and that selection for redundancy is based on objective criteria.

OC24 will consider making appropriate reasonable adjustments to the working environment or any work arrangements that would alleviate any substantial disadvantage these cause disabled staff.

OC24 will aim as far as reasonably practicable to accommodate the requirements of different religions and cultures and will consider requests from employees to vary or change their working hours to enable them to care for a dependant.

**Review**

This policy statement will be reviewed annually as part of our commitment to upholding professional standards. It may be altered from time to time in the light of legislative changes, operational procedures or other prevailing circumstances.