

## Respect and Inclusion Policy

*We will trust and respect each other  
Our inclusive working environment will be supportive and friendly*

### 1.0 Principles

- 1.1 Higgs & Sons is fully committed to achieving a working environment which provides equality of opportunity to all existing and potential staff. We value the diversity of our workforce and all the visible and non visible differences that our staff bring to the firm. Our aim is to remove any barriers for staff in order for them to realise their full potential in a transparent culture.
- 1.2 It is the firm's policy to treat all staff and job applicants fairly and equally. That means treating everyone as individuals regardless of their age, gender, disabilities, marital status, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, responsibility for dependants, religion, belief, trade union activity or sexual orientation.
- 1.3 As a firm we strive to attract talent from the widest possible pool available. We remain fundamentally committed to the principles of a meritocracy. All appointments will be made on the basis of the most capable person for the role.
- 1.4 This policy applies at all times and should influence the way we treat individuals whether they be colleagues, clients or business contacts. The policy impacts on recruitment, career development and training, discipline, redeployment, dismissal and redundancy, terms of employment, pay and benefits and the way we go about our business. The policy also applies to all suppliers that are commissioned through the supply chain.
- 1.5 Compliance with statutory or other requirements may create exceptions. For example:
  - where a genuine occupational requirement is appropriate
  - treatment of certain ex-offenders in occupations listed by government.
- 1.6 We are committed to respect human rights and believe that diversity benefits and adds value to our business. A diverse workforce helps to stimulate creativity and innovation through the introduction of fresh thinking and approaches.
- 1.7 We will therefore not tolerate any processes, attitude or behaviour that may amount to unfair discrimination, including harassment, victimisation and bullying through prejudice, ignorance or stereotyping.
- 1.8 We are also committed to an environment that is free from harassment, bullying and victimisation. All allegations of inappropriate behaviour will be investigated and dealt with accordingly. We will not tolerate behaviour that has an adverse impact on our staff, clients or suppliers.

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- 1.9 We will ensure that harassment of any member of our staff is dealt with promptly and systematically according to agreed procedures.

### **2.0 Business commitment and ownership**

- 2.1 Higgs & Sons aims to position Respect and Inclusion as a mainstream business issue with ownership and engagement across the firm.
- 2.2 We are committed to providing a workplace that is fair, transparent and equitable and one that is free from discrimination and harassment. We will value all differences, both visible and non visible, across our staff, suppliers and clients.
- 2.3 Higgs & Sons is a vibrant and diverse community – where we aim to create a working environment in which all individuals are respected and are able to make the best use of their skills and capabilities. We will maintain a culture of meritocracy in all relevant decisions and ensure the principles of fairness and equity are practised.
- 2.4 We do not discriminate against staff on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. These are known as the protected characteristics as outlined in appendix 1.
- 2.5 Higgs & Sons will not condone any form of discrimination by or against a member of staff unless there is a specific legal exemption. The various types of discrimination which this policy covers are outlined in appendix 2.
- 2.6 We will endeavour to embed this policy into everyday activities to ensure that Respect and Inclusion is part of the way that our business is conducted.
- 2.7 We will ensure that all staff are fully aware of and conversant with this policy and implement the principles on an ongoing basis. Any material updates and additions will be reflected in regular staff communications.

### **3.0 Training**

- 3.1 We will provide training in equal opportunities to managers and others likely to be involved in recruitment or other decision making where fairness and equality issues are likely to arise.

We will provide training to all existing and new staff and others engaged to work with us to help them understand their rights and responsibilities under this policy and what they can do to help create a working environment free of bullying and harassment. We will provide additional

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training to managers to enable them to deal more effectively with complaints of bullying and harassment.

After the initial awareness training which all staff will attend, refresher training will take place at appropriate future intervals.

### 4.0 Responsibilities

- 4.1 Every member of staff is required to assist us to meet our commitment to provide equal opportunities in employment and avoid unlawful discrimination.

Individual members of staff can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, us for any act of unlawful discrimination. Staff who commit serious acts of harassment may be guilty of a criminal offence.

Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against staff or third parties are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure. Discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to summary dismissal (i.e. without notice or payment in lieu of notice).

To ensure that all individuals are aware of the terms and implications of this policy, specific responsibility is vested in the following:

- **The Managing Partner**

The Managing Partner is responsible for introduction of the policy and monitoring its implementation. The Managing Partner will ensure that all individuals receive adequate support, guidance and awareness in the existence, implementation and maintenance of this policy.

- **Partners**

All Partners are required actively to discourage discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation on the grounds of any protected characteristic and to use their best endeavours to prevent such discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation taking place. Therefore, all Partners should ensure that they are fully conversant with the terms of this policy and their responsibilities thereunder. Further, all Partners should ensure that all staff for whom they are responsible are aware of this policy and the need to adhere to its provisions, and that breaches of this policy will result in disciplinary action which may result in dismissal.

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All Partners must ensure that any complaints made under this policy are dealt with promptly and in a sensitive manner.

All Partners should ensure that no potentially offensive material is displayed or circulated in the workplace.

All staff, regardless of seniority, have a duty and responsibility to comply with the requirements of this policy.

### **5.0 Grievances and complaints**

- 5.1 If have a concern in relation to how you have been treated at work, you should in the first instance contact your manager or a member of the Human Resources team who will seek to try and resolve any issues. We would hope it may be possible to find a solution informally.

If you consider that you may have been unlawfully discriminated against, you may use our grievance procedure to make a complaint.

We will take any complaint seriously and will seek to resolve any grievance that is upheld. You will not be penalised for raising a grievance, even if your grievance is not upheld, unless your complaint is both untrue and made in bad faith.

Use of our grievance procedure does not affect your right to make a complaint to an employment tribunal. Complaints to an employment tribunal must normally be made within three months beginning with the act of discrimination complained of.

### **6.0 Monitoring and Review**

- 6.1 This policy, our performance and workforce diversity will be monitored annually by us to judge its effectiveness and will be updated in accordance with changes in the law. If changes are required, we will implement them.

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

The firm commits to open and honest dealings in its decisions and as such endeavours to record relevant information in order to ensure discrimination does not occur.

Save as required by law, this procedure is a statement of policy only and does not form part of an employee's contract of employment and may be changed by the Firm in its absolute discretion at any time

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### Appendix 1: Definition of terms

The following are Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010:

- **Age:** A person belonging to a particular age group.
- **Disability:** a person with a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse affect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
- **Gender reassignment:** This applies to a person who proposes to, starts or has completed the process to change his or her gender.
- **Marriage and civil partnership:** Marriage is defined as a 'union between a man and a woman'. Same-sex couples can have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must be treated the same as married couples on a wide range of legal matters.
- **Pregnancy and maternity:** A woman is protected against discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity during the period of her pregnancy and for the duration of any statutory maternity leave that she takes.
- **Race:** A group of people defined by their colour, nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins. A racial group can be made up of two or more different racial groups (eg Asian Britons).
- **Religion or belief:** A religion must have a clear structure and belief system. Belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs or a lack of such belief. Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.
- **Sex:** A man or a woman.
- **Sexual orientation:** An individual's sexual attraction, either towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes i.e. bisexual, gay, heterosexual and lesbian people.

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### Appendix 2: Types of Discrimination

The following types of discrimination are covered under the Equality Act 2010:

- **Direct Discrimination:** This occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have, or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic.
- **Perceptive Discrimination:** This is a form of direct discrimination against a person because they are thought to have a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if that person does not actually possess that characteristic.
- **Associative Discrimination:** This is a form of direct discrimination against a person because they associate with another person who possesses a particular protected characteristic.
- **Indirect Discrimination:** A rule, condition or policy that applies to everyone but disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic.
- **Harassment:** This can be defined as any behaviour, whether deliberate or otherwise, directed at an individual relating to a protected characteristic, which is found to be offensive or objectionable to the recipient or creates an intimidating or threatening environment. An individual can complain of offensive behaviour, even if it is not directed at them. The harassment can be by another employee or by a third party such as customers or clients.
- **Victimisation:** An individual is treated less favourably, because they have made or supported a complaint or grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or are suspected of doing so.