

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Policy

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Approved and signed off by:

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1 Background

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. Before the Act came into force there were several pieces of legislation to cover discrimination, including:

- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Sexual orientation) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2003

2 Purpose

Skills North East Ltd. (SNE) is committed to creating a culture in which equality of opportunity and diversity are promoted actively and in which unlawful discrimination is not tolerated.

SNE recognises the real educational and business benefits of having a diverse community of staff and learners and is working towards building and maintaining an environment which values and celebrates diversity.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that in carrying out its activities SNE will have due regard to:

- Promoting equality of opportunity, across all its activities.
- Fostering and promoting good relations between people of a diverse background.
- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Encouraging participation of all.

3 Scope

This policy applies to all workers including employees, consultants, temporary workers, agency staff, secondees and other third parties working on behalf of SNE for all learning programmes including apprenticeships. It applies to the Board in the discharge of their duties. It also applies to suppliers, sub-contractors, and agencies in our supply chain. This Policy sets out how SNE will address the needs of people and communities who have protected characteristics as specified within Equality Act 2010.

4 General Principles

SNE programmes will be inclusive by: engaging with all stakeholders fairly; delivering value through effective management of the design and building and operating a safe, sustainable, and reliable system to provide exceptional levels of service to passengers creating a diverse, inclusive, and skilled workforce at all levels; building a diverse supply chain that promotes fair employment practices and brings economic benefits to all.

5 Definitions

Equality is defined as having equal rights and opportunities, being treated fairly, and having the support to reach one's potential.

Diversity is defined as the appreciation and respect of people's differences, including their values, beliefs, cultures, and lifestyles.

Inclusion is about creating an environment where people feel valued, respected, and safe. It also involves ensuring equality of opportunity and removing discrimination.

Equity recognises that everyone is different and has differing needs and circumstances and is focused on the actions taken to achieve a state of equality of outcome.

This policy will be implemented as follows:

6 Delivery:

SNE will seek to:

- Embed equality, diversity, inclusion and equity in all its activities
 - All new staff will receive training upon induction and subsequent annual refresher training, unless required sooner, to maintain knowledge and understanding of these key principles.
- Work with stakeholders, including:
 - communities and interest groups; and
 - local and national government, professional bodies, and industry.
- Approach its activities proactively by:
 - minimising the potential for discrimination, harassment, and bullying
 - seeking out opportunities to promote inclusive development
 - seeking out the views of stakeholders; and
 - taking necessary steps so that people with protected characteristics do not experience disproportionate disadvantage because of the planning, design, construction, and operation of SNE programmes.
- Create opportunities for local, disadvantaged, and underrepresented people and companies to benefit from the investment in SNE programmes by:
 - increasing equal opportunity, skills, and employment; and
 - promote equal outcomes in the services the SNE programmed will provide

6.1 LGBTQ+

SNE are committed to promoting a safe and inclusive environment for those employed and studying SNE. This is achieved through promoting knowledge and training to staff in relation to terminology used in this area and understanding the impact that discrimination and harassment has upon those within this community. At SNE, we ensure that our working environment for staff, visitors, learners, and contractors facilitate an open and safe environment, where no individual will face discrimination or harassment because of them being part of the LGBTQ+ community. We undertake to ensure that where individuals face discrimination or harassment, in relation to any of the protected characteristics

of the Equality Act 2010, a full and robust investigation will be completed, and the companies' Disciplinary Procedure implemented to protect individuals.

7 Workforce:

SNE is committed to equality, diversity, inclusion and equity in all aspects of recruitment and employment.

We will seek to achieve this in the following ways:

- Develop and implement recruitment and selection processes that are open and fair and that enable the selection of the best talent.
- Aim to build a workforce that reflects the communities it serves.
- Promote an environment free from discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation and tackle any behaviour that breaches this.
- Provide training support and encouragement to employees and workers so that they can develop their careers and enhance their contribution to the organisation.
- Make all employees and workers aware of their responsibility for promoting equality, diversity, inclusion and equity in their work; and
- Involve employees and workers and their representatives in the development implementation monitoring and review of human resources policies, procedures, and flexible working arrangements.

7.1 Inclusion

SNE recognises that people's differences are valued and used to enable everyone to thrive at work. An inclusive working environment is one in which everyone feels that they belong without having to conform, that their contribution matters, and they can perform to their full potential, no matter their background, identity or circumstances. An inclusive workplace has fair policies and practices in place and enables a diverse range of people to work together effectively. We believe in giving all employees and learners a voice, a voice that will be heard and listened to, a voice that will allow individuals to voice their opinions and thoughts without fear of repercussions.

We believe and commit to ensuring that individuals working within our organisations receive a remuneration package that reflects their experience and qualification only. We ensure that all individuals are included in all aspects of SNE programme working life and throughout the employee life cycle.

8 Underpinning principles

This policy is guided by the following principles, that:

- All staff, learners and visitors should enjoy a safe environment free from unfair/unlawful discrimination including harassment, bullying or victimisation.
- All learners and employees should have equal access to quality services that are made available by SNE.
- All staff and learners should have equal access to opportunities for personal, professional, or academic training and development, career progression and promotion opportunities.

- All staff and learners should be able to participate fully in the work and life of SNE and celebrate its diversity.
- Staff and learners at SNE should reflect the diversity of talent, experience and skills from the local, national and international pool from which it draws its learners and workforce.
- Positive action initiatives continue to be used to redress inequalities and unfair / unlawful discriminatory practice.

9 Responsibilities

All board members, management, staff and learners are responsible for ensuring SNE meets its legal obligations in respect of equal opportunities and maintains an environment where there is genuine inclusion and respect for diversity. Individual members of SNE are responsible for promoting equality of opportunity, contributing to an environment free of fear or intimidation and ensuring that their behaviour and actions do not amount to unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation.

Visitors to SNE, together with those contracted to work at or for SNE, will be expected to comply with this policy. Contractors or suppliers should also comply with equal opportunities legislation and if they are unable to demonstrate such compliance they should be excluded from consideration of the contract in question.

SNE recognises that it also has moral and social responsibilities that go beyond the legislation, and it will contribute to the wider process of change through all aspects of its work and practices to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Equity.

10 Procurement and Supply Chain Diversity:

SNE requires that contractors and suppliers of services comply with this policy. A copy of this policy will be provided to all consultants and suppliers appointed to work for all SNE programmes. All such organisations are required to make available the resources to comply with this policy, in the delivery of services they are providing. Failure to comply with the requirements of this policy may result in them being removed from SNE approved list of suppliers.

Procedures

11 Implementation of the Policy

The successful implementation of this policy relies on the mainstreaming of Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Equity issues within the SNE strategic plan, which in turn, is supported by operational plans. SNE will assess the impact of this policy on staff and learners to ensure it does not have an adverse impact for different groups of people, primarily in terms of race, sex and disability, as well as regarding age, religion/belief, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, sexual orientation and pregnancy and maternity.

12 Breach of the Policy

SNE will take seriously any instances or alleged incidents of non-adherence to the Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Policy by learners, staff or visitors. Such instances or allegations will be investigated and where appropriate will be considered under the relevant disciplinary procedure for staff or learners.

Regarding any breach of the policy by visitors, SNE will take appropriate action in relation to the nature of the incident.

13 Complaints

Any complaint will be taken seriously and dealt with in a timely and sensitive manner as indicated in the Complaints Policy and in accordance with the relevant Grievance and Disciplinary procedures.

14 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or earlier should it become necessary by the Quality Director.

15 Related Policies

Complaints Policy
Grievance Policy
Disciplinary Policy
Reasonable Adjustments Policy

16 References / Citations

More information can be found on the gov.uk website

[Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)