



Home Retail Group Equal Opportunities Policy

Introduction

This policy is part of the Home Retail Group Business Principles in respect of the Company's commitment to being an equal opportunities employer.

The Company is committed to promoting a working environment that is free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation. It is company policy to provide equal employment opportunities to all employees regardless of personal status and to prohibit all forms of discrimination. In order to achieve this, employment decisions will be based on merit, qualifications and abilities.

Any breach of this policy will be treated as a disciplinary matter.

Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, consultants and agency workers working within companies in the Home Retail Group.

Policy Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Prohibit all forms of discrimination in employment;
- Ensure that all employment practices and decisions are based on fair and objective criteria;
- Ensure that appropriate action is taken when the principles of this policy are breached.

Equal Opportunity in Employment

The Company prohibits discrimination on the grounds of: gender, marital status, sexual orientation, pregnancy, race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, religion or belief, disability, age, political opinion, trade union membership or any other legally protected status or form of harassment on any grounds. In addition, the Company will also not discriminate on the grounds of part-time status or 'spent' criminal convictions.

Treating an employee less favourably than other employees in the same circumstances on one of these grounds will amount to direct discrimination. In addition, employees should be aware that unlawful indirect discrimination can occur when the unjustified application of a provision, criterion or practice disadvantages an individual or group because they cannot comply with it.

Harassment and victimisation are forms of unlawful discrimination and will not be tolerated by the Company. Harassment is defined as unwanted conduct with the purpose or effect of either violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person. Victimisation is when an individual is subjected to unwanted and humiliating behaviour because he or she has made allegations of harassment or bullying or has acted as a witness in an investigation or complaint.

This policy applies to all aspects of the Company's working practices including: recruitment and selection of employees, terms and conditions of employment, promotion, training and development, post employment practices, such as the provision of employment references, and the general application of all policies. As such, the provisions of this policy apply to job applicants, current employees and former employees.

The Company also aims to facilitate flexible working arrangements, where practicable and in the interests of both parties, to support employees with care responsibilities outside work. The Company's Flexible Working Policy outlines alternative working arrangements, including the statutory right of working parents to request flexible working. This policy is [available on the Intranet](#) or from your HR department.

Disability Discrimination

It is the Company's policy to ensure that disabled employees and job applicants are treated with respect and dignity. The Company is committed to taking all reasonable steps in accommodating the needs of disabled people to enable them to be employed and to continue in employment where they are able to perform the functions of the job.

The Company will make every effort to make reasonable adjustments to the workplace and working arrangements to enable the recruitment of a disabled person or the continued employment of a current employee who becomes disabled. In certain circumstances, however, it may not be possible to make reasonable adjustments, such as when the building's physical features cannot be changed. If the Company cannot provide a safe working environment for a disabled person, it may not be possible to recruit a disabled applicant or to continue a disabled individual's employment.

Examples of the types of adjustments that may be considered include: the provision of specialist equipment and training; job redesign, where there is sufficient scope within the role and business area to do so; change to working pattern; or redeployment.

All decisions in relation to the employment of an individual who has a disability will be based on the individual's ability to do the job and a consideration of reasonable adjustments. Medical or Occupational Health advice will be sought to enable appropriate decisions to be made and the employee will be fully consulted in the process.

Treatment of Discrimination

The Company will view any breach of this policy or any other form of discriminatory action seriously and any employee who breaches the principles of this policy will be liable to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Employees who commit serious acts of harassment may also be guilty of a criminal offence.

Employees with questions or concerns about any type of discrimination in the workplace are encouraged to raise them with their line manager, or their line manager's manager where appropriate, or their HR department. An employee who wishes to make a formal complaint about discriminatory conduct should use the Company's Grievance Procedure. Where an employee feels that they are the subject of discrimination as a result of bullying, harassment or victimisation they should refer to the Company's Bullying and Harassment Policy, which provides guidance on raising and addressing such concerns.

Where a concern about discrimination is raised, all discussions will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be disclosed to anyone other than the individuals conducting the investigation. To ensure a full investigation takes place, it may be necessary to disclose information to others involved in the investigation. Any necessary disclosure of information will be clearly explained to the complainant.

Monitoring

To ensure that this policy is effectively implemented throughout the Company, equal opportunity monitoring will be undertaken by the HR department. The information that will be used for the purpose of monitoring may relate to an individual's gender, ethnic origin, grade, remuneration or any other criteria that the Company requires to assess the effectiveness of the application of this policy. The processing of this data will be in accordance with the Company's Data Protection Policy.

Policy Implementation and Responsibilities

All employees, irrespective of position, are expected to comply with this policy at all times and to act in accordance with its objectives.

It is the responsibility of the HR department to ensure that this policy is adequately implemented, monitored and maintained and to ensure that training on the application of this policy is provided to those with management and/or recruitment responsibilities where appropriate.

All managers/supervisors have a responsibility to ensure that their staff are aware of this policy and their obligation to comply with it and that employment practices within their areas of work support the principles of this policy.

