

Diversity and Inclusion Policy





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Introduction

The Company is committed to ensuring that all colleagues are treated equally and fairly and free from discrimination throughout their employment.

It is our aim to ensure that all colleagues achieve their full potential and that all employment decisions and actions are based only on ability and the requirements of the job. This includes for example, recruitment and selection, terms of conditions of employment, access to training, access to promotion and transfers.

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Who does this apply to?

This policy applies to all colleagues across the Countrywide Group (excluding LSH), including contractors and self-employed individuals in relation to service they provide the Company. It's a guide and doesn't form part of your contract.

What are my responsibilities?

All colleagues have a responsibility for ensuring that we create an inclusive environment for everyone, free from discrimination, bullying, victimisation and harassment.

Recruitment and Selection

The Company recognises the benefits of having a diverse workforce and will take steps to ensure that:

- We endeavour to recruit from the widest pool of suitably qualified candidates possible
- Employment opportunities are open and accessible to all on the basis of their ability, skills, experience, appropriate qualifications and aptitude for the job
- All recruitment agencies acting for the Company align with our equality and diversity requirements and their own requirement not to unlawfully discriminate.

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Terms and Conditions

It is the Company's policy to treat its people equally, to create a working environment which is free from unlawful discrimination and which respects, where possible, the diverse backgrounds and beliefs of colleagues.

Working arrangements such as working hours, maternity and other leave arrangements, performance review systems and any other conditions of employment will not unlawfully discriminate against any colleague in a way that cannot be justified on the basis of the protected characteristics.

Where appropriate, the Company will endeavour to provide appropriate facilities and working arrangements which take into account the specific needs of colleagues which arise from their having any of, or being associated with, the protected characteristics.

Promotion and Career Development

Promotion within the Company is made without reference to any of the protected characteristics and will be based solely on merit.

The selection criteria and processes for recruitment and promotion will be kept under review to ensure that there is no unlawful discriminatory impact on any particular group which cannot be justified.

While positive action measures may be taken in accordance with the relevant anti-discrimination legislation to encourage under-represented groups to apply for promotion opportunities, recruitment or promotion to all jobs will be based solely on merit.

All colleagues will have equal access to training and other career development opportunities appropriate to their experience and abilities. The Company may take appropriate positive action (as permitted by the anti-discrimination legislation) to provide special training and support for groups which are under-represented in the workforce and encourage them to take up training and career development opportunities.

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How do I report breaches of this policy?

If you feel that you have been subjected to unlawful discrimination as a result of a protected characteristic, you should use the Company Grievance Policy to report these concerns. A full investigation will be carried out and you will be informed of the outcome.

Any acts of unlawful discrimination will be taken extremely seriously and may result in disciplinary action, which in serious cases could result in summary dismissal. Please refer to the Company Disciplinary Policy for further information.

Legal Definitions

The Equality Act 2010 (and other applicable legislation) defines direct discrimination as less favourable treatment because of a protected characteristic. The protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Discrimination

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Direct discrimination

Occurs where a person is treated less favourably than another person because:

- they have a protected characteristic
- they are thought to have a protected characteristic
- they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic

Indirect discrimination

Occurs when a provision, criterion or practice (i.e. policy and procedure) that applies to everyone but adversely affects people with the protected characteristic more than others and is not justified

Disability at Work

The Equality Act 2010 places responsibilities on employers in relation to recruitment, promotion, transfer, training and development, of disabled people. Discrimination occurs when a disabled person is treated less favourably than someone without a disability and the unfavourable treatment relates to the disability and cannot be justified.

If a colleague has any form of disability, they should speak to their line manager or HR Services in the first instance, so that they can assess, where necessary, what reasonable adjustments can be made to help them perform their role to the best of their ability within the Company. All medical information will be treated as confidential and will only be shared as necessary.

Discrimination arising from disability

Occurs where a person is treated unfavourably because of something arising in consequence of their disability and that treatment is not justified.

Failure to make reasonable adjustments

Occurs where the Company fails to take such steps (adjustments) as are reasonable to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability

Change history

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Version no	Date	Change made by	Brief details of change
1.0	01/03/2019	Claire Raines	Launch of New Policy
1.1	22/01/2021	Claire Raines	Annual Review

Policy sign off

Name	Role	Date
Dan Thompson	Group HR Director	01/03/2019

Need more info?

If there are any queries relating to this document or any of the local supporting policies or standards please contact the HR Support Team (hrsupport@countrywide.co.uk or 01908 961200)

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Ownership and Confidentiality

This document should not be shared with any other third party without the written consent of Countrywide PLC. This policy and any associated documentation remains the property of Countrywide PLC and should be returned if requested.

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