

Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Aquaterra operates within multicultural and diverse communities. It is committed to the provision of equal opportunities for people whether these be staff, customers, contractors or partners (community or business). Further, it seeks to provide services sensitive to different communities' cultural needs and expectations, and to seek to ensure that employees' individual needs are equally met.
- 1.2 This policy will be emphasised during the recruitment of staff and reinforced during their employment. It will also be communicated as appropriate to customers, contractors and partners.
- 1.3 This policy relates specifically to the employment context. Aquaterra has adopted complementary policies in respect of its relationships with the wider community.
- 1.4 In reflection of Aquaterra's Core Values, this policy aims to ensure that all staff are treated equally regardless of their race, colour, national or ethnic group; their gender, marital status or sexual orientation; any disability they may have; their religion or belief; or their age.
- 1.5 The policy addresses issues of equality and diversity in recruitment, employment, working conditions, training, harassment and race relations.

2 Application of the policy

- 2.1 All employees of Aquaterra are bound by this policy. It will be communicated to all applicants and training in it will be provided during employees' induction and their probationary period.
- 2.2 The Chief Executive and all senior managers are responsible for implementing and monitoring the effectiveness of the policy. All managers and supervisors are expected actively to promote equality of opportunity and awareness of diversity issues in their own areas of responsibility, supported as appropriate by the Senior HR Officer.
- 2.3 All employees, regardless of their personal, cultural, religious or political beliefs, are required to adhere to the policy as a condition of their continued employment with Aquaterra. Failure to do so may lead to disciplinary action.
- 2.4 Recognised trade unions and the Staff Consultative Committee are expected to play a partnership role with Aquaterra management in the promotion, implementation and monitoring of this policy. In particular,

Aquaterra will welcome suggestions for alternative working arrangements and service conditions that will enable it better to meet the diverse needs of its workforce.

3 Definitions

3.1 Discrimination

- 3.1.1 This can take many forms, but generally is experienced either directly or indirectly.
- 3.1.2 Direct discrimination arises when an employee is treated less favourably than others in the same circumstances, on the basis of their race, colour, national or ethnic group; their gender, marital status or sexual orientation; any disability they may have; their religion or belief; or their age.
- 3.1.3 Indirect discrimination is experienced when conditions or requirements are set that will adversely affect one particular group of employees more than another and which cannot be justified in terms of what is required for them actually to do their job.
- 3.1.4 Aquaterra believes that discrimination is unjust and unfair to individuals and groups of employees, and results in fewer people from diverse backgrounds from making a significant contribution to its success. The organisation, in promoting policies that encourage diversity, recognizes that it will perform more effectively and sensitively both to its staff and the communities it serves.

3.2 Victimisation

This is similar to discrimination, but tends to be more malicious and persistent, is often planned and in response to some ill-perceived action by the victim.

3.3 Harassment

This is behaviour which is unwelcome, unpleasant, offensive or threatening to the person(s) toward whom it is directed. It takes many forms, occurs in a variety of situations and may be directed at an individual or group. Examples of harassment could include physical assault, verbal abuse, innuendo, threatening behaviour, or bullying.

4 Equality in recruitment

- 4.1 Irrespective of the recruitment method chosen, jobs will be open equally to all eligible candidates, and success will be only dependent upon an applicant's ability to perform the job role to the standard required.

- 4.2 Aquaterra's recruitment procedures will be fair, open and transparent, and every effort will be made to avoid any direct or indirect discrimination. Further, acknowledgment will be made to differing expectations of the recruitment process by diverse groups of applicants, and as far as possible and consistent with the high standards that Aquaterra sets for itself and its staff, adjustments will be made to meet these differing expectations. In this way, the make up of Aquaterra's workforce will better reflect the make up of the communities it serves.
- 4.3 Aquaterra will set out in advance the skills, experience and other qualities needed for the job. These criteria will be directly related to the requirements of the job and will be demonstrably measurable. Every applicant will be told what the criteria are, and they alone will be used as the basis for finding the most suitable person for the vacancy.
- 4.4 Staff involved in recruitment and selection are expected to be aware of diverse cultural perspectives and of practices to reduce the possibility of discrimination, and will be given appropriate training if necessary. Staff without such training will not normally make recruitment decisions alone.
- 4.5 Care will be taken to ensure that public advertisements are accessible to local communities so that there is opportunity to people of all backgrounds to apply. The targeting of recruitment will reflect the diversity of these communities, and where there is a substantial difference between their make-up and the structure of the relevant part of Aquaterra's workforce, the placement of advertisements may be weighted to encourage a better response from under-represented groups. Aquaterra will use all legal means to encourage applications from people who are currently under represented in its workforce, paying particular attention to the level and location of the job.

5 Equality in employment

- 5.1 Once they are employed, Aquaterra will ensure that all staff are treated equally in respect of their working conditions and are not subjected to any discrimination or harassment.
- 5.2 Aquaterra will comply with all anti-discriminatory legislation and codes of practice addressing issues of sex discrimination, discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, ethnicity or nationality, equal pay, disability discrimination, sexual orientation or marital status. It welcomes the protection and dignity offered to employees by the Human Rights Act.
- 5.3 Aquaterra will take steps to ensure that it provides a working environment that is accessible, safe and free from harassment for our employees, and which is welcoming to employees with varying cultural standards and to those with disabilities.
- 5.4 Aquaterra will not condone any form of discrimination against any employee, nor will it tolerate discrimination, harassment or victimisation by any employee. Allegations will be promptly investigated and breaches of this Policy may be subject to disciplinary action.

6 Equality and diversity in working conditions

- 6.1 Aquaterra will seek to offer flexible working arrangements, subject to the needs of the business, to those with dependants to care for, and job restructuring to improve opportunities for people with disabilities.
- 6.2 Where members of staff have a particular mobility, cultural or religious need which may conflict with existing work requirements, Aquaterra will consider what reasonably practicable steps it can take to vary or adapt these requirements to enable such needs to be met. This may include offering different working arrangements or revised conditions of service as appropriate.
- 6.3 Aquaterra will provide rehabilitation training, provision of equipment and access for employees with disabilities wherever it is reasonable to do so, to suit their particular circumstances and to enable them to continue to make a contribution to the success of the organisation. It will monitor both its policy and practice to ensure their effectiveness.

7 Equality in Training

- 7.1 Aquaterra's Training Plan seeks to ensure that all staff fulfilling the same role have equal access to the same type of training.
- 7.2 Training is intended to ensure that staff can attain the level of competency required by Aquaterra. Individual employee's training plans will vary from each other according to the ability or experience of the individual employee and their job role.
- 7.3 Opportunities for career development will be open to all staff with the identified ability and experience. This will be managed on the same principles as the recruitment process.
- 7.4 Aquaterra will provide diversity training to all staff in need of it, to create greater understanding of the diverse needs of colleagues and service users.

8 Dealing with cases of discrimination, victimisation or harassment

Any employee who suspects a case of discrimination, victimisation or harassment is encouraged to bring it to the attention of management. This may be done through Aquaterra's grievance procedure, but in recognition that instances of alleged harassment may be particularly sensitive, Aquaterra has also adopted special arrangements for investigating such allegations (see section 3.4 of Grievance Policy and Procedure). A case if proven may lead to disciplinary action being taken against a perpetrator.

9 Monitoring

- 9.1 Aquaterra will make regular checks to measure how far the make up of its workforce reflects the local communities it serves. This should inform

the organisation whether this policy is being fully effective in respect of our recruitment and retention of staff.

- 9.2 Where such monitoring has demonstrated that the workforce does not fully reflect the local community we serve, full investigations will be undertaken and if appropriate plans will be drawn up to tackle the causes of any possible discrimination.