

Equality and Diversity Policy

1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

1.1 Commun-IT is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all who learn and work here. Commun-IT is an organisation working within a diverse community. We respect and value positively differences in race, colour, ethnicity, gender, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion, class, economic status and size. Commun-IT will guard against unwitting or deliberate acts of discrimination that lead to disadvantage.

1.2 Commun-IT believes that equality can only be achieved by putting words into action. We hold our learners in the highest regard and value them, not just as learners and we value the unique contribution each and every learner brings to the Centre. We are committed to providing high quality training that will enable learners to secure rewarding employment and also to equip them with those skills necessary in interacting successfully with their colleagues in the workplace.

1.3 Commun-IT prides itself on its excellent record of equal opportunities. However, we are not complacent. We believe in identifying gaps in our service and strive to address under-representation and are continuously working towards improvement. By translating our Equal Opportunities Policy into action it is our aim to be one of the best training organisations in our area and recognised as a centre of choice for learners.

1.4 Commun-IT recognises that learners will look to its staff as models of equal treatment. Therefore, we will ensure that examples of good practice are visible throughout the company.

1.5 Commun-IT is committed to the following principles:

- ensuring that no student is denied a place on the course without justification
- the dignity of each individual is respected by his/her peers and staff
- the concerns and complaints of each individual are dealt with carefully and in such a way as to show that those concerns are valid and important
- where an individual has a complaint they will be supported in their efforts to seek redress
- under-represented groups will be actively encouraged to take part in any of our courses and other services that we provide; and
- where possible, appropriate services will be provided to meet the varied needs of our learners.

1.6 Equal opportunities issues will be discussed during induction and, additionally learners will have the opportunity to comment on equality issues at the end of the course when they will be invited to complete a questionnaire or participate in a discussion group.

2. DEFINITION OF DISCRIMINATION

2.1 Discrimination is defined as less favourable treatment received on grounds of gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, age, disability, class or economic status and size. Discrimination can manifest itself in the bullying and harassment of an individual, the unfair imposition of sanctions, such as disciplinary proceedings, withdrawal from a course, or the inconsistent application of the Centre's marking scheme. This list is not exhaustive.

2.2 During induction, both staff and learners will be inducted in the Centre's policies and procedures and their implementation.

2.3 The Centre will make clear its expectations of staff and learners. Contractors and other stakeholders who provide us with goods and services are expected to have their own policies and procedures or comply with Commun-IT's Equal Opportunities Policy and related procedures.

3. LEGISLATION

3.1 A number of different pieces of legislation within the UK have sought to address discrimination. They have included the Sex Discrimination 1975, Race Relations 1976 and Disability Discrimination 1995 Acts. They have been supplemented by various amendments many of which originate in European Union (EU) law rather than the domestic law of the UK itself. The key UK law is now the sex discrimination and the Equality act 2010 which has harmonised and brought together many previous pieces of legislation. It has also widened the scope of discrimination law in several important respects.

UK equality legislation now extends considerably beyond the area of employment and into the provision of education and training in the broadest sense and the wider supply of goods and/or services. Legislation outside the UK also addresses discrimination: for example the European Union Directives on Equal Pay and Equal Treatment of 1975 and 1976. Commun-IT is committed to abiding by all, current anti-discrimination legislation (and the related Codes of Practice)

4. RACE RELATIONS

4.1 Commun-IT recognises that learners and staff may have been discriminated against in society because of their colour, race, ethnicity and religion. Racism is in our society and requires decisive and specific action to counter it. It operates in very complex, covert and overt ways and is a serious barrier to educational aspirations, achievements and employment prospects of black and minority groups of learners. Commun-IT will take positive action to eliminate racism and its effects. Racial harassment will not be tolerated.

4.2 Commun-IT has the following principles:-

- to take positive action to encourage the recruitment and increase the success rates of black and minority ethnic learners on all programmes. The annual monitoring and quality improvement procedures evaluate performance of all programmes. These results will be monitored
- we will work to create a learning environment which is welcoming and supportive of black and minority groups of learners and staff
- We will respect and, where necessary provide for the practices which support learners' religious beliefs

5. DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

Commun-IT is committed to ensuring that disabled people are treated fairly. All reasonable adjustments to provision will be made to ensure that learners, staff and visitors with disabilities are not disadvantaged. Commun-IT will strive to ensure that no learners or staff are discriminated against or denied access to any service on the grounds of disability.

6. GENDER EQUALITY

6.1 Commun-IT is working to create a supportive and inclusive environment for both women and men which enables full access in learning and employment. Commun-IT will not allow sexual harassment or unfavourable treatment in any form.

6.2 We will monitor the participation, performance and progress of female and male learners and act to address inequalities.

6.3 Commun-IT will not tolerate sexual harassment in any area. The commitment of Commun-IT will be made explicit to learners and staff and sexual harassment and discrimination will be vigorously challenged through disciplinary procedures where necessary.

7. SEXUAL ORIENTATION

7.1 Commun-IT works actively to create a supportive and inclusive environment for all women and men. We will actively combat discrimination, sexual harassment or unfavourable treatment.

7.2 We strongly oppose discrimination on the grounds of sexuality and are committed to take positive action to identify and counter homophobia. Homophobic harassment will not be tolerated.

7.3 We will encourage a positive acceptance of, and recognition of the equal status for people representing the range of sexual orientation.

8. AGE DISCRIMINATION

8.1 Commun-IT is committed to ensuring that all staff are treated fairly irrespective of their age and has taken measures to ensure that it fully meets legislative requirements.

8.2 Age will not be a factor in any decisions made concerning recruitment & selection, access to employee benefits, opportunities for promotion or training, performance management, application of discipline or capability procedures or selection for redundancy.

8.3 Commun-IT demonstrates through its Equality and Diversity policy its commitment to ensure that all staff are treated fairly. The implementation of this policy will support and strengthen this commitment.

8.4 There is a recognition that age (young or old) can impact on performance. Issues such as inexperience or difficulty in quickly grasping new technologies can be as a result of age therefore performance management procedures will be monitored to ensure that disproportionate action is not being taken against any particular age group.

8.5 Commun-IT will consider all requests from staff to work on beyond the normal retirement age and any decision reached will take into consideration a number of factors such as workforce planning requirements, recruitment needs and training & development needs.

8.6 Staff who are retained beyond the normal retirement date will still be subject to normal rules regarding Performance & Development Review, Competency, Conduct and Occupational Health.

9. NON-DISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE

9.1 It is the wish of Commun-IT that both staff and learners are sensitive to each others' needs and become aware of positive language that causes a sense of belonging. The Centre is not advocating 'political correctness' that is devoid of any real appreciation of experiences of particular groups. Commun-IT will include an awareness raising session as part of its induction programme.

9.2 DISABILITY - People with disabilities do not fall into one group. Defining individuals in terms of their disability should be avoided. For example, 'epileptic' should be replaced with 'a person with epilepsy'. Tutors will take care to ensure that the content and design of their teaching materials takes into account the needs of disabled learners. Increasing the size of the

font and changing the typeface are two ways of making learning materials more accessible to learners with visual impairments.

9.3 GENDER - Commun-IT encourages staff and learners to be aware of the ways in which the male form is used when referring to an unspecified person. The Centre will undertake to review all of its literature for use of such language and will alter it to make all references gender neutral.

9.4 SEXUALITY - Commun-IT will actively discourage the negative stereotyping of bisexual, gay, heterosexual and lesbian orientations

9.5 Commun-IT is sensitive to the negative stereotyping, of racial groups, men and women, disabled people, lesbian and gay men and religious groups. We are committed to engaging openly with learners about any difficulties they may experience arising out of their perception that they are being treated differently.

9.6 Where a learner has concerns about different treatment, he/she can make an appointment with his/her tutor. The learner will be advised on how to deal assertively with the matter. If the problem persists, the Centre's complaints procedure will be initiated. The Centre will ensure that both the complainant and the person about whom the complaint is being made are supported.

10. POSITIVE ACTION

10.1 As part of the general duty to counter racial discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and positive relations between people of different racial groups, bodies that carry out a function on behalf of the public have a duty under law to monitor the impact of its policies by reference to race.

10.2 Commun-IT is committed to drawing on good practice and the Centre will be pro-active in recruiting learners from all walks of life and will take steps to assess the needs of all its learners in order to ensure that they are receiving the best service possible.

10.3 The Centre will also use statistics relating to the make up of the Borough to ensure that the intake of its learners reflects the Borough as a whole. We will do this by, for example, advertising our courses through voluntary and community organisations and national newspapers, and by becoming involved in Government-funded initiatives targeted at excluded members of society.

11. IMPLEMENTATION

The above policy and procedures are enforceable by ensuring all employees and learners have a thorough induction process and adhering to the appeals procedure.

Commun-IT is proactive in reaching out to an increasingly wide range of underrepresented groups and is attracting candidates from diverse backgrounds to its courses. We are champions of providing equal opportunities for all. We provide individually customised and responsive programmes to meet the needs of learners and employers.

Full use is made of learning support facilities within Commun-IT and throughout our Programme Centre. We provide free, fair assessments for all and we continuously improve our skills scan methods to reach as many people as possible. We track applicants from recruitment through to achievement and progression to ensure that no group is disadvantaged. We adopt learning style approaches to all the delivery of courses – thus we are aware from an early stage of any individual needs or preferences and do our best to find the best solution.