

## **Diversity & Equal Opportunities Policy**

Issue date: | July 2009

Authority: | Operations Director, Senior Management Team

Applicability | Covering all business divisions operating throughout the UK.



## **Introduction**

Safety Net Associates Limited recognises that it is essential to provide equal opportunities to all persons without discrimination. This policy sets out the organisation's position on equal opportunity in all aspects of employment, including recruitment and promotion, and provides guidance and encouragement to employees at all levels to act fairly and prevent discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, marital status, disability as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, part-time and fixed term contract status, age, sexual orientation or religion.

## **Vision Statement:**

- Safety Net Associates is committed to promoting equal opportunities.
- The Company values diversity and encourages fairness and justice.
- The Company wants equal chances for everyone to work, learn and live free from discrimination and victimisation.
- The Company will combat discrimination throughout the organisation and will use its position of influence in business, wherever possible, to help overcome discriminatory barriers.

## **In seeking to achieve this vision, the Company will strive to:**

- Encourage equality of opportunity for all people and actively promote good relations.
- Eliminate any conditions, procedures and individual behaviour that can lead to discrimination even where there was no intent to discriminate, with particular regard to:

## **Race; Gender; Disability; Sexuality; Age; Religion and Belief plus Employment issues.**

- Whilst recognising that individuals may experience disadvantage on more than one level.
- Offer services fairly to all people, ensuring that anyone in contact with the organisation is treated with respect, making provision for those groups within the community whose needs and expectations are less well met.
- Comply with all legislation dealing with discrimination and the promotion of equality, following the codes of practice issued to support this legislation.

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- Ensure all employment policies procedures, guidelines and circulars reflect and reinforce the Companies' commitment to equality.
- Ensure mechanisms are in place for responding to complaints of discrimination and harassment from employees and the public.
- Encourage disadvantaged groups and individuals to participate in the community.
- Make this policy known to all employees, job applicants, local citizens and partner organisations.
- Operate procurement practices and partnership arrangements that ensure others commissioned to provide services for the Company to have similar policies that cover equal opportunities.
- Periodically review the Equal Opportunities policy.

### **Supporting Guidelines**

The Equal Opportunities Policy is reinforced by guidelines specifically relating to accessibility and the Company's role as an employer.

### **Responsibility**

The Equal Opportunities Policy is covered by the company Directors for Co-ordination Services. Overall responsibility for the implementation of the policy lies with the Company directors. This Policy will come into effect from April 2009.

### **Definition of Discrimination**

(a) Discrimination can be direct or indirect. Both forms of discrimination must be avoided.

(b) Direct discrimination occurs when one person is treated less favourably than another on grounds relating to sex, race, marital status, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.

(c) Indirect discrimination occurs where a requirement is imposed which can be complied with by a smaller proportion of persons of a particular sex, race, marital status, disability, age, part-time or fixed term contract status, sexual orientation or religion, than persons in another group and which is not objectively justifiable in the given situation. Examples include:

- Seeking job applications only from persons under 27 years of age and with five years' post-graduate experience;

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- Demanding technical qualifications for a job which are not strictly necessary;
- Sending only full time employees on training courses.

### **Statement of policy**

(a) It is the policy of Safety Net Associates Limited to ensure that no job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of sex, race, marital status, disability, age, part-time or fixed term contract status, sexual orientation or religion, or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable. The organisation is committed not only to its legal obligations but also to the positive promotion of equality of opportunity in all aspects of employment.

(b) The organisation recognises that adhering to the Equal Opportunities Policy, combined with relevant employment policies and practices, maximises the effective use of individuals in both the organisation's and employees' best interests. Safety Net Associates Limited recognises the great benefits in having a diverse workforce with different backgrounds, solely employed on ability.

(c) The application of recruitment, training, and promotion policies to all individuals will be on the basis of job requirements and the individual's ability and merits.

(d) All employees of the organisation will be made aware of the provisions of this policy.

### **Recruitment and promotion**

(a) Advertisements for posts will give sufficiently clear and accurate information to enable potential applicants to assess their own suitability for the post. Information about vacant posts will be provided in such a manner that does not restrict its audience in terms of sex, race, marital status, disability, age, part-time or fixed term contract status, sexual orientation or religion.

(b) Recruitment literature will not imply a preference for one group of applicants unless there is a genuine occupational qualification, which limits the post to this particular group, in which case this must be clearly stated.

(c) All vacancies will be circulated internally.

(d) All descriptions and specifications for posts will include only requirements that are necessary and justifiable for the effective performance of the job.

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(e) All selection will be thorough, conducted against defined criteria and will deal only with the applicant's suitability for the job. Where it is necessary to ask questions relating to personal circumstances, these will be related purely to job requirements and asked to all candidates.

## **Employment Training and Organisational Development**

### **Guidelines**

#### **Statement of Principles**

The company is committed to ensuring that all its employment policies, procedures, guidelines and circulars will reflect and reinforce the Companies' commitment to equality.

#### **The Company will through its policies and training seeks to create a:**

- Prejudice-free and supportive working environment.
- Workforce which reflects the diversity of the local population, ensuring that people from all sections of our local communities have equality of opportunity to obtain employment in all areas and levels of the Company.

### **Recruitment and Selection**

#### **The Company will strive to:**

Ensure that all employees are recruited and promoted on the basis of ability and other objective relevant criteria.

Work towards ensuring that through recruitment that its workforce better represents the community it serves.

Be committed to equality of opportunity for all people and protect against all forms of discrimination, with a particular regard to:

#### **Gender; Race; Disability; Religious and Belief; Age; Sexuality**

Ensure that it communicates job opportunities to all sections of the community. We will scrutinise the recruitment process to ensure that we do not discriminate or discourage applications from any section of the community.

Ensure that all its employees who are part of the recruitment selection panel are trained on equalities issues.

Work with disadvantaged sections of the community in support of recruitment

Use appropriate legislation as a framework for action to support the recruitment process in a positive way.

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Collect and use recruitment information to support a fair and effective recruitment process.

### **Training and Organisational Development**

#### **The Company will:**

Seek to ensure that all employees are developed by the provision of appropriate and accessible learning opportunities in line with organisational needs.

Provide training that complies with the Companies Equalities Policies.

Include equalities training as part of its induction programme.

Include equalities training as part of its management development programme.

Provide equalities awareness training as part of its corporate training and organisational development programme.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

#### **The Company will:**

Continually monitor its workforce profile against the community profile to work towards a workforce that is reflective of the community it serves.

Specifically monitor recruitment, promotion, and training opportunities and take up of training, pay, grievance, disciplinary and exit from employment.

Monitor its performance against national best value performance indicators in respect of all equalities issues.

Receive an annual report from the Director of Human Resources on progress against targets that have been set.

Continue to review its monitoring processes to comply with changes in legislation.

### **Equal Opportunities policy - Supporting statements**

- **Race Equality:** The Company is committed to promoting a cohesive society and eliminating unlawful racial discrimination. The company will promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different racial, national and ethnic groups.
- **Disability Equality:** The Company will not treat a person less favourably directly or indirectly on the basis of his/her disability and will promote equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.
- **Gender Equality:** The Company will not treat a person less favourably directly or indirectly due to gender or marital status.

- **Equality of Employment:** The Company will through its policies and training seek to create:
  - A prejudice free and supportive working environment;
  - A workforce which reflects the diversity of the local population ensuring that people from all sections of The local community have equality of opportunity to obtain employment in all areas and levels of the Company. This will include working with disadvantaged sections of the community to support and encourage recruitment. (See Employment and Training Guidelines).
- **Accessibility:** The Company's services must be accessible and appropriate for all members of the community who might wish or need to use them. The Company will ensure its employment arrangements are accessible. (See Accessibility Guidelines).
- **Sexual Orientation: The Company will not discriminate directly or indirectly on the grounds of sexual orientation.**
- **Gender Reassignment: The Company will not discriminate directly or indirectly on the grounds of gender reassignment.**
- **Religion and Belief:** The Company will not discriminate directly or indirectly on the grounds of religion or belief. (This is defined as any religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief. It excludes philosophical or political beliefs unless those beliefs are similar to a religious belief, e.g. the belief has a profound affect on the person's way of life.)
- **Age:** A person's age will not lead to unfair discrimination.

## **Employment**

(a) Safety Net Associates Limited will not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, marital status, disability, age, part-time or fixed term contract status, sexual orientation or religion in the allocation of duties between employees employed at any level with comparable job descriptions.

(b) Safety Net Associates Limited will put in place any reasonable measures and/or adjustments within the workplace for those employees who become disabled during employment or for disabled appointees.

(c) All employees will be considered solely on their merits for career development and promotion with equal opportunities for all.

## **Training**

(a) Employees will be provided with appropriate training regardless of sex, race, marital status, disability, age, part-time or fixed term contract status, sexual orientation or religion.

(b) All employees will be encouraged to discuss their career prospects and training needs with their Line Manager or the HR Department.

### **Monitoring**

(a) It is the responsibility of the Managing Director or Chief Executive Officer to ensure that all aspects of this policy are kept under review and are operated throughout the organisation.

(b) Where it appears that applicants/employees are not being offered equal opportunities, circumstances will be investigated to identify any policies or criteria, which exclude or discourage certain employees and, if so, whether these are justifiable.

### **Grievances and victimisation**

(a) Safety Net Associates Limited emphasises that discrimination is unacceptable conduct which may lead to disciplinary action under the organisation's Disciplinary Procedure.

(b) Any complaints of discrimination will be pursued through the organisation's Grievance Procedure.