

## Equality and Diversity Policy

Cosmic is committed to encouraging equality and diversity among our workforce, and eliminating unlawful discrimination.

We want our workforce to represent all sections of society. And our customers, staff and the public to feel respected and able to give their best in providing our services.

We aim to:

- Provide an environment of equality, fairness and respect for all in our staff. Whether temporary, part-time or full-time
- Not discriminate against anyone. In particular against protected characteristics of; age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation
- Oppose and avoid all forms of discrimination. This includes in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities

This commitment includes training managers and all staff about their rights and responsibilities under the equality policy.

Team manager responsibilities include:

- Ensuring staff conduct themselves in a professional and non-discriminatory way
- Develop the environment of fairness and respect
- Help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination
- Ensure staff understand that they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, customers, suppliers and the public

All staff responsibilities included:

- Ensuring their conduct is respectful and non-discriminatory at all times
- Highlight any concern of colleague's behaviour to team managers
- Not discriminate against customers or public
- Help to create a positive and supportive environment for all

We take seriously any complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of our activities. Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under our grievance and disciplinary procedures, and any appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

In particular, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 is a criminal offence.

Cosmic makes decisions concerning staff based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).

We review employment practices and procedures to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.

We monitor the makeup of our workforce regarding information such as age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability, with the aim of encouraging equality and diversity, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality policy.

The equality policy is fully supported and signed off by the Board and is reviewed annually by the CEO (Operations).

## Supporting statements

- **Race Equality:** Cosmic is committed to promoting a cohesive network and eliminating unlawful racial discrimination. Cosmic will promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different racial, national and ethnic groups.
- **Disability Equality:** Cosmic 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:** Cosmic will not treat a person less favourably directly or indirectly due to gender or marital status.
- **Equality of Employment:** Cosmic will through its policies and training seek to create a prejudice free and supportive working environment.
- **Dignity at Work:** Cosmic will through its policies encompass the practice of a workplace environment, in which there is a healthy and appropriate use of the authority and power vested by Cosmic in employees and which is free from hostility and unwanted behaviour which an employee finds intimidating, upsetting, embarrassing, humiliating or offensive.
- **Accessibility:** Cosmic's services must be accessible and appropriate for all members of its community, including but not limited to clients and members who might wish or need to use them. Cosmic will ensure its employment arrangements are accessible. (See Accessibility Guidelines).
- **Sexual Orientation:** Cosmic will not discriminate directly or indirectly on the grounds of sexual orientation.
- **Gender Reassignment:** Cosmic will not discriminate directly or indirectly on the grounds of gender reassignment.
- **Religion and Belief:** Cosmic 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 effect on the person's way of life.)
- **Age:** A person's age will not lead to unfair discrimination.

#### Definition of Discrimination:

- a) Discrimination can be direct or indirect. Cosmic supports the Equality Act 2010 which states it is unlawful for staff to discriminate directly or indirectly, or to harass customers or clients because of the protected characteristics of disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief and sexual orientation in the provision of goods and services.
- 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.

Cosmic will be committed to equality of opportunity within recruitment and promotion, for all people and protect against all forms of discrimination.

- 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 and externally simultaneously.
- d) All descriptions and specifications for posts will include only requirements that are necessary and justifiable for the effective performance of the job.
- 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.
- f) Cosmic will ensure that all its employees who are part of the recruitment selection panel are trained on equalities issues.
- g) Cosmic will use appropriate legislation as a framework for action to support the recruitment process in a positive way.
- h) Collect and use recruitment information to support a fair and effective recruitment process.

## Grievances and victimisation

Cosmic emphasises that discrimination is unacceptable conduct which may lead to disciplinary action under the organisation's Disciplinary Procedure.

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

Minor breaches of the Equality and Diversity Policy will be dealt with by the provision of counselling. Where breaches are deliberate or persistent, they will be treated as misconduct and will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure. In addition they may be liable to action in an Employment Tribunal under the Sex Discrimination, Race Relations or Disability Discrimination Act.

Victimisation occurs when an employee is subjected to a detriment, such as being denied promotions or training opportunities because they supported a complaint, raised a grievance or were suspected of doing so. Cosmic does not

support victimisation and encourages employees to voice any concerns they may have without feeling it will jeopardise their future chances within the company.

## Accessibility Guidelines

Cosmic's services must be accessible to and appropriate for all who might wish or need to use them. We will take all reasonable steps to ensure its employment arrangements are accessible.

In seeking to achieve this vision, the Cosmic will strive to:

- Facilitate physical access into the buildings it controls. If unable to, it will provide a reasonable alternative method of making the service in question available to all groups.
- Monitor and evaluate accessibility in order to make improvements. In particular using consultation to understand the needs and expectations of service users, potential users and the workforce.
- Use communication methods that are appropriate and sensitive.
- Use language that is appropriate and jargon-free.
- Publicise the variety of ways in which services can be accessed.
- Improve the accessibility of employment arrangements or physical features of the workplace to meet the needs of staff and applicants with disabilities or other needs.
- Work with partner organisations and agencies delivering services on behalf of the Cosmic, to enhance access to services.
- Explore multi-channel access to information and services that extends choice and convenience to our customers.

Policies and Procedures Site Link:

<https://sites.google.com/cosmic.org.uk/policysite/staff>

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For more information on the status of this document, please contact:	Kate Doodson E-mail: <a href="mailto:kate@cosmic.org.uk">kate@cosmic.org.uk</a>
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