



## **Equal Opportunities Policy**

*Barham Court, Teston, Maidstone, Kent, ME18 5BZ*

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

Open Water Ltd is committed to a comprehensive policy of equal opportunities for individuals within employment and those accessing services. Individuals will be treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities without regard to

- Race
- Religion
- Colour
- Gender
- Age
- National origin
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- HIV status
- Marital status
- Or any other grounds that which cannot be shown to be justifiable within the context of this policy

The aim of this policy is to ensure that no job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on grounds not relevant to good employment practice.

### **2 POLICY STATEMENT**

- 2.1 The policy and practice of the company require that all employees are afforded equal opportunities within employment and that entry into employment with the company and progression within employment will be determined only by personal merit and the application of criteria which are related to the duties of each particular position. In all cases, ability to perform the job will be the primary consideration.
- 2.2 All employees have a duty to co-operate to ensure that this policy is effective to ensure equal opportunities and to prevent discrimination. Employees must not harass or intimidate other employees on the grounds of race, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation and must not victimise or retaliate against employees who make such allegations. Disciplinary action will be taken against any employee who breaches this policy and serious breaches will be treated as gross misconduct.

### **3 CODE OF PRACTICE**

Open Water welcomes diversity amongst its employees and seeks to ensure that all candidates for employment are treated fairly, and that selection is based solely on the individual's abilities and qualifications. The recruitment process must result in the selection of the most suitable person for the job having regard to experience and qualifications where necessary. As an employer committed to the principle of equality of opportunity, the company will adhere to the following procedure for recruiting and selecting individuals for all positions:

#### **3.1 SELECTION CRITERIA**

The selection process will be carried out consistently for all jobs at all levels. Selection criteria for all positions will be clearly defined and reflected in the further particulars sent to applicants which will also include details of the company's commitment to equality of opportunity. Job qualifications or requirements which would have the effect of inhibiting applications from members of particular

groups, such as those of one gender, persons of a particular marital status or sexual orientation, persons of a particular racial group, persons within a certain age bracket or those with a disability, will not be demanded or imposed except where they are justifiable in terms of the job to be done.

### **3.2 ADVERTISING**

Job advertisements will be widely publicised so as to encourage applications from all suitably qualified and experienced people. In order to attract applications from all sections of the community, the company will endeavour to ensure that advertisements are not restricted to areas or publications which would exclude or disproportionately reduce applications from a particular gender, age group or racial group and should avoid prescribing requirements as to marital status or age or requirements which would exclude a particular gender or racial group. All job advertisements placed on behalf of the company will state the company's commitment to equality of opportunity.

### **3.3 SELECTION METHODS**

The selection process will be carried out consistently for all jobs at all levels. All those handling applications and conducting interviews must be aware of the principles of the Sex Discrimination Act, the Race Relations Act, the Disability Discrimination Act, the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations and other relevant legislation. The selection of new employees will be based on job requirements and the individual's suitability and ability to do the job and information sought from candidates will relate only to the qualifications for or requirements of the job.

### **3.4 INTERVIEWS**

The staff responsible for shortlisting, interviewing and making or recommending an appointment will be clearly informed of the selection criteria and the need for consistency. Wherever possible, at least two people will interview applicants and all questions will relate to the selection criteria. No questions will be based on age, assumptions about roles in the home and the family or the assumed suitability of different ethnic groups for the post in question. Where it is necessary to assess whether personal circumstances will affect the performance of the job (for example, if the job involves irregular hours or extensive travel) this will be discussed objectively and will be asked equally of all candidates. In the case of disabled applicants who identify themselves at the application stage, appropriate interview arrangements (such as accessible interview rooms or the assistance of a sign interpreter) should be offered to enable candidates to compete on an equal basis.

## **4 TRAINING**

To help meet the objectives of this policy the company will provide training that:

- 4.1 increases awareness of the prevalence of and harmfulness of discrimination and prejudice on the grounds of age, race and gender, and the needs and abilities of people with disabilities or other disadvantages;
- 4.2 examines the nature of discrimination, both direct and indirect, and the ways in which it can occur and can be prevented;
- 4.3 assists managers and employees to behave in ways that are non-discriminatory; and
- 4.4 explains the operation of and access to grievance and disciplinary procedures.

## **5 PROMOTION**

When considering candidates for promotion, care will be taken to consider those from all races, age groups and both sexes and those with disabilities where general ability is the main requirement.

## **6 GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

All allegations of gender or racial discrimination or discrimination on the grounds of disability, age or sexual orientation will be dealt with seriously and confidentially.

## **7 REVIEW OF RECRUITMENT PRACTICE**

Recruitment procedures and practices will be kept under review so as to ensure that this policy is being adhered to and to ensure that they do not include requirements or conditions which constitute, or may lead to, unlawful discrimination.