

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

Organisation: **Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce**

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Equality and Diversity Policy

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1. Introduction

Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce is committed to promoting equality and diversity across all aspects of our operations. As a leading membership organisation dedicated to supporting, connecting, and growing businesses across Staffordshire, we recognise that our strength lies in the diversity of our team, our members, and the communities we serve.

This policy sets out our commitment to creating an inclusive workplace where all individuals are treated with respect and dignity, regardless of their background or personal characteristics. The policy applies to all employees, contractors, volunteers, members, and any individuals who interact with our organisation.

Our mission to foster a thriving regional economy is achieved most effectively when we embrace diversity and ensure equal opportunities for all. Through our international trade services, professional business training programmes, networking events, and advocacy work, we have a responsibility to model best practice in equality and diversity both internally and externally.

This policy is underpinned by our commitment to comply with all relevant UK legislation, including the Equality Act 2010, the Employment Rights Act 1996, and any other applicable employment law. We recognise that equality and diversity is not merely a legal obligation but

a fundamental aspect of how we conduct our business ethically and responsibly.

2. Commitment to Equality

Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce is committed to equality in all areas of our work. We commit to:

Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation based on the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Creating a workplace culture that is genuinely inclusive and welcoming to all individuals, irrespective of their background, identity, or circumstances. This includes ensuring that our physical premises, digital platforms, and communication methods are as accessible as possible to all employees and visitors.

Promoting equality of opportunity in all employment decisions, including recruitment, selection, training, development, promotion, pay, working arrangements, and redundancy. We will ensure that decisions are made on the basis of merit and capability, and that no individual is disadvantaged due to any protected characteristic.

Fostering an environment in which diversity is actively valued and celebrated. We recognise that our team members bring diverse perspectives, experiences, and skills that strengthen our organisation and enable us to better serve our membership and the wider business community.

Ensuring that our services, including international trade documentation, business training, networking events, and advocacy, are accessible to members and stakeholders from all backgrounds. We will actively encourage participation from underrepresented groups within the business community and work to remove barriers to engagement.

Supporting our members in their own equality and diversity journey. Through our business training programmes, forums, and networking opportunities, we will signpost best practice and encourage our members to embed equality and diversity principles within their own organisations.

Collecting and monitoring equality data relating to our workforce and our membership base. This data will be used to identify any patterns of inequality and to inform our continuous improvement efforts. All data will be handled in accordance with UK data protection

legislation.

3. Workplace Conduct

All employees, contractors, volunteers, and members are expected to treat colleagues, clients, and contacts with respect and dignity at all times. We maintain a zero tolerance approach to behaviour that undermines our commitment to equality and diversity.

Discrimination is prohibited in all forms. This includes direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, and victimisation. Discrimination may occur in relation to any of the protected characteristics listed above, and applies to all interactions and decisions within our organisation.

Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated. Harassment is defined as unwanted conduct relating to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment. This includes verbal abuse, written abuse, physical conduct, and inappropriate behaviour of a sexual nature.

Victimisation will not be tolerated. No individual will be subjected to less favourable treatment because they have made a complaint about discrimination or harassment, or because they have participated in an investigation into such a complaint.

All employees are responsible for fostering an inclusive workplace. This means:

Treating all colleagues with respect and courtesy in all interactions.

Challenging discriminatory behaviour or language when it occurs, whether directed at oneself or at others.

Supporting colleagues who disclose that they have experienced discrimination or harassment.

Ensuring that our communications, both internal and external, do not contain discriminatory language or assumptions.

Considering accessibility in our working arrangements and in the design of our events, training programmes, and services.

Reasonable adjustments will be made for employees with disabilities to enable them to perform their role effectively. We will work with individuals on an ongoing basis to identify any adjustments that may be needed and to implement these in a timely manner.

Flexible working arrangements are available to all employees and will be considered on a case by case basis in accordance with our Flexible Working Policy. We recognise that flexible arrangements support both work life balance and the inclusion of individuals with different circumstances and needs.

Recruitment and selection will be conducted fairly and transparently. All vacancies will be advertised widely to encourage applications from diverse candidates. Selection will be based on merit, and all candidates will be assessed against the same criteria. We are committed to minimising unconscious bias in our recruitment processes through the use of structured interviews, diverse interview panels, and evidence based selection methods.

Pay equity is important to us. We are committed to equal pay for equal work and for work of equal value. We will regularly review our pay practices to ensure that no individual is paid less than their colleagues on grounds of any protected characteristic.

Training and development opportunities will be made available to all employees. We recognise that access to training is important for career progression and for the ongoing development of our workforce. We will actively encourage employees from underrepresented groups to access training and development opportunities.

All employees have a right to confidentiality and privacy. We will treat disclosures relating to protected characteristics with sensitivity and will only share information on a need to know basis.

4. Responsibility and Review

The leadership team at Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce is responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented effectively and that our commitment to equality and diversity is embedded within our organisational culture.

The Chief Executive Officer holds overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for ensuring that sufficient resources are allocated to support equality and diversity initiatives.

All managers are responsible for:

Creating an inclusive team environment where all individuals feel valued and respected.

Implementing this policy consistently within their areas of responsibility.

Responding promptly to any concerns or complaints related to equality and diversity.

Monitoring team dynamics and taking action where behaviour falls short of our commitment to equality and diversity.

Supporting employees who disclose that they have experienced discrimination or harassment.

All employees are responsible for:

Reading and understanding this policy and understanding their obligations under it.

Treating colleagues with respect and dignity.

Reporting any breaches of this policy to their manager or through our formal complaints procedure.

The organisation will maintain a confidential record of all complaints relating to equality and diversity. This information will be analysed on an annual basis to identify any patterns and to inform our continuous improvement efforts.

We will review this policy on an annual basis to ensure that it remains appropriate and that it reflects any changes in legislation or best practice. The review will take into account feedback from our employees, our members, and any relevant external guidance.

All employees will be required to undertake training on this policy during their induction and at regular intervals thereafter. Managers will undertake additional training on their specific responsibilities in implementing the policy.

Any breach of this policy will be taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. We also reserve the right to take action against individuals who are not employees of the organisation but who breach this policy, including members and contractors.

Support and resources are available to all individuals who have experienced discrimination or harassment. The organisation will signpost employees to relevant support services and will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to support individuals through any investigation or resolution process.

This policy will be communicated to all employees, contractors, volunteers, and members. It will be available in alternative formats on request to ensure accessibility.

We remain committed to continuous improvement in our approach to equality and diversity and welcome feedback and suggestions from all stakeholders.

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