



## Equal Opportunities Policy

### 1. Statement of Policy

Steps is committed to encouraging, valuing and promoting equal opportunity and is opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. We recognise that the provision of equal opportunities in the workplace is not only good management practice, but also makes sound business sense and therefore we promote equal treatment for all employees and job applicants irrespective of race, colour, sexual orientation, nationality, ethnic origin, religion, political belief, disability, age, gender or marital status.

### 2. Scope

All employees have a part to play in achieving this and Steps will ensure that individuals are aware of their personal responsibility to follow and support the equal opportunities policy. This policy has particular relevance to all those concerned with recruitment, training and promotion.

Decisions about recruitment and selection, promotion, training or any other benefit will be made objectively and without unlawful discrimination. All employees, prospective employees, job applicants or others who work for us will be treated fairly and will not be discriminated against.

Steps will seek to identify and act upon any unfair or unlawful discrimination which denies individual opportunity on any of the criteria mentioned above. The principle of creating an environment which eliminates discrimination applies equally to the treatment of freelance associates, clients, suppliers and other people who have contact with Steps.

Steps will:

- help all those who work for us to develop their full potential
- make the best possible use of the skills, talents and abilities of all employees;
- promote equality of opportunity for all persons
- encourage a good and harmonious working environment in which all persons are treated with respect
- demonstrate achievements in equal opportunities against planned performance measures
- prevent occurrences of unlawful direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- ensure as far as possible that our services reflect the diverse needs of its clients

- fulfil all our legal obligations under equality legislation and associated codes of practice
- comply with our own equal opportunities policy and associated policies
- regard any breach of the Equal Opportunities Policy as gross misconduct which could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

### **3. Adherence to Policy**

The People Director is specifically responsible for the effective implementation of this policy. Each director and manager also ensures that within their areas of responsibility, the standards established within this policy are followed. We expect all our employees to abide by the policy to help create an environment of equality. All employees must:

- co-operate with any measures introduced to ensure equal opportunity
- report any suspected discriminatory acts or practices
- not persuade or attempt to persuade others to practice unlawful discrimination
- not victimise anyone as a result of them having reported or provided evidence of discrimination
- not harass, abuse or intimidate others on account of their race, gender etc.
- not lobby job applicants in an attempt to discourage them from applying or taking up a post.

### **4. Implementation**

To implement this policy Steps will:

- Communicate the policy to employees and relevant others
- Ensure equality training and guidance is provided and specific training in non-discriminatory selection techniques for those involved in assessing job applicants. Equal Opportunity training will be part of Steps induction process.
- Ensure that staff job descriptions include specific actions and duties through which the equal opportunities policy can be implemented
- Ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfil the objectives of the policy
- Obtain commitments from other parties we deal with confirming that they will comply with the policy in their dealings with our organisation.

### **5. Monitoring & Review of Action Plan**

We will review the effectiveness of the policy and all related action plans at least annually and establish appropriate information and monitoring systems to assist its effective implementation. Equal Opportunity is a key performance indicator at Steps and the action plan is monitored on a monthly basis by the management board.

### **6. Complaints**

Employees and applicants have the right to complain about unfair discrimination through the appropriate procedures.

Any employee who has a concern regarding the application of this policy should normally make use of the Steps grievance procedure.

Employees wishing to raise a grievance alleging unlawful discrimination during an internal selection procedure should make use of the Steps grievance procedure.

Every effort will be made to ensure that employees who make complaints will not be victimised. Any complaint of victimisation will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially. Victimisation will result in disciplinary action and may warrant dismissal.