HART LEARNING GROUP
EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

GOVERNANCE AND CONTROL

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SCOPE

This policy prescribes our approach to equality and diversity for all staff, students and job applicants within North Hertfordshire College, Hart Learning & Development and Group Corporate Services (these three units are described as 'the Group' within the policy).

Within this policy the following definitions are used:

- Equality: for the purpose of this policy, can be described as breaking down barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity and access for all groups: the basis of which is supported and protected by legislation.
- Diversity: for the purposes of this policy, can be described as celebrating differences and valuing everyone. Each person is an individual with visible and non-visible differences and by respecting this everyone can feel valued for their contributions which is beneficial not only for the individual but for the Group and the local community we serve.
- Inclusion: for the purpose of the policy, can be described as an individual's experience within their organisation and the extent to which they feel valued and included.

PURPOSE

The policy helps us ensure that:

- We maintain our commitment to creating and sustaining a respectful, positive and supportive working environment for our colleagues and learning experience for our students and apprentices.
- As a Group and as individuals, we recognise our role in creating and maintaining an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all members of our community are recognised, valued and celebrated.
- We promote equality & diversity and challenge all forms of discrimination through our role as an education provider, community leader and local employer.

- We respond to changing demographics and needs of our workforce and the community we support to retain valuable employees and continue to meet the needs of our students and apprentices.

- We provide a curriculum that enables our young people, adults and apprentices to thrive, challenges discrimination and enables them to be a positive and active member of the communities in which they live and work.
- The Group fulfils its public sector duty by reviewing this policy annually and complying with current equality legislation.

RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR VALUES

Our values underpin our work in relation to equality and diversity. Our values are:

- Respect
- Ambition
- Professionalism
- Inspiration
- Integrity
- Community
- Excellence

The values of 'community' and 'respect' are most closely aligned to this policy and our expectations in relation to these are described below.

Respect	We value the contribution that each member of our community makes. We ensure that we are an inclusive, welcoming and open organisation that encourages and values different thinking and perspectives.
Community	We are committed to building a community where everyone has a voice, feels supported and can thrive. We are committed to being an active and responsible part of our local and wider communities.

THE GROUP'S COMMITMENT

The Group is committed to:

- Equality of opportunity and believes that all individuals have an equal right to develop and achieve their full potential.

- Opposing all forms of unlawful and unfair 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
- Selection for employment, promotion, training, or other developmental opportunities
- Providing educational experiences for our young people, adults and apprentices that enable them to thrive and become positive and active members of society, who recognise the value of diversity.
- Regularly reviewing employment practices and procedures so that fairness is maintained at all times, and ensuring when candidates are selected for employment, promotion, training, or any other benefit, it will be solely on each individual's own merits and suitability.
- Ensuring training, development, and progression opportunities are available to all staff.
- Encouraging anyone who feels they have been subject to discrimination to raise their concerns so corrective measures can be taken including disciplinary action against those who breach this policy.
- Taking seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities
- Promoting a culture that ensures where members of our community, including staff, students and apprentices, treat everyone with dignity and respect.
- Ensuring that equality and diversity is embedded in all its activities.
- Encourage equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace because it is the right thing to do, is good practice, and makes business sense.

OUR POLICY IN PRACTICE

The Group believes that equal and fair treatment and protection for discrimination are fundamental rights for members of our community. The Group is clear that it will not tolerate any form of prejudice and discrimination and will take action where this is identified. It is recognised that prejudice and discrimination will vary dependent on the group they are directed at.

Having a clear action plan

The Group will put in place a set of organisational objectives in relation to equality & diversity and a plan will be established that will set out the annual activity that will be undertaken. This will be in line with our obligations as a public sector organisation. The plan will be will reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that actions remain relevant and purposeful.

Training and development

The Group will provide meaningful training and development for colleagues supports their understanding and actions in relation to equality and diversity. Training and development will encompass the protected characteristics and will focus on individuals and teams taking meaningful action. This extend beyond pure equality and diversity themes, and will include activity in relation to leadership and wellbeing. Training and development will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Clarity for new employees at induction on the Group's approach to equality and diversity
- Ongoing training and development
- The provision of leadership and management development
- Talent development programmes

Developing and delivering a curriculum

The Group will support teachers to develop a curriculum that goes beyond the requirements of qualifications and focuses on the personal development, aspirations and behaviours of the young people, adults and apprentices we work with. This broader curriculum will facilitate students and apprentices to recognise their role as a member of the community, to gain a deeper understanding of the value and importance of diversity and to go onto be positive and active members of society. The curriculum will provide activity that broadens the experience of students and apprentices and not only raises aspirations, but facilitates them to realise these aspirations regardless of background and disadvantage. The Group will use participation and achievement data to allow us to understand and identify groups of students and apprentices that did not achieve and progress as well as their peers, and then take action to improve this.

Staff recruitment

- As holders of the Disability Confident badge, we take a positive approach in the selection of people with disabilities, including interviewing all people with disabilities who meet the essential selection criteria.
- The Group ensures we have the right policies, practices and processes in place to support our existing, and prospective employees that may have a disability or health condition.
- We deliver an inclusive recruitment and selection process aimed at creating a strong and diverse workforce representative of the communities we serve.

Monitoring and review

The Group will monitor the following to determine impact and effectiveness of its activity:

- Data in relation to students, apprentices, colleagues and the community it serves
- Internal surveys that surface the voice and perspective of staff, students and apprentices
- Colleague, student and apprentice voice as collated through various improvement and development activities

- The quality of teaching and curriculum and the impact on different groups of students

- The Group will review its progress through an annual report, made available in its website.

OUR DUTY

The public sector equality duty (the equality duty) is made up of a general equality duty which is supported by specific duties. The general equality duty requires the Group, in the exercise of its functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010 (Amendment) Regulations 2023.

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it. (The Protected Characteristics as defined by the Equality Act are – age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation)

The Group is required to have due regard to the aims of the general equality duty when making decisions and when setting policies. In doing so, we ensure that:

- Decision-makers are aware of the general equality duty's requirements.

- The general equality duty is complied with before and at the time a particular policy is under consideration and when a decision is taken.

- They consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the aims of the general equality duty as an integral part of the decision-making process.

- They have sufficient information to understand the effects of the policy, or the way a function is carried out, on the aims set out in the general equality duty.

- They review policies or decisions, for example, if the make-up of service users changes, as the general equality duty is a continuing duty.

- They take responsibility for complying with the general equality duty in relation to all their relevant functions. Responsibility cannot be delegated to external organisations that are carrying out public functions on their behalf.

- They consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the aims of the general equality duty not only when a policy is developed and decided upon, but when it is being implemented.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Corporation Board, the Group's governing body, has overall responsibility for ensuring that the Group complies with the Equality and Diversity policy and meets its public duties.
- All members of the Group are expected to act in accordance with this policy and to treat colleagues with respect at all times.
- All staff should understand 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, students, suppliers and the public.

MAKING A COMPLAINT

Anyone who feels that the treatment they have received is not in keeping with the Equality and Diversity Policy should raise their concerns with their line manager, tutor or any appropriate member of staff in the first instance. In most cases, concerns can be resolved informally. In some cases, however, it may be necessary to deal with the concerns by following a formal approach.

LINKED POLICIES / PROCESSES

- Equality & Diversity Action Plan and Annual Report
- Dignity at Work policy
- Grievance policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- HLG IT Policy for Users
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Student Code of Conduct (incorporated into Positive Behaviour Policy)
- Gender Pay Gap report
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Recruitment Policy (incorporated into Safeguarding, Child Protection & Prevent Policy)