HART LEARNING GROUP
EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

GOVERNANCE AND CONTROL

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SCOPE

This policy prescribes our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion 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.

Our approach to EDI goes beyond legal compliance with EDI and belonging embedded throughout the organisation and the way we work.

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 inclusion (EDI) 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 EDI. 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.

- We are recognised as a College of Sanctuary
- We ensure that we provide a place of psychological safety wherein we thrive for equity rather than simple equality.

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
  - Family-friendly practices
  - Requests for flexible working
  - Reasonable adjustments
  - 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 always maintained, 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.
- Training development, and progression opportunities available to all staff.
- Increasing reporting confidence for hate incidents
- 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 members of our community, including staff, students and apprentices, treat everyone with dignity and respect and know where they can access support.
- Encouraging opportunities to promote and protect staff wellbeing
- Encourage EDI in the workplace because it is the right thing to do, is good practice, and makes business sense.
- Giving opportunities to our students to help shape EDI priorities
- Increasing staff diversity in leadership positions

OUR POLICY IN PRACTICE

The Group believes that equal and fair treatment and protection from 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 has put in place a set of organisational objectives in relation to EDI with a plan setting out the annual activity that will be undertaken. This is in line with our obligations as a public sector organisation. The plan is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that actions remain relevant and purposeful.

Training and development

The Group provide meaningful training and development for colleagues which supports their understanding and actions in relation to EDI. Training and development encompasses the protected characteristics and focusses on individuals and teams taking meaningful action. This extends beyond pure EDI themes and includes activity in relation to leadership and wellbeing. Training and development includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Clarity for new employees at induction on the Group's approach to EDI
- Ongoing training and development
- The provision of leadership and management development
- Talent development programmes
- A suite of safeguarding training recognising that discrimination and prejudice are safeguarding concerns.

Developing and delivering a curriculum

The Group supports 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 facilitates 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 on to be positive and active members of society.
- The curriculum provides 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.
- EDI is planned into teaching, learning and assessment ensuring it is relevant to vocational sectors and employers.
- The Group uses attendance, achievement and progression 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 takes action to reduce these gaps.

Commitment to Underrespesented Groups

- The group recognise the additional barriers faced by some groups and work to remove barriers and improve access. These include but are not limited to:
  - LGBTQ+ learners
  - Disabled learners
  - Care-experienced young people
  - Young carers
  - Minority ethnic groups
  - Refugees and asylum seekers
  - Students experiencing socio-economic disadvantage

Staff recruitment

- 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 monitors 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
- Participation in enrichment and leadership opportunities
- Data in relation to staffing:
  - Recruitment
  - Promotion
  - Pay gaps
  - Staff turnover
  - Wellbeing indicators
- The Group reviews its progress through an annual report, made available on its website.

OUR DUTY

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) 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 different group.

  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
  - sexual orientation

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

- Decision-makers are aware of the PSED's requirements.
- The PSED is complied with before and at the time a particular policy is under consideration and when a decision is taken.
- We consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the aims of the PSED as an integral part of the decision-making process.
- We 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 PSED.
- We review policies or decisions, for example, if the make-up of service users changes, as the PSED is a continuing duty.
- We take responsibility for complying with the PSED in relation to all relevant functions. Responsibility cannot be delegated to external organisations that are carrying out public functions on our behalf.
- We consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the aims of the PSED 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 EDI 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 EDI 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
- Gender Pay Gap report
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Recruitment Policy
- Safeguarding, Child Protection and Prevent Policy