



EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY



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EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY

INTRODUCTION

This policy outlines AAA Taxis policy regarding equal opportunities and diversity, setting out our responsibilities to ensure a workplace free from discrimination or harassment.

AAA Taxis seeks to promote equality of opportunity and to challenge discrimination based upon the 'protected characteristics' as set out in the Equality Act. These are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

AAA Taxis is fully committed to and compliant with the requirements of The Equality Act 2010 and in accordance with these regulations, AAA Taxis is committed to transparency with regards to how it protects people from discrimination in the workplace.

It is AAA Taxis policy to ensure that employees and others that we work with are recruited, developed, remunerated and promoted solely on the basis of their skills and suitability for the work performed, and that in carrying out their work they are free from direct and indirect discrimination, bullying, harassment or any other form of inappropriate behaviour or pressure through any means.

SCOPE

This policy applies equally to all employees, workers (e.g. contractors and temps) and volunteers whilst working for AAA Taxis. The co-operation of all employees, workers, volunteers, is essential for the success of this policy. Although, the ultimate responsibility for achieving the objectives of this policy lies with AAA Taxis, ensuring equality and diversity practice is the responsibility of everyone involved with the organisation.

This policy is relevant to all aspects of the business of AAA Taxis, which includes private hire operations, PCV minibuses, employment and subcontracting and sets out the ways in which AAA Taxis will seek to apply the above principles in all areas of employment and service provision.

OBJECTIVE

AAA Taxis aims to create a culture that respects and values difference, promotes dignity, equality and diversity, and encourages individuals to develop and maximise their true potential.

By diversity we mean valuing the benefits of a varied workforce that makes the best of people's talents whatever their backgrounds. Diversity encompasses visible and non-visible individual differences which can be many and varied. It can be seen in the makeup of our workforce and where people are in terms of management positions, job opportunities and terms and conditions in the workplace.

Diversity covers the following:

- Race
- Culture
- Politics
- Religion



- National origin
- Region
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Age
- Marital Status
- Ethnicity
- Disability
- Socio-economic differences
- Family structure
- Health
- Values and more

Embracing equality and diversity brings a wide range of experience, ideas and creativity whilst giving the individual employee a feeling of being enabled to work to their full potential.

We aim to remove any barriers, bias or discrimination that prevents individuals or groups from realising their potential and contributing fully to our organisation’s performance and to develop an organisational culture that positively values diversity.

Every person in the organisation is valued equally and AAA Taxis is committed to and promotes equal opportunities, diversity and anti-discriminatory practice in both service provision and employment. All those involved with the organisation are expected to respond by ensuring this practice in their own way of working.

AAA Taxis do not condone or tolerate discrimination, harassment or bullying, either directly or indirectly, on the basis of any of the criteria outlined in section above. Intimidation, harassment and bullying will not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action in line with AAA Taxis disciplinary policy and procedure.

THE LAW

It is unlawful to discriminate, harass or victimise anyone because of a protected characteristic.

Discrimination can be direct or indirect or in the form of harassment or victimisation. All forms of discrimination are unacceptable, regardless of whether there was any intention to discriminate or not. Employees have a duty to co-operate with AAA Taxis to ensure that this policy is effective in ensuring equal opportunities and in preventing discrimination.

AAA Taxis aim to meet the terms of any anti-discrimination legislation and will promote the spirit as well as the letter of the law.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Below are a list of basic rights and responsibilities upheld by AAA Taxis:

RIGHTS	RESPONSIBILITIES
To be treated with dignity and respect	To treat others with dignity and respect
To be treated fairly and without discrimination	To challenge inappropriate behaviours in others (through appropriate channels)
To disagree and present alternative views in a constructive and professional manner	To respect the authority, professional experience and decisions of others
To challenge and be assertive	To deal with conflict constructively through positive communication and open consultation
To be consulted on decisions that affect work	To recognise the needs of the business and others



MONITORING

As part of its commitment to anti discriminatory practice, AAA Taxis will maintain appropriate records as to the age, ethnicity, disability and gender of employees, workers and volunteers.

PROCESS

We achieve our Policy by ensuring that:

- All staff, suppliers and associates are fully aware of this policy, and trained where necessary.
- All complaints of discrimination, bullying and harassment are treated with the utmost confidentiality and acted on in an appropriate and timely manner.
- Job descriptions and person specifications reflect the position and do not contravene the stated intent of this policy.
- Recruitment advertisements are placed in a manner mindful of ensuring full and diverse awareness and access, clearly stating that we are an equal opportunities employer and that we welcome diverse applications.
- Recruitment practice and procedures are as open and as barrier free as possible. Application forms and other supporting material are free of information from which inferences could be drawn that are irrelevant to the job description. No applicant is disadvantaged by an interview's timing, location or facilities. Reasons for selection or rejection of applicants are recorded.
- All other policies, operations, staff guidance, reviews, opportunities to train or for advancement, and every part of our business, are carried out in accordance with this policy.
- Promotion within the company will be without regard to race, colour, ethnic or national origins, religion, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, age or disability and will be based solely on merit.
- Discrimination, harassment or bullying on grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origins, religion, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, age or disability by any employee including directors, will result in disciplinary action. The company will treat seriously any justifiable grievance, raised as a result of discrimination or harassment (on grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origins, religion, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, age or disability) and will take appropriate action.
- Each driver has responsibilities and we expect all our employees to abide by the policy and help create the equality environment that is its objective. In order to implement this policy we shall communicate the policy to employees and relevant others.
- This policy also applies to our conduct with respect to clients, their staff, and their customers. We are mindful of the policies and culture of each client and our responsibility to support their aims and objectives.

RAISING A CONCERN

Most problems that occur in the workplace can and should be resolved through the normal day to day contact that employees, workers and volunteers have with their immediate line manager and colleagues. Employees should draw the attention of their line manager to suspected discriminatory acts or practices or suspected cases of bullying or harassment.

Wherever possible, employees, workers and volunteers should endeavour to resolve the issue informally; this will ensure the matter is resolved quickly and satisfactorily before it escalates into a more serious issue.



However, there may be occasions where this does not produce a satisfactory solution and the employee may then decide to invoke formal procedures. If the offence may be of such a serious nature that informal procedures are inadequate to deal with the issue at hand, employees, workers or volunteers may raise a complaint through AAA Taxis grievance procedure.

Any employee, worker or volunteer who raises a concern in good faith within these procedures will not be disciplined or face victimisation. By 'good faith' AAA Taxis means that the individual reasonably believed that they had witnessed or were subject to malpractice or wrongdoing and that they raised their concern to an appropriate person. Any who disciplines or victimises an employee, worker or volunteer for raising a concern within these procedures or who seeks retribution will themselves be subject to AAA Taxis' disciplinary procedure.

AAA Taxis promise to treat all allegations of bullying, harassment and/or victimisation seriously and to try to resolve any concerns as quickly as possible.

AAA Taxis will make every effort to ensure that the identity of the employee, worker or volunteer raising the concern will be kept confidential where possible; only those with a need to know will be informed of the identity of the complainant and the details of the complaint.

Appropriate support will be offered to the complainant. Consideration will be given to transferring or relocating or suspending the person against whom the allegation has been made pending outcome of the process.

Any employee, worker or volunteer found to be bullying, harassing or victimising another person either inside or outside the workplace, or raising a concern maliciously or irresponsibly, will be subject to AAA Taxis disciplinary procedure (please see Appendix A for definitions of discrimination, victimisation, harassment and bullying).

AAA Taxis takes all allegations of discrimination very seriously.

Bullying and discrimination is often a perception that someone has of the behaviour or language of others. AAA Taxis asks that everyone is sensitive to the needs and feelings of others in their actions and language so as to take account of the needs and sensitivities of colleagues.

SUCCESS

We measure our success through:

- Carrying out a review of our operations to ensure that they are fully compliant with this policy, and recording any breach of this policy, whether direct or indirect, intentional or accidental.
- Acting immediately to remedy any failure or breach of this policy, both intentional and unintentional.
- Ensuring a continual review of best practice and improvement.

TRAINING

Training is available as part of the mandatory induction and as an ongoing process on the importance of relevant legislation via bite size management training sessions, organised and delivered by the HR Team. Bitesize training sessions on absenteeism, recruitment, and performance management cover relevant aspects of equal opportunities legislation.



APPENDIX A: TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION – DEFINITIONS

Reference is made throughout this policy to the Equality Act (2010).

DIRECT DISCRIMINATION

Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a ‘protected characteristic’ they have or are thought to have (see perception discrimination below), or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic (see discrimination by association below). Appendix 2 contains an example of direct discrimination.

DISCRIMINATION BY ASSOCIATION

Applies to race, religion or belief and sexual orientation, age, disability, gender reassignment and sex. This is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic. See Appendix B for an example of discrimination by association.

DISCRIMINATION BY PERCEPTION

Applies to race, religion or belief and sexual orientation, age, disability, gender reassignment and sex. This is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic. See Appendix B for an example of perception discrimination.

INDIRECT DISCRIMINATION

Applies to age, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and marriage and civil partnership, disability and gender reassignment. Indirect discrimination can occur when you have a condition, rule, policy or even a practice in your company that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic. Indirect discrimination can be justified if you can show that you acted reasonably in managing your business, i.e. that it is ‘a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim’. A legitimate aim might be any lawful decision made in running an organisation, but if there is a discriminatory effect, then it is likely to be unlawful.

Being ‘proportionate’ in achieving a legitimate aim is a significant hurdle to overcome and care must be taken to ensure that unnecessary and unwarranted conditions etc. are not placed at recruitment or during employment that can have a disparate impact.

HARASSMENT

Harassment is ‘unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual’. Harassment applies to all protected characteristics except for pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnership. Employees will now be able to complain of behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at themselves and the complainant need not possess the relevant characteristic themselves. Employees are also protected from harassment because of perception and association.



THIRD PARTY HARASSMENT

Applies to sex, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. The Equality Act makes individuals potentially liable for harassment of your employees by people (third parties) who are not employees of your company, such as customers or clients. AAA Taxis will only be liable when harassment has occurred on at least two previous occasions, we are aware that it has taken place and we have not taken reasonable steps to prevent it from happening again.

VICTIMISATION

Victimisation occurs when an employee is treated in a discriminatory fashion because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act or because they are believed to have done so. An employee is not protected from victimisation if they have maliciously made or supported an untruthful complaint (i.e. they know the complaint to be untrue). There is no longer a need to compare treatment of a complainant with that of a person who has not made or supported a complaint.



APPENDIX B: EXAMPLES OF TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION

DIRECT DISCRIMINATION

Paul, a senior manager, turns down Angela's application for promotion to a supervisor position. Angela, who is a lesbian, learns that Paul did this because he believes the team that she applied to manage are homophobic. Paul thought that Angela's sexual orientation would prevent her from gaining the team's respect and managing them effectively. This is direct sexual orientation discrimination against Angela.

DISCRIMINATION BY ASSOCIATION

June works as a project manager and is looking forward to a promised promotion. However, after she tells her boss that her mother, who lives at home, has had a stroke, the promotion is withdrawn. This may be discrimination against June because of her association with a disabled person.

PERCEPTION DISCRIMINATION

Jim is 45 but looks much younger. Many people assume that he is in his mid 20s. He is not allowed to represent his company at an international meeting because the managing director thinks that he is too young. Jim has been discriminated against on the perception of a protected characteristic.

INDIRECT DISCRIMINATION

A team meeting takes place and the minutes get pinned up on the board afterwards. John is in a wheelchair and the minutes have been pinned up too high for him to read them. This wasn't done deliberately by the manager but John has been indirectly discriminated against by not being able to access the same information as the rest of the team. John speaks to his manager who puts up a new, more accessible notice board.

HARASSMENT

Steve is continually being called gay and other related names by a group of employees at his work. Homophobic comments have been posted on the staff notice board about him by people from this group. Steve was recently physically pushed to the floor by one member of the group but is too scared to take action. This is harassment because of sexual orientation.

THIRD PARTY HARASSMENT

During a training session by a trainer from an external organisation, attended by male and female workers, a male trainer directs a number of remarks of a sexual nature to the group as a whole. Susan finds the comments offensive and humiliating to her as a woman. Even though the comments weren't specifically directed at her, she feels harassed. She has a word with the learning and development manager who in turn speaks to the training organisation they had used. She makes it clear that should this happen again, they will not use this organisation. She keeps Susan in the picture and therefore has taken reasonable steps to protect Susan from third party harassment.



VICTIMISATION

Anne makes a formal complaint against her manager because she feels that she has been discriminated against because of marriage. Although the complaint is resolved through the organisation's grievance procedures, Anne is subsequently ostracised by her colleagues, including her manager. She could claim victimisation.

PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY

Lydia is pregnant and works at a call centre. The manager knows Lydia is pregnant but still disciplines her for taking too many toilet breaks as the manager would for any other member of staff. This is discrimination because of pregnancy and maternity as this characteristic does not require the normal comparison of treatment with other employees.