



Equality and Diversity Policy

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1 Purpose

Althaus are committed to promoting equality and diversity across our organisation and creating a culture that actively values difference. We aim to promote a provision in which everyone feels valued, respected, and able to contribute. We celebrate that everyone is different and value equally the unique contribution that each individual brings

The aim of the policy is to ensure

- Fair recruitment and selection of staff
- equal access to training and progression opportunities
- equitable terms and conditions of employment
- appropriate provision of services for different sections of the community

Althaus digital is also committed to compliance with relevant equality legislation, the Equality Act 2010, Codes of Practice and relevant best practice guidance. This policy pursues and builds on the statutory position to ensure effective policies and practice of promoting equality.

We aim to pro-actively tackle discrimination or disadvantage and aim to ensure that no individual or group is directly or indirectly discriminated against for any reason with regard to employment or accessing its services.

Issues regarding harassment and bullying are covered in the Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination Policy. For issues regarding recruitment refer also to the Recruitment policy

2 The Definition of Equality and Diversity

Equality can be described as breaking down barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity and access for all groups both in employment and to goods and services; the basis of which is supported and protected by legislation.

Diversity 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 Althaus.

Equality and Diversity are not interchangeable but interdependent. There can be no equality of opportunity if difference is not valued and harnessed and taken account of.

3 Scope

This policy applies to althaus employees, agency workers, learners/apprentices and employers, contractors and volunteers

4 Policy Statement

We are committed to the achievement of equal opportunities; this is central to our mission. It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of any of the nine "protected characteristics" as defined by the Act. These are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

We also recognise that the Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful for staff to discriminate directly or indirectly, or harass customers or learners/apprentices because of the protected characteristics of disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation in the provision goods and services.

We believe discrimination, either direct or indirect as defined in law, is unacceptable and we will not tolerate it. We will not tolerate discrimination or harassment against an individual because they are associated with another individual who has a protected characteristic.

We will not tolerate discrimination or harassment against an individual on a perception that he or she has a particular protected characteristic.

We will not tolerate discrimination or harassment of any of our employees or volunteers by third parties such as clients or customers.

We will be proactive in all matters relating to equality of opportunity and diversity. We value and will celebrate the richness brought to our organisation by a diverse population, both of staff and clients. We recognise and will seek to reflect the positive contributions brought to Althaus by the variety of its staff.

We are directly opposed to all forms of discrimination taking place by any staff member, learner/apprentice or any other individual who is directly or indirectly associated with althaus digital.

We are committed to:

- Creating an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all our staff are recognised and valued.
- Every employee is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, victimisation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.
- Training, development and progression opportunities are available to all staff.
- Equality in the workplace is good management practice and makes sound business sense.
- We will review all our employment practices and procedures to ensure fairness.
- Breaches of our equality policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings.
- This policy is fully supported by the senior management team.
- The policy will be monitored and reviewed annually.

- We also recognise that the behaviours through which diversity is evident must be consistent with the values that underpin this policy document.
- Additionally, we recognise that despite our best intentions circumstances may arise where we fail to provide an appropriate and professional service to people, consistent with the aims of this policy. We are committed to take action in such circumstances.

5 Implementation

Althaus have procedures that support and uphold this equal opportunities policy. As a result, everyone can expect to be treated with fairness and for judgements to be made that respect their human rights and ensure natural justice. Decisions will be made with integrity following a process based upon transparent criteria.

Althaus digital will take action to communicate this policy to all staff, learners and others. We will continue to develop and implement programmes to ensure that all staff have received appropriate training to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities under this policy.

Consultation with and involvement of a wide range of stakeholders will be essential for ensuring that our equal opportunities policy and practice is effective. We also need to ensure that we gain feedback to ensure that the practical impact of our policy and practice does not result in unintended or unfair discrimination or in consequences that are contrary to the aims of this policy.

Althaus will develop policies, codes of practice and guidance to deal with specific aspects of the implementation of this Policy. These developments will take place against a clear and published action plan.

6 Employment

We believe we must recruit the best person for the job and that discrimination prevents this from happening.

Althaus's Equal Opportunities Policy is there to assist in the elimination of discrimination and ensure fair treatment for all employees by:

1. advertising all jobs in appropriate ways to ensure the widest possible response from all sections of the community
2. examining recruitment procedures regularly to ensure people are selected on their abilities and merits
3. offering fair terms and conditions of employment to employees
4. ensuring facilities and practices are supportive of employees with family responsibilities
5. providing equipment and facilities to enable people with a disability to obtain a job or continue working with Althaus.

7 Training

Training will play an important role in assisting employees to implement Althaus digital's Equal Opportunities Policy and in developing employees' skills and potential.

All staff will receive training on Equality and Diversity as part of their induction and within three months of joining our organisation.

All managers responsible for recruitment and selection will undertake additional Equality and Diversity Training. The purpose of training will be to

1. inform employees of the purpose of the Equal Opportunities Policy
2. provide employees, especially managers, with the skills and knowledge necessary to implement the policy
3. encourage and enhance the skills of employees, particularly those from those who have traditionally been under-represented in the workforce.

All employees will need to show that they:

1. understand their workplace responsibilities as stated by the Equality Act 2010.
2. have knowledge of the protected characteristics that are covered by the law.
3. understand what is meant by discrimination and be able to recognise the different types.
4. understand what is deemed as prohibited conduct within the Equality Act.
5. be aware of the importance of equality and diversity training so that the workplace can become more tolerant and understanding.

8 Responsibility

All members of Althaus staff will take responsibility for their actions.

Specifically:

- The overall managerial responsibility for equal opportunities lies with the Chief Executive Officer
- All managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring that this Equal Opportunities Policy is implemented in their areas of responsibility.
- The CEO is responsible for taking action in relation to equal opportunities in employment matters, for monitoring the effectiveness of the policy and for ensuring appropriate provision of supportive staff development.
- All employees are responsible for ensuring that they act at all times in a way that is consistent with our equal opportunities policy. Individuals may be

personally accountable should any complaint arise or in respect of breaches of policy.

- People not employed by Althaus but who play a part in its activities, e.g. visitors, clients, contractors and suppliers of goods and services will be made aware of our expectation that they will operate within the scope of this policy. We will expect contractors and learners/apprentices to demonstrate their commitment through evidence of their own equal opportunities policy.

9 Responding to feedback

Althaus is committed to respond positively to constructive criticism and complaints in relation to equal opportunities. We recognise that making complaints and expressing concerns in relation to equal opportunities can be challenging. We will, therefore, develop specific advice and support to enable staff and volunteers to put forward their concerns effectively.

We will take appropriate action to protect staff from discriminatory behaviour by any individual or within the organisation, or in the course of their duties. Allegations of discriminatory behaviour on the part of staff will be dealt with under the appropriate disciplinary or grievance procedure.

All learners/apprentices will have the opportunity to make requests for reasonable adjustments and special considerations to be made in order for them to achieve to the best of their ability. Further information can be found in the 'Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations' policy.

10 Work/life balance

Althaus is committed to employees who have commitments outside work, irrespective of whether they have caring responsibilities. Althaus is committed to helping its employees fulfil their potential at work whilst finding the right work/life balance by offering Flexible Working opportunities and job share options where appropriate.

Althaus aims to improve the working lives of its employees by having a framework of policies such as the Right to Request Flexible Working, Special Leave to help with caring responsibilities and domestic emergencies and Career Breaks.

11 Discrimination

Discrimination may take eight main forms and is defined in law along with the protective characteristics associated with each provision as listed below:

1. Direct Discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic. Relevant protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity. For example, a manager does not select a pregnant woman for promotion even though they meet all of the competencies because they are pregnant. This is probably direct discrimination and cannot be justified.

2. Associative discrimination occurs when someone discriminates against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic. Relevant protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. An example of this is when a manager does not give a job-applicant the role, even though they have met all of the competencies for the role, just because the applicant tells the employer they have a disabled partner. This is probably associative discrimination because of disability by association.
3. Discrimination by perception occurs when someone discriminates against an individual because they think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic. Relevant protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. An example of this is when a manager selects a person for redundancy because they incorrectly think they have a progressive condition (i.e. that they are a disabled person). This is probably discrimination by perception because they believe the individual is disabled.
4. Indirect discrimination occurs when a seemingly neutral provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone places a group who share a characteristic e.g. type of disability at a particular disadvantage. Indirect discrimination may be justified if it can be shown that the provision, criterion or practice is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. An example of this is when an employer decides to apply a “no hats or headgear” rule to staff. If this rule is applied in exactly the same way to every member of staff, the staff who may cover their heads as part of their religion or cultural background (such as Sikhs, Jews, Muslims and Rastafarians) will not be able to meet this requirement of the dress code and may face disciplinary action as a result. Unless the employer can objectively justify using the rule, this will be indirect discrimination. Relevant protected characteristics include age, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. In addition, the Act extends protection against unjustified indirect discrimination to gender reassignment and disability.
5. Dual Discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably because of a combination of two relevant protected characteristics. This means that it will be possible for an applicant to claim that they have been treated less favourably not just because of their race but also because of their gender. For example, because the individual is an Asian woman. Relevant protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. (At present this new concept has not been implemented).
6. Detriment arising from a disability arises when you treat a disabled person unfavourably because of something connected with their disability. This type of discrimination is unlawful where the employer or other person acting for the employer knows, or could reasonably be expected to know,

that the person had a disability. This type of discrimination is only lawful if the action can be justified and the employer can show that is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. An example of this when an employer imposes a “no beards” rule as a part of a dress code and tells staff they will be disciplined if they do not comply. An employee is a disabled person who has a skin condition which makes shaving very painful. They have been treated unfavourably (threat of disciplinary action) because of something arising from their disability (their inability to shave). Unless the employer can objectively justify the requirement, this may be a detriment arising from a disability. It may also be a failure to make a reasonable adjustment.

7. Victimisation occurs when an employee is treated unfavourably, disadvantaged or subjected to a detriment because they have made or supported a complaint of discrimination or raised a grievance under the Equality Act, this policy or the Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination policy or because they are suspected of doing so. (However, an employee is not protected from victimisation if they have maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint). An example, of this is when an employee requests to work flexibly and their manager refuses their request because they supported a colleague in a complaint of discrimination.
8. Third party harassment occurs when an employee is harassed by someone who does not work for the employing organisation such as a customer, visitors, client, contractor or visitors from another organisation. The employer will become legally responsible if they know an employee has been harassed on two or more occasions by someone and it may also be different individuals each time and fails to take reasonable steps to protect the employee from further harassment.

12 Complaints of Discrimination

Althaus takes all claims of discrimination very seriously and will take appropriate action against those concerned. Discrimination occurs when someone directly or indirectly treats a person or a group of people unfavourably because of a protected characteristic of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. This covers all behaviour including remarks and insinuation, both verbal and non-verbal, which cause offence.

Any member of staff who is subject to harassment, bullying or discrimination is encouraged to refer to Althaus digital's policy on Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination. This provides details of the steps that can be taken to deal with such an issue.

If a worker (engaged through, or by, an employment agency or bureau) considers they have been discriminated against they should raise their complaint directly with their employer.

13 Communication

The Equality and Diversity policy is available on the business's internal shared drive (policy Section) and althaus digital's website. Please contact the CEO if you require a copy in an alternative format.

The details of this policy will be proactively communicated and promoted to all current staff and new starters.

14 Monitoring

The CEO will review relevant performance indicators and will make regular reports to the Board. This report will review both progress against the action plan and make appropriate proposals for further development.

Equality monitoring will be carried out to measure the effectiveness of althaus digital's Equal Opportunities Policy, to check the policy is working and act as a basis for future plans.

In line with changes in the law, we will continue to monitor our own policies and procedures and remove any which do not fit in line and thus unfairly discriminate.

Monitoring information will only be used for this purpose and will be treated confidentially.

We will maintain and review the employment records of all employees in order to monitor the progress of this policy.

We will monitor recruitment and selection procedures to ensure discrimination is not occurring.