

SIGNS NOW UK

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES & DIVERSITY POLICY

Signs Now is committed to establishing and maintaining equality of opportunity for all existing and potential staff and will adopt processes in all aspects of employment which will ensure this equality of opportunity irrespective of sex, race, ethnic origin, colour, nationality, national origin, marital status, age, religion, belief, disability, or sexual orientation.

Signs Now fully accepts all of its statutory obligations to eliminate both direct and indirect discrimination and also the role of the Equal Opportunities Commission, The Commission for Racial Equality and The Disability Rights Commission.

The Signs Now policy has the active support of all Directors, with overall responsibility being held by the Managing Director.

What does equal opportunities actually mean?

When recruiting we will use open recruitment methods, these will include job centres, careers services, press advertisements, recruitment agencies. Our adverts will be worded so as not to place unfair restrictions or requirements on any particular group. That is, for example specifying length of residence in the UK, requesting specific qualifications which are not necessary for the effective performance of the job. Our advertising will include wording which demonstrates our commitment to equality of opportunity and how we wish to encourage applications from under represented groups to work for our business.

In order that Signs Now can make sure that we follow the above criteria and make sure we monitor the fairness of our recruitment procedures as per our Equal Opportunities Policy we will include a question as to whether special help is needed and also a section on identifying cultural/ethnic origin on our application forms (recent forebears/country of origin/cultural identity) as:

White
British
Irish
Any other White background

Chinese or other ethnic group
Chinese
Other

Mixed
White & Black Caribbean
White & Black African
White & Asian
Any other mixed background

Asian or Asian British
Indian
Pakistani
Bangladeshi
Any other Asian background

Black or Black British
Caribbean
African
Any other Black background

Please tick box

We also include a section on our Application forms which requests information as to whether special help or equipment modification would be required for an individual to carry out the job we are advertising.

- Equal opportunity for all staff to know about and compete for job vacancies when they arise, with the knowledge that the selection processes are fair and impartial, and that selection will only be made on the basis of someone's ability to do the job. Selection in Signs Now will be based solely on relevant job criteria and will not involve subjective judgements or stereotyping.
- Equal opportunities also means that all staff will have the same opportunity for training and development, benefits, entitlements, decisions about dismissal, short-time working and redundancy.
- No member of staff will face, be threatened with or receive disciplinary action on the grounds of sex, race, ethnic origin, colour, nationality, national origin, marital status, religion, age, disability, or sexual orientation.

- Disabled members of staff (or potential members of staff) have the right to expect Signs Now to make adjustments wherever possible to accommodate them.
- All staff have the right to be protected against various types of harassment including racial and sexual harassment and bullying of all types.
- Equal opportunity does not mean equal outcome, as all of us have different abilities, skills and qualifications.

Equal opportunities focus

Although not exhaustive, Signs Now's Equal Opportunities Policy is designed to focus on the following areas:

Ethnic minorities

Our policy is to aim to eliminate incidents of racial discrimination in employment. Signs Now recognises that equality of opportunity regardless of race, colour, religion, ethnic or national origin is vital, both to give individuals a fair and equal chance of developing their abilities and realising their expectations, and also from us as an employer to make the best use of all staff.

Sex discrimination

Working patterns have changed in recent years and are continuing to do so at an increasing rate. Traditional social attitudes may deprive women (and sometimes men) of opportunities to realise their abilities and may in some cases cause them to lower their expectations. There are few *male* or *female* jobs anymore and gender is not a valid reason to differentiate between one person and the next.

Our aim is to improve the opportunities available to women and Signs Now also acknowledges that it is in its best interests to recruit and retain the services of trained and experienced staff, irrespective of their gender.

Sexual orientation

Signs Now staff shall not be discriminated against for any reason which is related to their sexual orientation. The sexual orientation of staff is a personal and private matter which has no bearing on work activities. Signs Now will not discriminate on the basis of gender reassignment.

Disability

Signs Now recognises the positive skills and attributes of the disabled person rather than concentrating on what he/she cannot do, and will give the disabled members of staff (or potential members of staff where appropriate) the same opportunities for selection and career progression as all other staff. If a disabled candidate is the most suitable, then Signs Now will discuss with him/her what adjustments to the job or premises might be necessary and agree the best course of action.

Should a member of staff become disabled, the priority will be to allow the member of staff to continue working, wherever possible, based on medical opinion and possibly involving appropriate adjustments to the job, physical environment or transfer.

Diversity

Signs Now are committed to respecting diversity within the workplace. We will endeavour to ensure that your gender, age, colour, ethnicity or national origin, culture, religion, disability, political affiliation or sexual orientation are respected by all members of staff to promote a balanced and diverse workplace.

Age

Signs Now is committed to all staff regardless of age.

Religion

Signs Now is committed to all staff regardless of religion.

Marital status

Marital status is a matter of a personal and private nature that has no bearing on work activities.

Harassment and bullying

Harassment and bullying at work for any reason is unlawful and unreasonable. Signs Now will not tolerate harassment of any type and will use The Disciplinary Procedure as appropriate.

Signs Now's responsibility

Signs Now has a number of responsibilities which include:

- The development and implementation of the employment policies and practices which promote equality at work and do not result in discrimination whether intentionally or unintentionally.
- The training of staff and management to fully understand the spirit and aim of the policies, practical implications of what is expected of them and compliance with the guidelines and rules.
- To protect all staff, job applicants, clients and suppliers from discrimination, bullying, harassment and victimisation and to take appropriate action against any breaches of the policy.

Your role

As well as Signs Now's management, individual members of staff all have an important part to play. This includes you! Please remember that the Equal Opportunities Policy is designed for your protection and you have a responsibility to support its implementation.

The basic rules

- Don't discriminate against, bully or harass another member of staff, client or supplier.
- Don't assist others or put pressure on colleagues to do so.
- Don't victimise a member of staff who has made a complaint of discrimination, harassment or bullying.

- If you know that someone is on the receiving end of unacceptable behaviour, you must report it immediately.
- Refuse to get involved with any action or behaviour which you believe to be inappropriate and report the matter immediately.
- Do make your opposition known to discrimination and bullying.
- Co-operate with Signs Now in any measures intended to promote equal opportunities.
- Don't cause offence to others at work.
- Don't use bad language.
- Do treat others as they would wish to be treated!

Harassment

Harassment can take many forms, some more obvious than others. There is not a really precise definition, but in general terms it may be described as unwanted or unwelcome conduct which results in the creation of a stressful or intimidating environment for the subject.

Some examples of harassment are:

- Graffiti
- The display of offensive material.
- Embarrassing comments, lewd remarks or sexual suggestions.
- Touching of any kind.
- Pestering and unwanted advances.
- Threat of dismissal to pressure the individual into sexual favours.
- Assault or threat of violence.
- Ridicule.
- Deliberate isolation and non-co-operation.
- Racist jokes, using derogatory terms or slang to describe an ethnic or racist group.
- Inappropriate jokes of any type.
- Suggestive taunts.
- Any form of bullying or victimisation.
- Cruel practical jokes.
- Generally making life difficult either as manager, Director or colleague

Action to be taken

If you become aware of, or feel that you are the victim of, any discriminatory or inappropriate conduct, you should report it immediately to a manager or Director. Provided that in making your allegation in good faith, you will be protected from any adverse consequences. If it is found that you have acted maliciously, you may be subject to disciplinary action.

You will be interviewed to ascertain the nature of the issue. Although your wishes regarding confidentiality will be taken into account, Signs Now may feel that it has no option but to involve you in an investigation or that it can take no action without your support.

If you are unhappy with any of the steps taken in relation to your complaint, you may use the Grievance Procedure.

Flexible Working

If you have children under the age of six (18 if disabled) and have completed six months service, you have the legal right to request flexible working arrangements. This might include a change in hours, change in the time of working and term working plus many other options!

Signs Now has a duty to seriously consider any requests, but is not obliged to grant them. This will depend on the arrangements requested and the impact on the operation of the business. You should remember that, if granted, any change in working arrangements will be permanent.