

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Countrywide accepts and welcomes that society consists of many diverse groups and individuals and this diversity is an asset to the community. It also recognises that certain groups and individuals are discriminated against and is opposed to this. Countrywide recognises that it has a moral and legal responsibility to promote equal opportunities and will pursue equality in the workplace. This Policy has been prepared to set out Countrywide's commitment and as a statement of its intent.

Countrywide is an Equal Opportunities employer. It is committed to providing a working environment in which employees are able to realise their full potential and to contribute to business success irrespective of their:

- Gender including being married or in a civil partnership or being or becoming a transsexual person or sexual orientation
- Race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- Age
- Religion, belief or lack of religion or belief
- Any disability
- Being pregnant or on maternity leave

This is a key employment value to which all employees are expected to give their support. To create conditions in which this goal can be realised, Countrywide is committed to identifying and eliminating discriminatory practices, procedures and attitudes throughout the organisation. Countrywide expects employees to support this commitment and to assist in its realisation in all possible ways.

Specifically, Countrywide aims to ensure that no employee or job applicant is discriminated against, either directly or indirectly, on the grounds given above, this commitment applies to all aspects of employment including but not limited to those outlined below:

- Recruitment and selection, including advertisements, job descriptions, interview and selection procedures.
- Training.
- Promotion and career development opportunities.
- Terms and conditions of employment, and access to employment related benefits and facilities.
- Grievance handling and the application of disciplinary procedures.
- Selection for redundancy.

Equal Opportunities practice is developing constantly as social attitudes and legislation change. Countrywide will keep its policies under review and will implement changes where these could improve equality of opportunity. This commitment applies to all of Countrywide's employment policies and procedures, not just those specifically connected with equal opportunity.

## HARASSMENT & BULLYING POLICY

Countrywide believes that all its employees have the right to a working environment free from intimidating and insulting behaviour and recognises its legal obligation to provide such an environment. Countrywide is committed to the development and promotion of a positive workplace culture that is free from harassment and bullying and aims to ensure that any allegation of harassment or bullying at work is taken seriously, is properly investigated and dealt with effectively.

The definition of harassment is *'unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment'*. Forms of harassment include many kinds of unacceptable behaviour. For example, action, behaviour, comment or physical contact, which is found objectionable or which causes offence, including: offensive jokes, verbal abuse, language, graffiti or literature of a racist or sectarian nature, or offensive remarks about a person's physical characteristics, age, sexual orientation or any other personal characteristic.

Bullying is the intimidation or belittling of someone through the misuse of power or position, which leaves the recipient feeling hurt, upset, vulnerable or helpless. Examples include:

- Unjustified criticism of an individual's personal or professional performance, shouting at an individual, criticising an individual in front of another.
- Spreading malicious rumours or making malicious allegations.
- Ignoring or excluding an individual from the team/group.

Countrywide will also not tolerate victimisation i.e., treating someone unfairly because they've complained about discrimination or harassment.

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY**

Countrywide believes that all employees are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect while at work and when representing the business in any capacity outside of work. This Policy statement has been prepared to make clear to employees that Countrywide will not tolerate sexual harassment of one employee by another.

Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct directed towards an employee by a fellow employee (or group of employees) which is of a sexual nature, or which is based on a person's sex, and which is regarded as unwelcome and offensive by the recipient. This could include but is not limited to:

- Unwanted physical contact.
- Unwelcome sexual advances, propositions, suggestions or pressure to participate in social activity outside work, where it has been made clear that this is not welcome.
- Conduct which can be deemed as intimidation, physically or verbally abusive, including the display of explicit material, the use of sexually explicit humour, and comments of a sexual nature whether directed specifically at any individual or not.
- Suggestions that sexual favours may further an employee's career, or that refusal may hinder it.

Countrywide regards sexual harassment as a form of intimidation which has the effect of insulting and demeaning the employee to whom it is directed. It is therefore unacceptable in the working environment and Countrywide will take positive action to prevent its occurrence.

## **EMPLOYEE'S RESPONSIBILITY**

All employees have a personal responsibility not to harass, sexually harass or bully other members of staff, or to condone harassment or bullying by others. Harassment including sexual harassment and bullying is serious misconduct and action may be taken under the disciplinary procedure against an employee found to have harassed or bullied an individual at work. Employees should also be aware that they could be personally liable by law if they harass anyone at work. All employees have a duty to assist in the creation of a safe working environment, where unacceptable behaviour is not tolerated. Any employee who becomes aware of harassment or bullying occurring should bring the matter to the attention of his/her manager.

Employees are required to observe the following requirements in their dealings with their colleagues:

- People will be treated with dignity and respect regardless of race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion or age.
- At all times people's feelings will be valued and respected. Language or humour that people find offensive will not be used, e.g., sexist or racist jokes or terminology that is deemed derogatory.
- No one will be harassed, abused, excluded or intimidated on the grounds of their race, sex, age, nationality, disability, religion or sexual orientation.
- Foul, insulting, abusive or racist remarks will not be tolerated from anyone associated with Countrywide and behaviour of this type will be taken seriously.

## PROCEDURE

Where possible and appropriate, harassment and bullying complaints of any nature should be dealt with by using an informal approach, at least in the first instance. Informal action provides the opportunity to resolve allegations of harassment through informal discussion and mediation. Some people may not be aware that their behaviour in some circumstances is being perceived as bullying harassment or sexual harassment. Using an informal approach gives the alleged harasser the opportunity to stop if directly approached by an employee, manager or through a mediation process. However, should the informal approach fail to stop the harassment or bullying, or if an employee agrees with their manager that the situation is so serious as to warrant formal action, the formal approach should be taken. This involves the complainant making a written complaint.



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