

## EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY & STATEMENT

### ***Equality and Diversity Statement***

Step Ahead is totally committed to preventing discrimination in its education and employment services by stimulating genuine equality of opportunity and access for all. Our aims in delivering our funded programmes, such as those supported by European Social Fund, are to promote and deliver its information, advice and guidance, training and employment programmes without discriminating on the basis of any aspect of an individual's age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, background or heritage.

Step Ahead is firmly committed to Equality and Diversity in all areas of its work and we recognise that we have much to learn and profit from diverse cultures and perspectives.

I believe that diversity will make our organisation more effective in meeting the needs of all our clients and candidates and am pleased to endorse our policy and practises in this area.

Signed:



Date: 11 July 2020

Name: Jackie Bedford

Position: Chief Executive

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

### ***Equal Opportunities in Employment***

Step Ahead is committed to preventing discrimination in its employment and education practices, and whilst delivering ESF activities, by stimulating genuine equality of opportunity. In order for us to continually monitor the application of our Equal Opportunities Policy, we ask all our candidates to complete our Equal Opportunities Monitoring form at the time of registration.

Step Ahead aims to develop, promote and deliver its services, information and employment opportunities without discriminating on the basis of any aspect of an individual's background or heritage which is used as justification for unfair treatment. We are committed to promote equality in line with Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

Step Ahead opposes all discrimination on the grounds of age, race, religion or belief, creed, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, marital or parental status, sex, sexual orientation, or on the grounds of disability or any other protected status. We are keen to promote good relations in the Community by providing a non-discriminatory service.

We actively deter discrimination the grounds of sex and counter discrimination against men and women in all employment practices, recognising the demands of child care and the care of other dependants.

Step Ahead ensure that lesbians and gay men will be given the same priority for all jobs as applicants from other groups who are represented in the company.

Disabled applicants will not be barred from selection on the grounds of disability unless arrangements for working with or around the disability cannot reasonably be made.

We value people for their competencies, and age is not a consideration when selecting our candidates.

## ***Equal Opportunities Policy***

Step Ahead is firmly committed to diversity in all areas of its work and we recognise that we have much to learn and profit from diverse cultures and perspectives; we believe that diversity will make our organisation more effective in meeting the needs of all our clients and candidates.

Step Ahead actively promotes equal opportunities and ensures that this policy is promoted and communicated to staff and candidates alike. This applies in the recruitment, selection, training and promotion of all grades of staff employed by the Company and amongst those who use our services – both candidates and employer clients. Promoting equality of opportunity means that everyone is treated solely on the basis of competence and merit, regardless of age, gender, marital status, ethnic, racial or religious or disability considerations, or any other protected status.

All employees are made fully aware that discriminatory acts are treated as gross misconduct. We draw all employees' attention to the Codes of Practice on gender, race and disability on the Equality and Human Rights Commission ([www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)), which have specific guidance for employment agencies. The relevant sections of the Codes are reproduced as part of this policy and all staff are expected to comply with them. We regularly monitor and review any associated Implementation Plans, which individually detail their review schedules and monitoring objectives.

### **Recruitment, Training and Development**

- 1.1. All recruitment and selection, whether internal or external, will be conducted on a non-discriminatory basis and monitored by the Manager.
- 1.2. All training and development services will be planned and executed on a non-discriminatory basis and made available to as many employees as possible.
- 1.3. All promotions will be on a non-discriminatory basis.
- 1.4. No vacancies circulated to employees will contain any directly or indirectly discriminatory statements.
- 1.5. Training in recruitment, selection and appraisal will be provided as widely as possible.
- 1.6. All recruitment materials including application forms will be designed to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity.
- 1.7. Appraisals are intended to form the basis of employee development
- 1.8. Any ability or psychometric testing used in recruitment and selection will be free of bias
- 1.9. Monitoring of recruitment, selection and promotion will be undertaken to assess the success of the policy.

## **Terms and Conditions of Employment**

- 1.10. Whilst these may be different for different employees, they will be designed to reflect the policy and to promote it.
- 1.11. All terms and conditions will be continuously reviewed to ensure their alignment with the policy.
- 1.12. Wherever possible, working patterns will be “family friendly”.
- 1.13. The implementation of employment policies that are attractive to people returning to work will be given high priority.

## **Operating Step Ahead's Service to Candidates and Employer Clients**

- 1.14. All dealings with employer clients and job candidates will be conducted in accordance with the Equal Opportunities Policy, as well as the law, and monitored by the manager.
- 1.15. All job vacancies and temporary assignments from employer clients will be accepted and handled on a non-discriminatory basis only.
- 1.16. Appropriate measures will be taken to bring the Policy to the attention of employers, clients and candidates in written communication with them.
- 1.17. All advertising, marketing and promotional material will reflect the Policy.
- 1.18. All pre-selection methods will reflect the Policy.
- 1.19. Step Ahead employees must not make remarks, either verbal or written, which could result in direct or indirect discrimination.

## **Breach of the Policy**

- 1.20. Any apparent breach of the Policy by an employee will be dealt with through the Disciplinary Procedure.
- 1.21. Proven discrimination will be treated as gross misconduct.

## DIVERSITY POLICY

### ***Different Drums and Different Drummers***

If I do not want what you want, please try not to tell me that my want is wrong.

Or if I believe other than you, at least pause before you correct my view.

Or if my emotion is less than yours, or more, given the same circumstances, try not to ask me to feel more strong or weakly.

Or yet if I act, or fail to act, in the manner of your design for action, let me be.

I do not, for the moment at least, ask you to understand me. That will come only when you are willing to give up changing me into a copy of you.

I may be your spouse, your parent, your offspring, your friend or your colleague. If you will allow me any of my own wants, or emotions, or beliefs, or actions, then you open yourself, so that some day these ways of mine might not seem so wrong, and might finally appear to you as right - for me. To put up with me is the first step to understanding me. Not that you embrace my ways as right for you, but that you are no longer irritated or disappointed with me for my seeming waywardness. And in understanding me, you might come to prize my differences from you, and far from seeking to change me, preserve and even nurture those differences.

Extract from:

“Please Understand me II” by David Keirsey and Marilyn Bates

## **Diversity Policy Statement**

Step Ahead is firmly committed to diversity in all areas of its work.

We have much to learn and profit from diverse cultures and perspectives, and we believe that diversity will make our organisation more effective in meeting the needs of all our clients and candidates.

Step Ahead aims to develop, promote and deliver its services, information and employment opportunities without discriminating on the basis of a person's age, race, religion or belief, creed, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, marital or parental status, sex, sexual orientation, or on the grounds of disability.

Step Ahead has a commitment to be an organisation that:

- Develops services to achieve equality and diversity in all its activities;
- Endeavours to have a workforce generally reflecting the population;
- Understands how valuing diversity can improve our ability to deliver better services;
- Actively consults with different individuals and communities to ensure that services which are provided are responsive and reflect the diversity of need;
- Provides all employees with the training and development they need to enable them to achieve organisational goals;
- Provides a supportive, open environment where all employees have the opportunity to reach their full potential;
- Listens to its customers and involves them in the development of services that recognise and value diversity; and
- Believes that both customers and employees have important parts to play in making this happen.
- Ensures that any subcontractors appointed will promote equal opportunities in-line with legislation.

## ***Diversity Strategies***

Overall our Diversity Strategy is to ensure that our Diversity Policy is applied fairly and consistently across the Organisation, as an integral part of the service we provide.

We recognise peoples' differences and aim to ensure that each individual is treated with respect.

To achieve the aims of our overall strategy we will take action to address discrimination, as well as action to promote diversity in employment and service.

The strategies reflect the existing and forthcoming EC and UK legislation and definitions for Equality.

All the specific strategies, actions and outcomes are company-wide and apply to all offices. They should be applied and managed as part of their more detailed Action plans.

## ***Employment***

Step Ahead aspires to a diverse workforce which has the skills and understanding to achieve a quality service responsive to individual and customer needs.

As an organisation, we are committed to ensuring that all people are treated fairly and without unlawful discrimination. As an employer, we aim to ensure that all employees treat each other with dignity and respect.

We aim to develop a working environment where harassment is unacceptable and where individuals feel confident enough to bring complaints without fearing prejudice. In the unlikely event that harassment occurs, we have strong policies and procedures in place to deal with it.

To achieve our aims we will:

- Provide full and fair consideration to all job applications.
- Require all our employees to undergo relevant training as part of their induction.
- Provide sufficient training and support to meet all our employees' needs in recognising and carrying out their work responsibilities.
- Regularly review our recruitment, selection, training and promotion procedures, ensuring they remain fair and reflect current best practice.
- Maintain records in recruitment, training and employment and use this information to assist in identifying areas of inequality.
- Help all employees to realise their full potential by ensuring they receive fair consideration of their training and career development needs as well as promotion opportunities.

- Whenever possible modify employment practices and procedures to reduce barriers member of disadvantaged social organisations may experience in seeking, and during, employment.
- Develop processes to deal with harassment, bullying and dignity at work which can operate within a safe and open environment.
- Follow Government guidance on applying the relevant UK legislation and ESF guidance when delivering ESF funded projects.

## ***Race***

Step Ahead is committed to achieving racial equality. We recognise our duties under the Race Relations Acts and related Codes of Practice, as embodied in the Equality Act 2010, and undertake to strive for racial equality both in employment and service provision.

To achieve our aims we will:

- Provide services relevant to people's needs, respecting their cultural and social identities.
- Strive to have a representative workforce that can sensitively address the needs of all communities.
- Work with other organisations to promote racial equality and eliminate racial disadvantage and racial harassment.
- Only accept an environment which is free from racial harassment and racist behaviour.
- Encourage people from minority communities to take up employment and training opportunities in areas and levels where they are under-represented.
- Follow Government guidance on applying the relevant UK legislation and ESF guidance when delivering ESF funded projects.

## ***Religion***

Our strategy is to counter unlawful discrimination and harassment on grounds of religion and belief and to promote good relations between people of different religions and beliefs.

To achieve our aims we will:

- Strive to create an environment which recognises and respects religion and belief.
- Improve the understanding of religion and belief among our staff so that they can sensitively address the needs of individuals and of different faith communities.
- Along with other organisations promote understanding and good relations between people of different faith communities.

- While separate from our Race Strategy, our actions for religion and belief will be broadly similar in principle.
- Follow Government guidance on applying the relevant UK legislation and ESF guidance when delivering ESF funded projects.

## ***Carers***

We wish to create an environment where employees, both women and men, are free to share their needs and concerns as carers and are not disadvantaged in the workplace by doing so.

We acknowledge that caring responsibility may include caring for children, a person with a disability and older people.

To achieve our aims we will:

- Work with both men and women to identify the needs of all carers and develop appropriate arrangements to meet those needs.
- Within the constraints of effective service delivery, Step Ahead will make the best possible use of flexible working practices to support carers in our workforce.
- Promote awareness of what flexible working practices are available to support carers.
- Develop an organisational culture, which provides a supportive environment for carers.
- Follow Government guidance on applying the relevant UK legislation and ESF guidance when delivering ESF funded projects.

## ***Gender***

Step Ahead is committed to achieving gender equality under the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay legislation and codes of practice, as embodied in the Equality Act 2010, and undertake to strive for gender equality in service provision and employment.

To achieve our aims we will:

- Create an environment which is free from harassment and sexist language and behaviour.
- Encourage men and women to take up employment and training opportunities in areas where they are under-represented.
- Set targets to achieve a better gender mix throughout the organisation.
- Work alongside other organisations to promote gender equality.

- Provide flexibility within the working environment which recognise and supports work and home balance requirements (also see Carers strategy).
- Follow Government guidance on applying the relevant UK legislation and ESF guidance when delivering ESF funded projects.

## ***Sexuality***

Step Ahead is very aware of the real discrimination that people face due to their sexuality and life choices and we are committed to removing this unfair treatment from our working environment.

We want to create an open environment where Lesbians, Gay men, Bisexual and Transgender people feel safe to be open about their sexuality and difference, if they choose to do so.

The organisation will work to make its service accessible to everyone, and ensure that our employment policies and service delivery are not based on the assumption that everyone is heterosexual.

To achieve our aims we will:

- Develop policies and procedures to prohibit unfair treatment of Lesbians, Gay men, Bisexual and Transgender staff.
- Provide the same level of service irrespective of any employee's or customer's sexuality.
- Where appropriate, develop services to meet the needs of Lesbians, Gay men, Bisexual and Transgender people
- Follow Government guidance on applying the relevant UK legislation and ESF guidance when delivering ESF funded projects.

## ***Disability***

Step Ahead recognises that people with a disability are disadvantaged both by an environment and by social attitudes, reflecting the needs of non-disabled people. We are committed to achieving disability equality by, wherever reasonably possible, eliminating both unlawful discrimination on the grounds of disability and the disadvantage experienced by people with a disability. We also recognise that improvements in the operation of our services can reduce the disabilities faced by the disabled.

To achieve our aims we will:

- Recognise our responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, EU Directives and other legislation and will follow the relevant DRC Codes of Practice for employment, premises and services, as embodied in the Equality Act 2010.

- Strive to provide services, which are relevant to the needs of people with disability.
- Try to ensure that all our services and documentation are accessible and available to people with a disability.
- Whenever possible modify our procedures to make full use of an individual's ability and adapt our facilities as necessary to accommodate people with a disability.
- To ensure DDA requirements are met, we shall perform regular "audits" of our premises, services and processes.
- Where needed, provide managers and staff with training in awareness and confidence to support people with a disability.
- Whenever practicable, continue to employ staff who become disabled during their employment, and assist in their re-training.
- Guarantee people with a disability an interview for any employment vacancy for which they meet the minimum essential criteria.
- Provide systems which seek to maximise access to employment by people with a disability.
- Follow Government guidance on applying the relevant UK legislation and ESF guidance when delivering ESF funded projects.

## **Age**

At Step Ahead, we recognise that age discrimination can affect all age groups and both genders, age is no indicator of effectiveness in most work activities and employment decisions should not be based on age . We will value people regardless of age and aim to provide services that should be sensitive to the needs of all age groups. We will work to create an environment where people are judged on their talents, skills and experience, rather than on misconceptions and prejudices about age.

As an organisation we are committed to opposing unjustified age discrimination and recognise the need for our own strategy to be in line with the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations, as embodied in the Equality Act 2010.

To achieve our aims we will:

- Remove age-related criteria in our employment practices.
- Regardless of age, provide recruitment, training and promotion on the basis of need.
- Work with organisations to eliminate age discrimination.
- Work to ensure that older workers are able to remain with or leave the organisation with dignity and flexible working arrangements.
- Follow Government guidance on applying the relevant UK legislation and ESF guidance when delivering ESF funded projects.

## **Cohesion**

Step Ahead recognises that it may also need to deal with discrimination against groups not elsewhere covered, in line with existing or forthcoming UK legislation. For example, the review of legislation on employment of ex-offenders, a group which is estimated by the Home Office to cover over a quarter of the working-age population.

To achieve our aims we will:

- Continue to review and progress the organisation's Diversity Policy and Strategies so that they reflect the true diversity of society.

## **Revision Control**

Date	Version	Overview of amendment(s)	Amendment date	Approved by	Approved date
15/10/2019	1.4	Revision control table added	15/10/2020	Jackie Bedford	25/10/2019
30/09/2020	1.5	Checked and reviewed	N/A	Jackie Bedford	02/10/2020

## **Approved and endorsed by:**

Signed:

Name: Jackie Bedford

Title: Chief Executive

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2020