

POLICY

Equal Opportunities

General

1. HTBC is committed to the policy of equal treatment of all Employees, Learners and Applicants etc and requires all employees, of whatever grade or authority, to abide by and adhere to this general principle and the requirements of the Codes of Practice issued by the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality.
2. All employees are expected to abide by the requirements of the Race Relations Act 1976 (as amended), Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (as amended), Employment Equality Regulations 2003, Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 and the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003. Specifically, discrimination is prohibited in:
 - a) treating any individual on grounds of sex, colour, marital status, race, nationality or ethnic or national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability or membership or non-membership of a Trade Union, less favourably than others;
 - b) expecting an individual solely on the grounds stated in item 2a) to comply with requirement(s) for any reason whatsoever related to their employment, which are different to the requirements for others;
 - c) imposing requirements on an individual which are, in effect, more onerous on that individual than they are on others. For example, this would include applying a condition (which is not warranted by the requirements of the position) which makes it more difficult for members of a particular race or sex to comply than others not of that race or sex;
 - d) victimisation of an employee or any third party;
 - e) harassment of an employee or any third party (which for the purposes of this policy, and the actions and sanctions applicable thereto, is regarded as discrimination);
 - f) any other act, or omission of an act, which, as its effect, places an employee or applicant at a disadvantage against another (or others), purely on the above grounds. Thus, in all disciplinary matters (and in consideration for training, promotion, etc.) i.e. all instances where those in control of employees are required to make judgements between them, it is essential that merit, experience, skills and temperament are considered as objectively as possible.
3. HTBC commits itself to the immediate investigation of any claims of discrimination on the grounds stated in item 2a), and, where such is found to be the case, a requirement that the practice cease forthwith, restitution of damage or loss (if necessary), and the rigorous investigation of any employee accused of discrimination and the circumstances surrounding such allegation.
4. Any employee (irrespective of seniority) found guilty of discrimination will be instructed to desist forthwith. Since discrimination in its many forms is against HTBC policy, any employee offending will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure. Unless assurances of future non-discriminatory actions are forthcoming, an employee repeating any act of discrimination may be dismissed.
5. HTBC recognises the right of an employee to belong to, or not to belong to, a trade union, and membership or non-membership of such a union will not be taken into account in any way during the career of the employee.

6. HTBC commits itself to the employment of disabled personnel whenever possible, and will treat such employees in aspects of their recruitment and employment in exactly the same manner as other employees, the difficulties of their disablement permitting. Assistance will be given, wherever possible, to ensure that disabled employees are helped in their journeys to and from their place of work, in access to their workplace, in gaining access to facilities on company premises, and in progressing in their career, subject only to the opportunity existing, the applicant's suitability, talent, and wish for it. Appropriate training will be made available to members of staff who request it. HTBC is keen to hear ideas whereby its facilities can be made more user-friendly for the benefit of disabled employees.

Complaints procedure

1. In the event that any employee feels that they have suffered discrimination in any way, HTBC's grievance procedure should be utilised.
2. If the complaint is against the employee's own immediate or other superior, confidential application should be made to a member of the Senior Management Team.
3. In instances of sexual harassment, the anonymity of the complainant should be protected as far as possible.
4. A person who discriminates or harasses may be liable for payment of damages to the person offended, in addition to any damages payable by the company should it have failed to ensure the practice ceased forthwith. Under the Criminal Justice Act 1994, harassment became a criminal offence punishable by a fine of up to £5,000 and/or a prison term of up to six months. Under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the penalties for aggravated harassment (i.e. a situation in which the victim feels they may suffer violence) are an unlimited fine and/or five years imprisonment.
5. To make a complaint of discrimination, harassment, victimisation, or unfair treatment, it will be necessary to have available:
 - a) details of what, when, and where the occurrence took place;
 - b) any witness statements or names;
 - c) names of any others who have been treated in a similar way;
 - d) details of any former complaint made about the incident, date, where and to whom made;
 - e) a preferred solution to the incident.

Until a hearing is arranged complainants should keep the matter confidential, other than arranging for details of possible witnesses to be given the member of the Senior Management Team whom the original complaint was raised.

6. All discrimination complaints will be investigated and full details will be kept of all evidence, etc. as well as findings and details of any sanctions imposed.
7. Where allegations against an immediate superior or close colleague are considered proven, every effort will be made, if required by the victim, to transfer that person away from them, although it must be realised that this may prove difficult in some instances.