EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT

BEFS is an equal opportunity employer.

We are committed to being a successful, caring and welcoming place for all employees. We want to create a supportive and inclusive environment where our employees can reach their full potential, without prejudice and discrimination. We are committed to a culture where respect and understanding is fostered and the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances will be positively valued.

Equality of opportunity, valuing diversity and compliance with the law is to the benefit of all individuals at BEFS as it seeks to develop the skills and abilities of its people. While specific responsibility for eliminating discrimination and providing equality of opportunity lies with managers, individuals at all levels have a responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect.

Through this policy and procedure and the training and development of managers and staff, the organisation will do all it can to promote good practice in this area in order to eliminate discrimination and harassment as far as is reasonably possible. BEFS will also continue to work towards its dedicated goal of encouraging and promoting equality and diversity within the workforce.

The policy aims to achieve equality by removing any potential discrimination in the way that our employees are treated by fellow employees or BEFS, including:

- people with disabilities
- people of different sexual orientations
- transgender people
- people of different races
- people on the grounds of their sex
- those of faith and of no faith
- in relation to their age
- in relation to their social class or medical condition
- people who work part-time
- those who are married or in a civil partnership
- women who are pregnant, have recently given birth or are breastfeeding.

Discrimination can be either direct or indirect discrimination. Some of the above are protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and discrimination is prohibited, unless there is a legal exception under the Equality Act.

Direct discrimination
This is where someone is treated less favourably due to one (or more) protected characteristics. It can be intentional or unintentional discrimination. Occasionally the discrimination may occur due to a protected characteristic of another person, so the discrimination may be because of association. An example is an advert for a job that requires ‘men only’ or ‘under 30s only’.

Indirect discrimination
This is where someone is disadvantaged by an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice (PCP) that is applied 'across the board' or 'equally across a particular group'. The PCP may have the consequence (usually unintended) of causing a disadvantage, which then actually affects somebody. For example, a PCP relating to clothing or headwear could be applied 'equally', but may cause someone with a protected characteristic to be disadvantaged. The PCP could be justified if it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Victimisation
This is not the same as the common meaning of victimisation, but is specifically regarding treating someone less favourably because they have complained about or given information about discrimination or harassment, either regarding themselves or someone else.

Harassment
This is part of the Equality Act but is covered in more detail in the Harassment policy.

The Equality Act 2010 applies to how employees treat fellow employees, visitors, suppliers and former employees.

BEFS is committed to equality of opportunity and to providing a service and following practices which are free from unfair and unlawful discrimination.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that no applicant or member of staff receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be relevant to performance. It seeks also to ensure that no person is victimised or subjected to any form of bullying or harassment.

The personal commitment of every employee to this policy and application of its principles are essential to eliminate discrimination and provide equality throughout BEFS.

Training, development and progression opportunities are available to all staff.

The Head of Operations has particular responsibility for implementing and monitoring the equality and diversity policies and, as part of this process, all personnel policies and procedures are administered with the objective of promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating unfair or unlawful discrimination.

There will be monitoring and reviews of the effectiveness of the equal opportunities policy, including a review of job applicants and the benefits/career progression of existing employees. Comments and suggestions on the policy can be directed to Ilona McAllister, Head of Operations.