Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

The Spark Group

Introduction

At The Spark Group, we believe that everyone has the right to discover their talents and achieve their full potential.

We are committed to creating a culture where everyone is welcomed, respected, valued and able to participate fully, regardless of their background, personal circumstances or protected characteristics.

We promote equality of opportunity, value diversity and foster an inclusive environment where everyone is treated with dignity, fairness and respect. We are committed to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality and ensuring everyone can participate in and benefit from our learning programmes, employment opportunities and services.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All employees;
- All sub-contractors;
- All contractors;
- All volunteers;
- All learners;
- All visitors;
- Employers and work placement providers supporting our learners;
- Any other individual participating in or interacting with activities delivered by The Spark Group;
- All activities conducted onsite, online, during placements, trips or off-site events

What do we mean by Equality, Diversity and Inclusion?

Equality means ensuring everyone has fair access to opportunities by recognising and removing barriers that may prevent people from achieving their potential.

Diversity means recognising, respecting and valuing the differences between people, including their backgrounds, experiences, perspectives and characteristics.

Inclusion means creating an environment where everyone feels welcome, respected, supported and able to participate fully.

Protected Characteristics

We fully uphold the Equality Act 2010, which protects individuals against discrimination based on the following protected characteristics:

- Age;
- Disability;
- Gender reassignment;
- Marriage and civil partnership;
- Pregnancy and maternity;
- Race;
- Religion or belief;
- Sex;
- Sexual orientation

Types of Unacceptable Behaviour

The Spark Group will not tolerate unlawful discrimination in any form.

This includes:

Direct discrimination - treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic

Indirect discrimination - applying a rule or practice that disadvantages people with a protected characteristic without a legitimate reason

Harassment - unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment

Victimisation - treating someone unfairly because they have raised, supported or participated in a complaint relating to discrimination or harassment

Our Commitment

We are committed to:

- Promoting equality of opportunity for everyone;
- Creating an inclusive, welcoming and respectful environment;
- Valuing and respecting diversity across The Spark Group and learning programmes;
- Preventing discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Complying with the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation;
- Ensuring that everyone is treated fairly and with dignity

Accessibility and Reasonable Adjustments

We recognise that individuals may require different types of support to participate fully. Where appropriate and reasonable, we will:

- Make reasonable adjustments for employees and learners;
- Provide accessible information and alternative formats where possible;
- Remove unnecessary barriers to participation;
- Consider individual needs during recruitment, learning, assessment and employment;
- Work with individuals to identify support arrangements

Inclusive Learning and Working Environment

We are committed to creating an environment where everyone feels able to contribute to succeed.

We will:

- Promote inclusive teaching, learning and assessment practices;
- Embed equality, diversity and inclusion throughout our programmes and learning materials;
- Challenge stereotypes, prejudice and any discriminatory behaviour;
- Encourage participation from individuals from all backgrounds;
- Celebrate and respect the diversity of our learners, employees and partners;
- Foster a culture of mutual respect and positive relationships

Equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded throughout our curriculum, learner experience and organisational culture. We actively promote respect, tolerance and understanding alongside the Fundamental British Values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

Reporting Concerns

Anyone who experiences or witnesses discrimination, harassment, victimisation, or unfair treatment should report their concern as soon as possible.

Concerns can be reported to:

- A line manager
- Any member of the Senior Leadership Team
- A tutor (for learners)
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead

If your concern involves your usual point of contact, or you do not feel comfortable raising it with them, you should report it to another manager, the Designated Safeguarding Lead or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Reports may be made verbally or in writing.

All reports will be treated seriously, investigated fairly and handled sensitively.

Confidentiality

Information relating to concerns or complaints will only be shared with those who need to know in order to investigate the matter, safeguard individuals or fulfil legal responsibilities.

Absolute confidentiality cannot always be guaranteed where safeguarding concerns or legal obligations require information to be shared.

Protection from Victimisation

The Spark Group encourages individuals to raise concerns in good faith.

No individual will suffer disadvantage, retaliation or unfair treatment because they have reported discrimination, supported another person in raising a concern or participated in an investigation.

Any act of victimisation will be treated seriously and may result in disciplinary or other appropriate action.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where there are changes to legislation, statutory guidance or organisational requirements.

The review will ensure the policy continues to promote equality, diversity and inclusion across all aspects of The Spark Group's work.

Communication, Engagement and Training

We actively promote this policy and build engagement across our workforce, learners and employer partners. We are committed to ensuring that all employees understand their responsibilities and possess the skills needed to embed inclusive practice throughout their work.

To achieve this, we will:

- Ensure the policy is easily accessible to all staff, learners, employers and stakeholders via our website and learning channels;
- Deliver mandatory induction and ongoing continuing professional development (CPD) for all staff, covering equality, diversity, neurodiversity, unconscious bias and inclusive teaching and assessment practices;

- Gather learner and employee feedback through regular surveys and focus groups to drive continuous improvement;
- Embed principles of equality, diversity and inclusion across recruitment, learning delivery, assessment and employer partnerships.

Apprenticeship Delivery and Employer Partnerships

When delivering apprenticeship training and working alongside employers, we set clear expectations to ensure safe, fair and inclusive environments for all apprentices.

We will:

- Collaborate with partner employers to ensure they understand their legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 and provide reasonable adjustments in the workplace;
- Ensure fair and non-discriminatory recruitment and selection processes when recruiting employees and onboarding apprentices;
- Carry out robust initial assessments to identify individual learning and support needs, putting tailored reasonable adjustments in place from the start of the apprenticeship journey;

Approval

This policy has been approved by The Spark Group's Senior Leadership Team.

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