

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY**

All learners/staff have the right to access education and training and to achieve success so that they can reach their full potential and contribute towards serving their community. Our equal opportunities policy is a reflection of our commitment to inclusion and to eliminating discrimination through education, training and working practices, which will bring benefits to all of our learners, staff and the wider community.

Rutledge recognises the benefits of having a diverse community, with individuals who value one another, and the different contributions everyone can make. Learners will be taught to value and respect others. Rutledge is committed to being an equal opportunities education provider and is committed to equality of opportunity for all members of the Rutledge Community. Rutledge recognises and accepts its responsibilities under the law and opposes discrimination on the basis of:

- gender;
- marital or civil partnership status;
- any gender reassignment;
- race;
- disability;
- sexual orientation;
- religion (community background) or belief (including lack of religion or belief);
- ethnic or national origin;
- age.

Rutledge also opposes all bullying and discrimination on the basis that a person has a special educational need or learning difficulty, or because English is an additional language.

Rutledge aims to ensure that all policies and practices conform to the principle of equal Opportunities and takes into account the Equality Act 2010.

Rutledge will tackle inappropriate attitudes and practices through staff leading by example, the supportive Rutledge culture and Rutledge's other policies.

**Related policies:** This Equal Opportunities Policy is consistent with all of the Rutledge's policies, including the Be Safe Be Heard Policy, Positive Behaviour Management Policy, Special Educational Needs Policy, Whistleblowing Policy, Disability Discrimination Policy, Anti Bullying & Harassment Policy Ethnic Diversity & Racism Policy.

## **Policy statement**

**Scope:** This policy applies to all members of the current and prospective Rutledge Community, both our Staff and our Learners.

**Policy aims:** Through the operation of this policy we aim to:

- communicate the commitment of Rutledge to the promotion of equal opportunities;
- promote equal treatment within Rutledge for all members;
- create and maintain an open and supportive environment which is free from discrimination;
- foster mutual tolerance and positive attitudes so that everyone can feel valued within Rutledge;
- be alert to the early signs of needs that could lead to later difficulties, and respond as appropriate;
- remove or help to overcome barriers for learners where they already exist;
- ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination against any person on any ground
- make it clear that, and ensure, that all discriminatory words, behaviour and images are treated as unacceptable;
- take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled people at a substantial disadvantage (the 'reasonable adjustments' duty).

## **Forms of discrimination**

**Types:** Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

**Direct discrimination:** Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably due to one or more of the grounds. For example, rejecting an applicant of one race because it is considered they would not 'fit in' on the grounds of their race could be direct discrimination.

**Indirect discrimination:** Indirect discrimination occurs where an individual is subject to an unjustified provision, criterion or practice which puts them at a particular disadvantage because of, for example, their sex or race.

## **Admissions**

**Applicants:** Rutledge accepts applications from, and admits learners irrespective of their gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or special educational needs and will not discriminate on these grounds. Rutledge will treat every application in a open-minded way using objective and fair criteria.

## **Education and associated services**

**Equal access:** Rutledge will afford all learners equal access to all benefits, services, facilities, classes and subjects, irrespective of their gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, belief or special educational needs, subject to considerations of safety and welfare.

**Positive action:** Rutledge may afford learners of a particular racial group, or learners with a disability or special educational needs, access to additional education or training to meet the special needs of the learners in that group, for example, language training for groups whose first language is not English.

**Exclusions:** Rutledge will not discriminate against any learner by excluding him or her from Rutledge, or by subjecting him or her to any other detriment, on the grounds of his or her gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, belief or special educational needs.

**Teaching and materials:** Efforts are made to recognise and be aware of the possibility of bias (for example gender or racial), so that this can be eliminated in both Rutledge's teaching and learning materials and teaching styles. Materials are selected for all areas of the curriculum so as to avoid stereotypes and bias.

**Learner interaction:** All learners are encouraged to work and socialise freely with, and have respect for, all other learners, irrespective of their gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, belief or special educational needs, subject to considerations of safety and welfare. Positive attitudes are fostered through the curriculum and ethos of Rutledge, and learners will be encouraged to question assumptions and stereotypes.

**Bullying:** Rutledge will not tolerate bullying or cyber-bullying for any reason. Specific types of bullying include bullying relating to race, religion, belief or culture, bullying related to SEN, learning difficulties or disabilities, bullying related to appearance or health conditions, bullying relating to sexual orientation, bullying related to home circumstances, sexist or sexual bullying. See Rutledge's Anti-bullying Policy for more details.

#### **Learner Dress**

There is no uniform requirement, but learners are expected to dress with consideration for others.

**Symbols of faith:** learners are not discouraged from wearing symbols of faith, providing these do not transgress Health and Safety requirements.

#### **Religious belief**

**Religion:** Rutledge's ethos is non denominational and all are expected to respect the rights and freedoms of the Rutledge Community as a whole and considerations of safety and welfare.

#### **Disability and Special educational needs**

**Our approach:** We are an inclusive Community which welcomes learners with disabilities and special educational needs. At present, our facilities, physical and otherwise, for the disabled and those with special educational needs are limited. However, we will do all that is reasonable to ensure that Rutledge's curriculum, ethos, culture, policies, procedures and premises are made accessible to everyone. (See SEN Policy)

#### **Learners with English as an additional language**

Rutledge has appropriate welfare support for all such learners through its supportive culture.

#### **Provision for learners with particular religious, dietary, language or cultural needs**

Rutledge will consider all requests from learners with religious, dietary, language or cultural needs and will make reasonable efforts to accommodate these requests where appropriate

### **Responsibilities**

All members of the Rutledge Community are expected to comply with this policy and therefore to treat others with dignity at all times without regard to their gender, marital/civil partnership status, race, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion, belief or age.

**Management:** Those working in senior management level have a specific responsibility to set an appropriate standard of behaviour, to lead by example and to promote the aims and objectives of Rutledge with regard to equal opportunities.

### **Monitoring and review**

**Monitoring:** To ensure that this policy is operating effectively and to identify those sections of the local community which may be under-represented in Rutledge, Rutledge monitors applicants' gender, race, disability and religion or belief as part of the Admissions procedure.

**Review:** The Branch Manager is responsible for the ongoing monitoring and reviewing whether the aims of this Policy are carried out throughout all areas of Rutledge and taking appropriate action where necessary. This policy is reviewed annually by the Operations Director/ HR Manager.

### **Reporting and recording incidents of discrimination**

**Complaints:** If you believe that you have received less favourable treatment on any of the unlawful grounds listed above, or if you feel that this policy has been breached in any way to your detriment you are encouraged to raise the matter through the Rutledge's formal Complaints Procedure. A copy of the Complaints Policy is available on request. Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the complaints procedure.

**Enforcement:** Rutledge will treat seriously and urgently investigate every complaint and report. Disciplinary action may be taken against any member of the Rutledge Community who is found to have acted in contravention of this policy.

**Record:** All reported breaches of this policy will be recorded and this record will be reviewed annually by the Operations Director/ HR Manager.

**Reviewed by: SMT (August 2012)**

**Revised by: Breda Cullen**