

SIGTA LTD

Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy

Date	Version	Description	Checked	Approved
15-01-26	2.0	Annual review of this policy review completed. Minor updates to format and content (format). Para 1.0 'Policy purpose' has been included in lieu of 'Aims' Introduction of version control table to record amendments made.	 Mike Driscoll IQA - SIGTA	 Alison Foxwell CEO - SIGTA

Next revision due: 15-01-27

Policy Purpose

1. **To recognise and promote the value of diversity**, and to demonstrate a commitment to equality of opportunity by treating everyone associated with SIGTA fairly and lawfully, according to their individual needs. SIGTA aims to foster a culture where our employees, our apprentices, and our learners are:
 - Treated with dignity.
 - Valued for their contributions.
 - Supported to achieve their full potential, in line with personal aspirations, organisational needs, and programme requirements.
2. **To ensure recruitment and selection** of employees and apprentices/learners is based on open criteria relevant to the position or programme and is never unfair or unlawful because of discrimination (direct or indirect) against protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010.
3. **To work collaboratively** with others to remove barriers facing under-represented groups and to actively promote training and career opportunities in areas relevant to SIGTA's operation.
4. **To integrate equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)** into all SIGTA policies and practices as a standard aspect of how we operate.
5. **To promote awareness, understanding and good practice of equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)** among all SIGTA employees, apprentices/learners, and employers through training and ongoing dialogue.

Responsibilities

All employees should understand that they, as well as their employer, can be held personally liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination committed during their employment. The fact that a discriminatory act was undertaken without the employer's knowledge or consent, provides no defence in law, unless the employer can show that all reasonable practical steps were taken to prevent such discrimination.

- 1 **SIGTA's Board of Directors** has overall responsibility for the development, implementation and evaluation of SIGTA's Equal Opportunities & Diversity policy.
- 2 **The Chief Executive** has lead responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of this policy and ensures that the principles are incorporated into strategic plans of SIGTA Ltd. The CEO also oversees ongoing monitoring of its implementation and reports regularly to the Board of Directors.
- 3 **Managers** have responsibility for ensuring full compliance with this policy and that equal opportunities and diversity (EO&D) principles are embedded in all areas of SIGTA activity.
- 4 **All employees** must implement this policy in all aspects of their work and, where appropriate, actively encourage learners and employers to actively engage with EO&D best practices.

Recruitment, Selection and Training

SIGTA regularly reviews selection procedures, training methods, and assessment practices to ensure alignment with current good practice. A pro-active approach is taken to remove any barriers. We also:

- Recognise the changing educational curriculum, training methods and awareness of language and cultural differences among people from different backgrounds.
- Offer advice, information and training to member companies, apprentices and learners to develop and enhance their own EO&D practices.

Communication and training for staff

SIGTA is committed to the continuous professional development of its employees.

We believe that investing in staff training is essential for maintaining excellence, fostering innovation, and ensuring a safe, productive workplace. The company will provide relevant learning opportunities to enhance job-specific skills, meet regulatory requirements, and support long-term career growth, ensuring all employees have the tools necessary to succeed in their roles.

Learner Support:

All applicants for apprenticeships and government-funded training are assessed to establish their starting point. Where a disability or specific need is identified that affects their area of study, reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure the learner can succeed. If SIGTA cannot meet a learner's needs, they will be signposted to suitable alternative provision.

Employer Support:

Employers are made aware of available resources and assistance available to support learners with disabilities, including support for workplace adjustments.

Complaints, Discipline and Grievance

All aspects of EO&D are covered under SIGTA's Complaints, Discipline and Grievance procedures. These documents are available to all employees.

Guidance on SIGTA's complaints process is also provided in the Apprentice Commitment Statement and Information Folder. The complaints procedure is also publicly available via SIGTA's website:

www.sigta.co.uk

Equal Opportunities and Diversity Training

All employees receive training in the area of equal opportunities and diversity. Training is reviewed by the CEO and updated as required.

EO&D is a standard agenda item at monthly training team meetings to ensure awareness, to facilitate the identification of EO&D issues and to encourage continuous improvement of SIGTA's and employees practice.



SIGTA apprentices are required to participate in Apprentice Development Workshops that explore and challenge views about equal opportunities, diversity and inclusion.

SIGTA Training employees are required to further develop the EO&D understanding of apprentices during learner reviews/training sessions. This will be achieved through the discussion of current issues relating to EO&D (inside or outside the workplace), the application of EO&D to the behaviours required in the apprenticeship and the use of information/worksheets to further promote understanding. The same approach is used to develop apprentices understanding of Safeguarding, British values and Prevent.

Application of EO&D with Employers and Subcontractors

The Chief Executive is responsible for overseeing the effective application of SIGTA's EO&D policy across all employer and subcontractor relationships.

SIGTA seeks to ensure that the member companies (employers) it contracts with for the training of apprentices and other government funded learners, treat apprentices/learners fairly in line with current legislation and good practice.

Employers must confirm they understand and meet their EO&D obligations and comply with current legislation, before apprentices/learners are placed with them.

New employers are briefed on EDI expectations, and they are offered advice if required, including an example policy to help with the development of their own.

SIGTA ensures that all subcontractors deliver training in line with EDI principles, to ensure all apprentices/learners are treated fairly in line with current legislation and good practice. Compliance is monitored through regular contact and observation visits.

SIGTA employees will use their regular visits to employers and apprentices/learners to promote and reinforce ongoing awareness and understanding of equal opportunities and the benefits of diversity and inclusion.

If in the opinion of SIGTA Ltd, EDI standards are not met within an employer, or a subcontractor falls short of their obligations, SIGTA will work with the employer/subcontractor to resolve the issue. If the situation cannot be resolved and apprentices could be disadvantaged, SIGTA reserves the right to terminate its contract with the organisation concerned. In the event of a contract being cancelled, SIGTA will take all necessary steps to ensure continuity and a high-quality learning experience for apprentices.

Monitoring

SIGTA collects and monitors EDI data relating to employees, Directors/Trustees and learners, including age, gender, ethnicity, and disability status.

Where appropriate and with sensitivity, additional diversity information may be collected, to ensure our services are inclusive and reflective of wider society.

Data is used exclusively for monitoring purposes and does not affect access to opportunities or benefits available to individuals.

We are aware that some individuals may choose not to disclose requested information, so care will be taken to avoid inadvertent discrimination in such cases.

EDI data is stored securely as confidential personal information and access to this information is restricted.

Continuous improvement

When new legislation is introduced, additional training will be provided if required, to ensure employees are aware of the changes and the relevance to their role. Current legislative updates are incorporated in the initial training for new employees.

SIGTA works with external organisations to maintain, update and develop organisational and individual awareness of EO&D. The Education Training Foundation is seen as a key provider of good quality resources for employees development and CPD.

Feedback is welcome and encouraged from employees, employers, apprentices/learners and external stakeholders for any suggestions for the improvement of this policy and its implementation.

Relevant Legislation - Equality Act 2010

This policy is informed by the Equality Act 2010, which consolidated and strengthened previous anti-discrimination laws into a single Act.

The Equality Act came into force on 1 October 2010. The Act simplified, strengthened and harmonised legislation which provides a law that protects individuals from unfair treatment and promotes a more equal and inclusive society for all.

The main pieces of legislation that were merged to create the Equality Act 2010 are:

- The Equal Pay Act 1970
- The Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- The Race Relations Act 1976
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- The Equality Act 2006, Part 2
- The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007

The Equality Act 2010 defines 9 protected characteristics and 6 types of discrimination.

Protected Characteristics

There are nine protected characteristics:

- **Age:** Any age.
- **Disability:** Including a past disability.
- **Gender Reassignment:** Being in the process of changing, having changed, or intending to change your gender.
- **Marriage and Civil Partnership:** For employment purposes.
- **Pregnancy and Maternity:** During pregnancy and after birth.
- **Race:** Including colour, nationality, ethnicity, and national origin.

- **Religion or Belief:** Including religious and non-religious beliefs.
- **Sex:** Being male or female.
- **Sexual Orientation:** Being heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual.

Types of discrimination / prohibited conduct.

The equality act defines the following six as prohibited conduct:

1. Direct Discrimination:

Treating someone less favourably because of their protected characteristic.

2. Indirect Discrimination:

Applying a rule or policy that unfairly disadvantages someone with a protected characteristic, even if it applies to everyone.

3. Harassment:

Unwanted behaviour that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.

4. Victimisation:

Treating someone unfairly because they have complained about discrimination or supported someone who has.

5. Discrimination Arising from Disability:

Direct discrimination that occurs because someone has a disability.

6. Failure to Make Reasonable Adjustments:

The legal duty to make reasonable adjustments to services or workplaces to ensure disabled people are not disadvantaged.