

## Equality and Diversity Policy

### 1 | Introduction

Here at Aquila, we are proud of our track record of delivering a broad spectrum of services that have impacted on a diverse range of customers and stakeholders. Aquila Group is an inclusive group where all employees, customers and stakeholders are treated with respect and dignity. We recognise, however that this very diversity can result in certain groups or individuals being disadvantaged because of unfair or unlawful discrimination they may experience.

All policies and procedures developed and implemented by members of the Aquila Group will not discriminate unfairly or unlawfully against anyone, and will promote equality of opportunity for all. Aquila will continue to monitor its approach to equality and diversity on an on-going basis.

### 2 | Our Commitment

Aquila values diversity and actively promotes the positive benefits it can bring. We seek to employ a workforce which reflects the diverse communities in which we operate and will treat all employees with dignity and respect.

Aquila is also committed to its corporate social responsibility and its social values and seeks to have a positive impact within local communities. Aquila's goal is to make a better, more sustainable, and socially responsible world through our work with affordable housing organisations, charities, schools and sport organisations in the UK and abroad to devise new solutions, opportunities, sources of financial investment and technology. We aim to be an employer of choice and ensure our workforce is able to make a valuable contribution to these objectives whilst ensuring that their health and wellbeing is supported.

In addition to client project work, Aquila actively supports key initiatives in the housing sector, promoting diversity and inclusion. For example, Altair plays a key role in the Leadership 2025 programme to promote and actively support BAME diversity in leadership roles in the housing sector. As part of Aquila's pledge to Leadership 2025, we are committed to diversity in all our recruitment work. This includes working with our clients to agree where any focus on underrepresented group might be best placed and creatively design a search and advertising strategy that seeks to redress the balance.

The purpose of this policy is to make clear Aquila's commitment to preventing discrimination and promoting equal opportunities in employment and all that we do.

### 3 | Diversity Statement

Our aims in regard to Equal Opportunities are straightforward. We aim to:

- Promote equality and diversity, challenging discrimination and promoting equalities in service delivery and employment
- Create a working environment where everyone is able to give their best, be free from bullying and harassment, feel safe and be treated with dignity and respect
- Ensure that our recruitment decisions are made on the basis of merit, ability, experience and potential and that recruitment processes are fair, open and

encourage applications from all sectors in the community with a view to having a workforce which reflects the diversity of the communities and people we serve

- Provide equality of opportunity and will not tolerate discrimination on grounds of age, gender, gender identity, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, race, nationality, religion, working pattern, caring responsibilities, trade union activity or political beliefs and any other grounds.
- Encourage and support our staff to achieve their potential by providing fair access to training and development opportunities.

Aquila recognises that its success depends on creating a working environment that supports the diverse makeup of its staff. To ensure that our 'diversity offer' goes beyond a paper statement we have implemented a range of supportive initiatives, policies and procedures designed to ensure we practice what we say:

- We are aware of, and fully comply, with all Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements on access to premises (e.g. our head office is accessible to people with impaired mobility and wheel chair users)
- We provide training to all staff on equality matters so as not to inadvertently offend or discriminate
- We recruit our staff from within the communities we operate within
- We actively support flexible working arrangements to support people with family commitments and to help them achieve the right work/life balance.
- We have a comprehensive internal complaints procedure and a confidential reporting policy and process

## 4 | The Legal Framework

Our Diversity statement and commitment is supported by legal duties to provide services and employment opportunities fairly and without discrimination. We have a strong moral and social duty to recognise that discrimination takes place and to do everything we can to challenge prejudice and discrimination. We value diversity and are fully aware and supportive of legislation and statutory duties.

We follow the legislative requirements set out in the Equality Act 2010 which covers all aspects of equality and diversity, replacing previous legislation covering equal pay, sex, race and disability discrimination. We are also mindful of the Human Rights Act 1998.

## 5 | Our Equalities Action Plan

We are committed to the following activities in relation to Equality of Opportunity. We will:

- Build on equality good practice within our field of operation
- Consult with and involve all clients, stakeholders and staff on this policy
- Provide accessible information and ways people can comment on our services
- Ensure our practices do not discriminate against anyone
- Deliver services which are appropriate to the needs of the service user
- Make sure that all operatives, associates and organisations providing services on our behalf work in line with this policy
- Make sure that all employees know the effects of this policy and are provided with appropriate training

Following *The Altair Review*, a report published by Altair in 2017 about how housing firms can create a more diverse leadership within their organisations, Aquila adopted the 5 point plan outlined in the review on how housing firms can create a more diverse leadership within their organisations. The recommendations that Aquila is following are:

1. Report annually on key diversity statistics

2. Set aspirational targets
3. Interview more diverse pools of candidates
4. Develop the leadership pipeline
5. Lead by example

We are currently at stage three of the five-year plan to being fully compliant with the recommendations made in *The Altair Review*. The objectives at the end of the five-year plan are to:

- Annually publish Altair's diversity statistics on the Aquila Services Group plc website or in a year-end e-bulletin on the Altair Ltd website
- Set a 14% BME aspirational target for the leadership team
- Interview at least one BME candidate for all leadership positions
- Establish an internal BME mentorship programme to develop the leadership pipeline
- Join the Leadership 2025 Index of Champions and appoint a diversity champion

## Monitoring the policy

We will monitor this policy bi-annually and review it annually.

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