



# Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy

August 2025

## Contents

Equal Opportunities and Diversity Statement

Direct Discrimination

Indirect Discrimination

Harassment

Victimisation

Protected Characteristics

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

Part Time Workers

Recruitment of Ex-Offenders

Exemptions to the Work Environment

Complaints and Monitoring Procedures

## **Equal Opportunities and Diversity Statement**

AWS embraces diversity and aims to promote the benefits of diversity in all of our business activities. We seek to develop a business culture that reflects that belief. We seek to develop a culture where we treat all employees as individuals, fairly and in a consistent way. We actively work within the parameters of the Equality Act 2010 by promoting a culture of respect and dignity and vigorously challenge discrimination, should it ever be present. We strive to remove unnecessary barriers for our employees seeking opportunities through training and development. We will expand the media in which we recruit to in order to ensure that we have a diverse employee and candidate base. We will also strive to ensure that our clients meet their own diversity targets.

AWS is committed to diversity and will promote diversity for all employees, workers and applicants. We will continuously review all aspects of recruitment to avoid unlawful discrimination. AWS will treat everyone equally and will not discriminate on the grounds of an individual's "protected characteristics" under the Equality Act 2010 which are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Personal and professional, our service begins and ends with people – from the consultants we hire, to the teachers we place, and the close relationships we build with clients.

We will not discriminate on the grounds of an individual's membership or non-membership of a Trade Union. All staff have an obligation to respect and comply with this policy. AWS is committed to providing training for its entire staff in equal opportunities and diversity. AWS will avoid stipulating unnecessary requirements which will exclude a higher proportion of a particular group of people and will not prescribe discriminatory requirements for a role. We will not discriminate unlawfully when deciding which candidate/temporary worker is submitted for a vacancy or assignment, or in any terms of employment or terms of engagement for temporary workers. AWS will ensure that each candidate is assessed in accordance with the candidate's merits, qualifications and ability to perform the relevant duties for the role.

This policy applies to all conduct in the workplace and also to conduct outside of the workplace that is related to your work or which may have a detrimental impact on AWS's reputation (e.g. the expression of views on social media)

Under the Act unlawful discrimination occurs in the following circumstances:

### **Direct Discrimination**

Direct discrimination occurs when an individual is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic. Treating someone less favourably means treating them badly in comparison to others that do not have that protected characteristic. It is unlawful for a recruitment consultancy to discriminate against a person on the grounds of a protected characteristic:

- in the terms on which the recruitment consultancy offers to provide any of its services;
- by refusing or deliberately omitting to provide any of its services;
- in the way it provides any of its services.

Direct discrimination can take place even if the individual does not have the protected characteristic but is treated less favourably because it is assumed he or she has the protected

characteristic or is associated with someone that has the protected characteristic.

Direct discrimination would also occur if a recruitment consultancy accepted and acted upon instructions from an employer which states that certain persons are unacceptable due to a protected characteristic, unless an exception applies. The Act contains provisions that permit specifying a requirement that an individual must have a particular protected characteristic in order to undertake a job. These provisions are referred to as occupational requirements.

Where there is a genuine occupational requirement then the client must show that applying the requirement is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, i.e. the employer must be able to objectively justify applying the requirement. An occupational requirement does not allow an employer to employ someone on less favourable terms or to subject a person to any other detriment. Neither does an occupational requirement provide an excuse against harassment or victimisation of someone who does not have the occupational requirement.

### **Indirect Discrimination**

Indirect discrimination occurs when a provision, criterion or practice (PCP) is applied but results in people who share a protected characteristic being placed at a disadvantage in comparison to those who do not have the protected characteristic. If the PCP can be objectively justified it will not amount to discrimination. Indirect discrimination would also occur if a recruitment consultant accepted and acted upon an indirectly discriminatory instruction from an employer.

If the vacancy requires characteristics which amount to an occupational requirement or the instruction is discriminatory but there is an objective justification, AWS will not proceed with the vacancy unless the client provides written confirmation of the genuine occupational requirement, exception or justification. AWS will use best endeavours to comply with the Act and will not accept instructions from clients that will result in unlawful discrimination.

AWS will use best endeavours to comply with the Act and will not accept instructions from clients that will result in unlawful discrimination.

### **Harassment**

Under the Act, harassment is defined as unwanted conduct that relates to a protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. This includes unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. AWS is committed to providing a work environment free from unlawful harassment.

Examples of prohibited harassment are:

- Verbal or written conduct containing derogatory jokes or comments;
- Slurs or unwanted sexual advances;
- Visual conduct such as derogatory or sexually orientated posters;
- Photographs, cartoons, drawings or gestures which some may find offensive;
- Physical conduct such as assault, unwanted touching, or any interference because of sex, race or any other protected characteristic basis;
- Threats and demands to submit to sexual requests as a condition of continued employment or to avoid some other loss, and offers of employment benefits in return for

sexual favours

- Retaliation for having reported or threatened to report harassment.
- If an individual believes that they have been unlawfully harassed, they should make an immediate report to their Line Manager followed by a written complaint as soon as possible after the incident.
- Should the concern be related to the Line Manager the concern should be reported to Lauren Griffiths, Compliance Manager, at [lauren.griffiths@affinityworkforce.com](mailto:lauren.griffiths@affinityworkforce.com).

The details of the complaint should include:

- Details of the incident
- Name(s) of the individual(s) involved
- Name(s) of any witness(es)

AWS will undertake a thorough investigation of the allegations in line with our Complaints Process and Policy. If it is concluded that harassment has occurred, remedial action will be taken. All employees and workers will be expected to comply with AWS's policy on harassment in the workplace.

Any individual who AWS finds to be responsible for harassment will be subject to a disciplinary procedure and the sanction may include termination.

### **Victimisation**

Under the Equality Act 2010 victimisation occurs when an individual is treated unfavourably because he/she has done a 'protected act' which is bringing a claim for unlawful discrimination or raising a grievance about discrimination or giving evidence in respect of a complaint about discrimination. AWS will ensure that our consultants do not victimise any individual.

### **Protected Characteristics**

There are nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010. Discrimination which happens because of one or more of these characteristics is considered unlawful.

The nine protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage or Civil Partnership (in employment only)
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

### **Age**

Under the Act, it is unlawful to directly or indirectly discriminate against, harass or victimise a person because of age. Age discrimination does not just provide protection for people who are older or younger. People of all ages are protected. A reference to age is a reference to a person's age group. People who share the protected characteristic of age are people who are in the same age group. Age group can have various references: Under 21s, People in their 40s,

Adults etc.

AWS will not discriminate directly or indirectly, harass or victimise any person on the grounds of their age. We will encourage clients not to include any age criteria in job specifications and every attempt will be made to encourage clients to recruit on the basis of competence and skills, not age.

AWS is committed to recruiting and retaining employees whose skills, experience, and attitudes are suitable for the requirements of the various positions regardless of age.

If AWS requests age as part of its recruitment process such information will not be used as selection, training or promotion criteria or in any detrimental way and is only for compilation of personal data, which the company holds on all employees and workers and as part of its equal opportunities monitoring process. In addition, if under age 22, to adhere to Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Business Regulations 2003 and other relevant legislation applicable to children or young candidates.

Where a client requests age or date of birth, this will have to be under an occupational requirement or with an objective justification which should be confirmed in writing.

### **Disability**

Discrimination occurs when a person is treated unfavourably as a result of their disability. Indirect discrimination occurs where a provision, criterion or practice is applied by or on behalf of an employer, or any physical feature of the employer's premises, places a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled.

In recruitment and selection there may be a requirement to make reasonable adjustments. For example, it might be necessary to have different application procedures for partially sighted or blind applicants that enable them to use Braille.

With testing and assessment methods and procedures, tests can only be justified if they are directly related to the skills and competencies required for the job. Even then, it might be appropriate to have different levels of acceptable test results, depending on the disability.

For example, an applicant with a learning disability might need more time to complete a test, or not be expected to reach the same standard as other nondisabled applicants.

Reasonable adjustments in recruiting could include:

- Modifying testing and assessment procedures;
- Meeting the candidate at alternative premises which are more easily accessible;
- Having flexibility in the timing of interviews;
- Modifying application procedures and application forms;
- Providing a reader or interpreter

Wherever possible AWS will make reasonable adjustments to hallways, passages and doors in order to provide and improve means of access for disabled employees and workers.

However, this may not always be feasible, due to circumstances creating such difficulties as to render such adjustments as being beyond what is reasonable in all the circumstances.

AWS will not discriminate against a disabled person:

- in the arrangements i.e. application form, interview or arrangements for selection for determining whom a job should be offered; or
- in the terms on which employment or engagement of temporary workers is offered; or
- by refusing to offer, or deliberately not offering the disabled person a job for reasons connected with their disability; or
- in the opportunities afforded to the person for receiving any benefit, or by refusing to afford, or deliberately not affording him or her any such opportunity; or
- by subjecting the individual to any other detriment (detriment will include refusal of training or transfer, demotion, reduction of wage, or harassment).

AWS will make career opportunities available to all people with disabilities and every practical effort will be made to provide for the needs of staff, candidates and clients.  
Gender Reassignment.

AWS recognises that any employee or worker may wish to change their gender during the course of their employment with the Company. We will endeavour to support any employee or worker through their reassignment. AWS will make every effort to try to protect an employee or worker who has undergone, is undergoing or intends to undergo gender reassignment, from discrimination or harassment within the workplace. Where an employee is engaged in work where the gender change imposes genuine problems AWS will make every effort to reassign the employee or worker to an alternative role in the Company, if so desired by the employee.

Any employee or worker suffering discrimination on the grounds of gender reassignment should have recourse to the Company's complaints procedure.

### **Marriage and Civil Partnership**

AWS will not treat a worker differently because they are married or in a civil partnership. In the Equality Act 2010, marriage and civil partnership is defined as someone who is legally married or in a civil partnership. Marriage can either be between a man and a woman, or between partners of the same sex. Civil partnership is between partners of the same sex.

### **Pregnancy and Maternity**

AWS recognises that it is unlawful to discriminate against a worker on the grounds of pregnancy or a pregnancy related illness. The protection starts when a worker becomes pregnant. This is called the protected period. All employees have the right to take maternity leave, however, temporary staff or agency workers may not have this right. If a worker has the right to maternity leave, the protected period ends when the maternity leave ends or when they return to work, if this is earlier. If a worker does not have the right to maternity leave, the protected period ends two weeks after the child's birth date.

Upon giving birth, it is also unlawful to discriminate against a worker for one of these reasons:

- Being on maternity leave
- Having been on maternity leave
  
- Having tried to take maternity leave which you're entitled to

In certain circumstances it may be lawful for a service provider to refuse to provide you with a service or treat you differently because you're pregnant if there are health and safety reasons for doing this. The service provider must reasonably believe there's a risk to your health and

safety if the service was provided to you.

### **Race**

Race includes a person's colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins. AWS is committed to recruiting and retaining employees whose skills, experience, and attitudes are suitable for the requirements of the various positions regardless race.

### **Religion or Belief**

AWS acknowledges that it is unlawful for an employer to discriminate against someone on the grounds of:

- Their religious belief
- Their religion
- Their philosophical belief
- Their political opinion

Religious belief for the purposes of equality law covers any religious belief, or the absence of one.

### **Sex**

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination (whether direct or indirect), harassment and victimisation on the ground of a person's sex whether they are a man or a woman. AWS will not discriminate against or favour a particular sex when deciding which candidate/temporary worker is submitted for a vacancy or assignment, or in any terms of employment or terms of engagement for temporary workers.

### **Sexual Orientation**

AWS will not discriminate against a worker based on their sexual orientation or how a person chooses to express their sexual orientation e.g. through appearance or the places you choose to visit.

The Equality Act 2010 says a person must not be discriminated against because:

- They are heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual
- someone thinks a person has a particular sexual orientation
- They are connected to someone who has a particular sexual orientation

### **Part Time Workers**

This policy also covers the treatment of those employees and workers who work on a part-time basis. AWS recognises that it is an essential part of this policy that part time employees are treated on the same terms, with no detriment, as full-time employees (albeit on a pro rata basis) in matters such as rates of pay, holiday entitlement, maternity leave, parental and domestic incident leave and access to our pension scheme. AWS also recognises that part-time employees must be treated the same as full-time employees in relation to training and redundancy situations.

### **Recruitment of Ex-Offenders**

AWS has registered with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and has the authority to apply for criminal records checks on individual because they are working with children or vulnerable adults or both. Therefore, we will comply with the DBS's Code of Practice which includes having a policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders. This policy is made available upon request and as part of the application process for relevant roles.

### **Exemptions to the Work Environment**

Under the Equality Act 2010 there are some exemptions that apply to the work environment which allow employers to require employees or workers to have (or not to have) certain protected characteristics. These are called Genuine Occupational Requirements and the burden is on the employer to show that there is an occupational requirement or an objective justification attached to a particular job role. Where there is a General Occupational Requirement then the client must show that applying the requirement is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, i.e. the employer must be able to objectively justify applying the requirement.

A Genuine Occupational Requirement does not allow an employer to employ someone on less favourable terms or to subject a person to any other detriment. Neither does an occupational requirement provide an excuse against harassment or victimisation of someone who does not have the occupational requirement. The objective justification test is used in relation to indirect discrimination, direct age discrimination and discrimination arising from a disability only.

### **Complaints and Monitoring Procedures**

AWS has in place procedures for monitoring compliance with this policy and for dealing with complaints of discrimination. Any discrimination complaint will be investigated fully through our Complaints Process and Policy.