

Equality and Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

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Introduction

The purpose of the policy is to provide a statement which acts as a public commitment to promoting equality in-line with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and the Equality Act 2010 that Realise commits to the three aims of the PSED which are:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

Realise is firmly committed to achieving equality for all, values diversity as a business and will continuously strive to create a positive environment, representative of and responsive to different cultures and groups where everyone has an equal chance to succeed; this is fully endorsed by all staff and the Realise Leadership Group and Board.

Realise provides education and employment services to help break down barriers to prosperity. We offer flexible, tailored support to young people and adults, including school leavers, employees who seek career development and anyone who, through illness or changing circumstances, has been prevented from completing their journey into work. The Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy shapes how we work and ensures that the agreed principles are considered and embedded in everything we do, including recruitment, delivering apprenticeship and adult education training, working with employers and apprentices and our partners. Realise and its delivery partners support wider inclusion by offering opportunities for disadvantaged learners and widening participation through a range of learning opportunities. Realises is equity focused.

By assessing, recruiting and developing talent from the widest pool we can gain insight into different cultures and communities and generate greater creativity in supporting learners, customers and employees alike. Realise considers and applies the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy in everything it does.

We all have a responsibility to embrace and support this vision and must continue to challenge behaviour and attitudes that prevent us from achieving this. Using fair, objective and innovative practices we aim to ensure that:

- All individuals are treated fairly and with respect at all stages of our interaction with them, and includes ensuring that activities are fully accessible to people with disabilities.
- All individuals have the right to be free from harassment and bullying of any description or any other unwanted behaviour whether based on sex, trans-gender status, marital status, civil partnership status, pregnancy, race, disability, age, political or religious belief or sexuality.
- Learners, customers and employees have an equal chance to contribute to achieving their potential, irrespective of any defining feature that may give rise to unfair discrimination. Realise meets our legislative obligations to publish statutory calculations such as gender pay gap reporting and endeavours to monitor progress towards any key objectives relating to representation and performance of different groups (sex, race, disability, age).

- The diversity of the communities we serve reflects at all levels in our learner, customer and employee profile.

Purpose of this Policy

The Policy is designed to establish clear guidelines for employees and Delivery Partners, learners, customers, contractors and visitors.

At Realise we seek to ensure that:

- Leaders promote equality of opportunity and diversity exceptionally well so that the ethos and culture of the provider prevent any form of direct or indirect discriminatory behaviour. Leaders, employees, customers and learners do not tolerate prejudiced behaviour.
- We make every effort to ensure that the ethos of an open-access culture is maintained. Realise focus on ways in which we can increase learner, client and employee recruitment from under-represented groups.
- Programmes of learning reflect diversity; a wide range of teaching and learning methods and resources are employed to promote inclusivity and sensitivity to issues of equality and diversity.
- Learner and customers from all groups have access to appropriate support and facilities.
- Applicants for employment are drawn from a wider pool with positive action to encourage applications from under-represented groups.
- Employee recruitment and promotion procedures are designed to eliminate discrimination. For example, anonymised job application process
- The views of learners, employee and customers will be sought and used to recommend improved practice within Realise.

Understanding the Terms

Equality is about creating a society where everyone can participate and has the opportunity to fulfil their potential without fear of prejudice and discrimination.

Diversity means difference. It is about recognising the individual as well as group differences, treating people as individuals and valuing our diversity.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) defines an equal society as one which:

‘Protects and promotes the central and valuable freedoms and real opportunities of each person, securing human rights for all and ensuring that no-one is unfairly disadvantaged. In an equal society, central and valuable freedoms and real opportunities are not unconstrained but are limited by the need to guarantee the same freedoms and opportunities for all. In an equal society, institutions and individuals respect the diversity of people and their goals, address their different needs and situation, and remove the barriers that limit what people can do and can be’.

The EHRC defines three aspects of equality:

1. Equality of outcomes
 2. Equality of process (fair treatment, or being treated with dignity and respect)
 3. Equality of autonomy (empowerment, or the degree of choice and control)
- Realise seeks a 'whole systems' approach to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion.

Policy & Legislation Considerations

The Equality Act 2010 replaces and incorporates all existing anti-discrimination laws with a single act. Realise policy and single equality scheme incorporates the protected characteristics listed below and the equality scheme includes specific targets to achieve strategic outcomes for each.

Age - Age diversity within the workplace is promoted and valued through:

- Challenging age stereotyping
- Recognising the benefits of a mixed-age community
- Target specific underrepresented age groups e.g. 50+ group and actively promote initiatives for career change coaching; transferrable skills audit; financial planning; and introduction to sector route ways.

Disability - The abilities of people are recognised and valued at all levels through:

- Ensuring that activities are fully accessible to people with disabilities
- Encouraging people to disclose their learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- Focusing on what people can do rather than what they cannot
- Challenging stereotypes about disability
- Making appropriate reasonable adjustments to help people with disabilities achieve their full career and learning potential

Gender - Women and men are fully and properly represented and supported at all levels in Realise through;

- Challenging gender stereotypes
- Tackling gender segregation
- Supporting individuals in balancing their life at work and home
- Supporting individuals who become pregnant and taking active steps to support them throughout their maternity period and return to work
- Supporting individuals through maternity, paternity and adoption leave

Gender Re-assignment - Realise promotes gender identity equality and positively takes steps to:

- Tackle gender identity discrimination
- Supports people who plan to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone gender re-assignment and are protected against all forms of discrimination and harassment

Marriage & Civil Partnership - Realise aims to ensure that all employees are treated fairly and with dignity and respect whether they are married, in a civil partnership or single.

Maternity & Pregnancy - Realise aims to provide an environment where employees are supported and treated fairly and with dignity and respect during pregnancy and maternity and while breastfeeding.

Race - The racial and cultural diversity of our communities is represented at all levels through:

- Challenging racial stereotyping
- Understanding, respecting and valuing different racial and cultural backgrounds and perspectives
- Promoting race equality in our programme of education and training and customer support

Religion or Belief - People are treated fairly at Realise irrespective of their religious beliefs (or non-belief) and practices or political opinions by:

- Recognising an individual's freedom of belief and right to protection from intolerance and persecution
- Providing a safe environment where learners, customers and employees can raise issues and share differences

Sexual Orientation - People are treated fairly in the workplace irrespective of their sexuality through:

- Promotes equality for LGBTQIA+ employees, learners and customers
- Respecting different lifestyles and gender identities
- Challenging negative stereotypical views

Responsibility

All employees are responsible for equality and diversity across the business ensuring their behaviours are aligned to our values and our policy and procedures.

All individuals within Realise have a responsibility to comply with this policy and have a positive attitude to ensure success. All Realise delivery partners are expected to hold the same responsibility and commitment and to promote equality in line with legal requirements. Realise promotes the Equality and Diversity Policy through its culture, recognising and actively valuing differences. The policy is easily accessible to all staff, available through our intranet and each and every member of staff are made aware of the policy and its importance at the start of their employment and throughout employment with training and development activities alongside the promotion of the principles of the policy through our values and behaviours.

All employees are legally obliged to:

- Act appropriately in line with the Realise Code of Conduct
- Report all incidents where the guidance in this document has not been followed or where they feel discrimination or victimisation has taken place.
- Undertake mandatory Equality and Diversity e-learning on induction, refreshed annually, and undertake any additional training associated with their role
- Ensure that learners and customers know who and how to report issues or concerns regarding bullying, harassment or victimisation, or discrimination

All Managers have the responsibility to:

- Foster a workplace environment where employees are free to be themselves

- Take appropriate action and intervene in cases where policy is breached
- Undertake mandatory Equality and Diversity e-learning on induction and refreshed annually, and any additional training relevant to roles
- Ensure that employees, learners and customers know who and how to report issues or concerns regarding bullying, harassment or victimisation or discrimination
- Communicate to employees, learners, customers and Delivery Partners as necessary ensuring that Policies and Processes are understood and that relevant training takes place

All employees, learners and customers will learn about the importance of good relations and have a responsibility to co-operate and comply with any measures set out to improve or sustain the concept of equality and diversity and report any breaches in Policy.

Any employees found to be in breach of the Equality and Diversity policy and/or relevant legislation will be dealt with through the formal disciplinary procedure.

Realise expects its Delivery Partners to have the relevant Policies and Procedures in place, and follow the principles as in this document. This is checked through due diligence and included in the monthly meeting agenda.

As part of the monitoring and management of the EDI policy and to ensure appropriate engagement towards the policy, and the Realise Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee meets every quarter to drive the EDI improvement plan as well as EDI activities across Realise. The EDI Committee helps Realise to understand how our policy and service is affecting or will affect those accessing our services and support. Appendix 1 outlines the roles and responsibilities of this committee.

Realise has received the following accreditations:

Disability Confident: This shows that we are an Employer who plays a leading role in changing attitudes for the better and that we are changing behaviour and cultures in our business, networks and communities; Realise is committed to equality in the workplace.

Ban the Box: We are registered with Ban the Box, removing the tick box from our application process. This takes away the opportunity for our employees to immediately judge an applicant because they have a criminal record. Instead, they see their suitability for the role first. We ask the question about criminal records later on in the recruitment process if it is applicable.

Stonewall champion: Realise has become a member of the Stonewall Diversity Champions initiative which offers support and guidance to employers on how to achieve fully inclusive workplace environments by integrating diversity and inclusion into all parts of their business, with a particular focus on the LGBTQ+ community

Monitoring & Review

Realise will seek to ensure that Realise policies and procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that they do not have a negative impact on any particular groups of people. A formal annual review of the policy takes place which is complemented by ongoing checks by the EDI Committee to ensure alignment and compliance to emerging policy, legislation changes and or best practice.

ADDENDUM

This policy applies to all provision. This policy applies to our employees, learners, customers, staff and our delivery partners.

Appendix 1

Performance Management: Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Monitoring and Management

Reason for this:

- Ensure an inclusive Curriculum that offers learning experiences to meet the specific needs of individuals
- Remove any barriers and allow all learners to develop skills to ensure that they have the opportunity to achieve the same as their peers
- To reduce and eradicate any gaps in achievement between different groups of learners
- To narrow gaps of those economically inactive or unemployed
- To increase participation with underrepresented groups
- To tackle discrimination and inequality at all levels
- To challenge stereotypes across sectors and industries, including age and gender
- Monitor the effectiveness of equality, diversity & inclusion through our Curriculum
- To celebrate diversity and raise awareness of the benefits of a diverse workforce and Curriculum

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee:

This group meet on a minimum of a quarterly basis. This diverse group drive the EDI improvement plan and activities across Realise. They have all made pledges around their specific area of interest to promote, celebrate and make improvements.

Key activities the group lead on include:

- EDI Calendar to celebrate diversity and provide practical information to educate.
- Tutor guides on how to adjust for different groups of learners
- External forums on EDI with learners, employers, partners and other external stakeholders to capture and address specific area priorities linked to protected characteristics
- Monitor localised EDI market intelligence, for example, how to narrow the gaps of economically inactive or under-represented groups
- Identify where Realise can carry out targeted campaigns to address and tackle local issues
- Work with local partnerships such as charities, support groups, targeted organisations and local authorities to promote and support EDI.
- Keep external accreditations up to date and valid

Curriculum Governance & Reviews:

As part of governance for new curriculum, a review is completed by Quality Assurers to ensure that the programme is inclusive, and EDI is embedded appropriately throughout prior to delivery commencing. They will also ensure differentiation is applied to enable it to be accessible for all levels and abilities to ensure all learners have the same opportunity to achievement.

Through on-going Curriculum Reviews, analysis of impact is reviewed that includes achievement and retention rates and feedback from learners and employers specific to EDI. Continuous improvements are made to the curriculum as a result of this to ensure our programmes are suitable for all.

Staff Training:

All Realise staff complete mandatory training on an annual basis linked to EDI to ensure the policy is effectively implemented. Training is as follows:

- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
- Safeguarding
- Prevent
- Fundamental British Values

These are completed via our e-learning platform and are monitored by the Quality Project Manager to ensure all staff complete the training in a timely manner.

Governance & Oversight:

Every quarter. The Quality & Curriculum Director collates the outcomes of the EDI Committee and Quality Monitoring Reviews and presents to the Leadership Group & Education Excellence board:

- EDI Improvement Plan
- Key activities and projects relating to EDI incl. impact of improvements on those projects
- Data to demonstrate achievements between different groups of learners
- Participation across different groups of learners
- Staff Training
- Accreditations
- Future plans

Version Control Number	Realise-20-PD-28
Version	8
Last Review Date	11/07/2022
Next Review Date	11/07/2023
Policy Owner	Lesley Rimmington Director of Quality and Compliance
Signed by Managing Director	 Gregg Scott Realise Managing Director