



Equality & Diversity of Opportunities Policy

[2025-27]

MI Skills Development Centre

Equal Opportunity Policy Introduction

MI ComputSolutions (trading as) MI Skills Development Centre (MISDC) is a voluntary Organisation established by the Managing Director as a consultancy organisation, providing support and training to community groups. Its establishment in 2002 was set up to tackle lack of skills, qualifications and job opportunities in the borough of Lewisham and Newham. In 2005, it extended its provision to its community providing both accredited and non-accredited courses through its partnership working with training providers and other community organisations.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to improve the health and career opportunities of individuals through inclusive and lifelong learning that enhance the employability of learners and sustainability of SME business.

Equality of opportunity underpins all that we do as a company from the way we promote and deliver training and education services to the way we employ our staff.

We intend to mainstream consideration of equality and Diversity into everything we do through:

- A clear statement of intent which is promoted widely
- 'Equality proofing' to ensure that our policies and practices are not inherently discriminatory and or lack equality in application.
- Making various training available to staff and those with whom we work; e.g. Prevent Duty, Safeguarding and Equality & Diversity.
- Communication and consultation
- Clear allocation of accountability
- Identification, promotion and implementation of best practice with regular reviews on Risk Assessment and its action plan
- Monitoring, evaluation and adjustment of policies, practices and services
- Taking action to eliminate unlawful discrimination. E.g. Islamophobia, tackling hate and prejudice based bullying, harassment and intimidation as part of MI ComputSolutions to and exemplification of British Values including "democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs"

General Statement

MI ComputSolutions is committed to the elimination of unlawful discrimination and the promotion of equality and diversity in all that we do. We recognise the rich diversity of the populations we serve and we aim to treat all people with dignity and respect. We wish to recognise the value of each individual and the positive contribution they can make to the promotion of a learning community. The company recognises the concept of institutional racism, and is committed to the elimination of the root causes of it.

We believe in human rights for all concerned with this organisation and all members of society. No action shall be taken against them by any person connected with the company which would devalue their positive contribution to society as a whole and to this organisation or lead to a loss of dignity or self-respect or respect from others.

We aim to ensure that all groups and individuals within the communities and workforces that we serve are given the full opportunity to benefit from the services and education and training opportunities that we provide. No service user, potential user, employee or potential employee will be unlawfully discriminated against because of age, sexual orientation, colour, disability, race, ethnic or national origin, gender, marital status, responsibility for dependants, political or religious beliefs or Trade Union activities. We recognise there may be other unlisted groups that may too face discrimination.

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all company services and employees and board members, and to services delivered by our Associates on behalf of the Company.

MI ComputSolutions will ensure that all policies and procedures are in line with current British and European Employment Legislation, Prevent Duty, British Values and good practice guides.

Putting Policy into Practice

Delivery of education and training services

MI ComputSolutions. will:

- Provide equal access to learners and potential learners
- Provide learning opportunities that recognise and are sensitive to the cultural needs of our diverse communities.
- Encourage participation of our learners so that they can influence the way their needs are met
- Seek to influence the organisations with which we work in a collective commitment to equality of opportunity
- Identify and eliminate the inappropriate use of information technology to harass, bully or unlawfully discriminate
- Ensure each learning venue has a trained equality champion to provide leadership in equality and to support learners and staff who feel they have suffered discrimination

Employment

MI ComputSolutions. will:

- Integrate equality of opportunity into all our functions and policies
- Recruit and value a workforce that reflects the diversity of our communities
- Take positive action where there is under-representation in our workforce
- Ensure all employees understand the aims and objectives of the company and the expected standards of behaviour towards colleagues, learners and others with whom we work.

- Make clear the action an employee or potential employee may take if s/he feels unfairly treated
- Provide training to our staff so that can put this policy into practice
- Monitor by age, ethnicity, disability and gender the following:
 - Recruitment and selection
 - Profile of the workforce
 - Training and development opportunities
 - Promotion
 - Incidents of harassment
 - Disciplinary and grievance cases
 - Staff retention

Taking Action

MI ComputSolutions will

- Provide regular monitoring data to inform planning
- Ensure that specific actions to promote equality are incorporated into its annual development plan
- Evaluate the impact of its policies and procedures as part of its annual self assessment report
- Measure the recruitment, retention and success of learners to monitor whether any group may be experiencing barriers to participation and learning
- Publish in a range of formats:
 - a learner rights and responsibilities charter
 - a disability statement
 - race equality action plan
 - procedures for dealing with sexual and racial harassment
 - a complaints procedure for learners and a grievance procedure for staff
- Review bi-annually all its equality policies including its race equality plan, and its disability statement for effectiveness and conformity with current legislation
- Monitor the implementation of its policy by those with whom it has a contractual relationship.

Communication of this Policy

- All staff and board members will be made aware of this policy and their responsibilities in relation to it.
- All managers will be responsible for ensuring that new recruits are made aware of the policy through a planned induction programme
- This policy will be issued to all learning venues with whom MI ComputSolutions contracts. Each Learning Venue will apply the policy within the centre but may publish the policy under their own name.
- The policy will be published and available to learners in centres
- Responsibilities for Implementing the Policy
- The Board is responsible for ensuring that the company fulfills its duties under the relevant equality legislation and the overall implementation of the policy. They will consider performance and progress on a regular basis.

- The Managing Director is responsible for the development and implementation of the equality action plan.
 - The Centre Manager and those with management duties are responsible for implementing, monitoring and actively promoting this policy. The Centre Manager must ensure that those they manage are fully aware of it and their responsibilities in relation to including the identification of development opportunities to enable staff to put this policy into practice in their work.
 - The Centre Manager is responsible for making the services to learners equally accessible for all. Managers are expected to take measures to address inequality and promote equal opportunity for all. They must deal promptly and effectively with concerns from learners.
 - Managers have a responsibility to treat employees fairly and with respect and to take action to help and encourage employees achieve their full potential. They must deal promptly and effectively with concerns from staff about their treatment in the workplace.
 - Employees play an integral role in making this policy effective. They must strive to make services to learners equally accessible for all and seek to maintain an environment where bullying and harassment cannot flourish. If they see unlawful discrimination occurring they have a duty to report it to the relevant manager.
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MI Skills Development Centre

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

MI ComputSolutions (t/a) MI Skills Development Centre

The aim of the statement is to ensure that no person who have had a disability in the past, and to comply with the requirements of the Equality and Diversity Act 2010 for the 9 protected characteristics: Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage or civil partnership (in employment only), Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion or belief, Sex receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of them suffering from a disability whilst in employment with or learning activities funded by the MI Skills Development Centre (MISDC).

MISDC will adhere to the principles of the Equality Act 2010 (superseded the Disability Discrimination Act 1995) regarding its employment responsibilities and raison deter.

Therefore, MISDC will ensure the following:

- Not to treat a person suffering from a disability less favourably for any reason relating to their disability.
- Provide reasonable adjustments for a person suffering from disabilities who are employees and/or members using MISDC facilities where possible.
- All partners funded by the Organisation provide a non-discriminatory learning environment and comply with the principles of the Equality Act 2010.
- All MISDC services e.g. IAG is fair and impartial

MISDC recognise the wide definition of a person suffering from a disability covered by the act and strives to provide an environment, which, both encourages, people with disabilities to reach their potential in work, training, and learning.

Discrimination is deemed to have occurred when:

- A person suffering from a disability is treated less favourably than someone else
- The treatment is for a reason relating to the disability and that treatment cannot be justified
- There is failure to make reasonable adjustment and that failure cannot be justified

Disability discrimination will be included both internally at MISDC and by its subcontracted providers, as part of the induction on diversity and equal opportunities, for all learners, staff, and training for staff in disability issues will be offered as appropriate. In this way, we will be actively promoting Disability Equality.

All MISDC evaluation forms will offer a person suffering from a disability the opportunity to comment on the facilities available to them.

MISDC will act on the feedback given pertaining to issues relating to the needs or discrimination of a person suffering from a disability. Furthermore, based on constructive feedback, MISDC will make reasonable adjustments were possible and ensure that any such adjustments are included as a requirement by subcontractors.

MISDC complete an audit of the facilities and materials available to support the needs of any person suffering from a disability using premises and services offered by subcontractors before contracts are agreed as well as its own premises. This statement is to be reviewed in

concert with the organisations other management policies and procedures as part of its quality assurance processes.

DISABILITY CODE OF PRACTICE

1.0 PURPOSE

This code of practice is to provide details and clarification of MI ComputSolutions policy towards people who have a disability, or who have had a disability in the past, and to comply with the requirements of the Equality and Diversity Act 2010.

2.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to all learners, prospective learners, job applicants, employees, contractors/consultants and agency staff and any other employee or person acting on behalf of the Company.

3.0 POLICY STATEMENT

We aim to ensure that all groups and individuals within the community are given full opportunity to benefit from the services and job opportunities we provide.

MI ComputSolutions is committed to ensuring that people with disabilities are supported and encouraged to enrol as learners or apply for employment within the Company.

4.0 DEFINITIONS

As a result of government requirements regarding the collection of certain statistics, the definition of 'disability' includes those people who have any of the following:

- Physical disability
- Sensory loss
- Mental health problems
- Chronic illness (e.g. asthma, sickle cell disease, epilepsy, diabetes)
- Medical conditions which may cause pain or other symptoms which affect your study or work
- Specific learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia, dysphasia)
- Any other condition which has a significant effect on your ability to study or work

"Disability" is defined as:

"a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on (a person's) ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities".

This applies to both people who currently have a disability and to those who have had a disability in the past.

5.0 PROVISIONS FOR STAFF AND PROSPECTIVE STAFF

5.1 Recruitment and Selection

In order that disabled persons may have an equal opportunity of being recruited the Company will strictly apply the Equal Opportunities Policy and Recruitment and Selection Policy. In particular, it will:

- Examine and review job descriptions and person specifications in order to ensure that unnecessary requirements are not included that may exclude a disabled person who could do the job and that the recruitment criteria for each job is ability based
- Apply for and display the Employer of Disabled Persons logo in advertisements to encourage such individuals to apply for vacancies
- Advertise vacant positions in the disability press
- Guarantee interviews to suitably qualified disabled applicants who meet the minimum essential requirements for the job
- Take reasonable steps to ensure that interview arrangements are such that disabled persons may attend without embarrassment or difficulty
- Examine selection tests to ensure that they are non-discriminatory in their application and ask all candidates whether or not they have any special needs before participating in the tests
- Make such reasonable adjustments to premises, work practices and equipment as are necessary to enable a disabled person to take up employment with the Company

5.2 Training and Development

Where appropriate, individual training will be considered for a disabled person to enable use of adaptations or special equipment provided. In addition, retraining will be considered for a member of staff who becomes disabled, to enable him/her to remain in their present job or else to take a redesigned or alternative job.

5.3 Physical Access

The company is committed to increasing access to its own premises. It will carry out an assessment of accessibility and develop a plan to improve access where required.

5.4 Work Placements

In order to assist disabled people build relevant skills and confidence a number of work experience placements of up to 13 weeks will be offered by the Company. During the work placements the individual will be provided with the opportunity to achieve a recognised vocational qualification to assist them with their future employment prospects.

Short term work placements will be unpaid and individuals are not engaged as employees of the Company. The Company will however, make a contribution to travel expenses.

5.5 Disability Awareness Training

Disability Awareness training will be carried out for all staff as part of the general briefing on Equal Opportunities.

A Disability Awareness session will also be incorporated into the Company Induction Courses for all new starters.

The aim of the training will be to make all staff more aware of the issues facing disabled people.

5.6 Accidents, Illness and Injuries

Where a member of staff becomes disabled, whether through accident, illness or injury, every reasonable and practicable consideration will be given to ensuring that s/he may remain in employment.

Examples of steps the Company may take are:

- Making adjustments to Company premises
- Allocating some of the disabled employee's duties to another person
- Transfer to an alternative position which is vacant
- Alteration to working hours
- Time off during working hour for rehabilitation, assessment or treatment
- Training and/or re-skilling
- Modification or purchase of appropriate equipment
- Modification to assessment procedures
- Provision of a reader/interpreter

All necessary advice and counselling will be provided to the Director of Planning and Corporate Services who will also consult with external specialist organisations as appropriate.

5.7 Disciplinary, Grievance and Capability Procedures

The Company will ensure that the disability, grievance and capability procedures do not, in themselves, discriminate against disabled members of staff. For example, the Company will consider requests from disabled staff to be accompanied by someone other than a workplace colleague or trade union representative on the occasion of an interview under of one these procedures.

6.0 PROVISIONS FOR LEARNERS AND PROSPECTIVE LEARNERS

MI ComputSolutions is committed to equality of opportunity and to supporting learners with learning difficulties who wish to follow other e-learning (or other learning means).

6.1 Learner Enrolment

There is a substantial amount of practical support which may be available students through the Company. It is therefore vital for learners to inform the company about a disability since this will have implications for the support and provision available.

The Company actively encourages students with disabilities to provide information of need as soon as possible and on the Application Form.

Information disclosed is considered 'personal information' under the Data Protection Act and will not usually be revealed to other learners, or to anyone outside the Learning Centre, without the explicit permission of the learner concerned. If a student prefers than other members of the centre staff are not informed, the implications of this will be discussed with the learners before agreeing, what, if any, information will be passed on.

All learners take part in a diagnostic assessment during the induction programme and learning support needs are identified. Appropriate individual or group support can be arranged.

6.2 Information

A selection of key centre literature will be made available in a range of formats including large print, braille, on film and tape.

6.3 Physical Access

The centre building is easily accessible because of its design. However, where special support cannot be provided the centre will endeavour to identify an appropriate centre for learners to attend and/or ensure learners can access courses remotely.

6.4 Mental Health Facilities

The Company can access Counselling Services for learners through its partnership with the IAG Network and local council. Examples of the support available include coping with stress, specific study skills and management of panic attacks or other difficulties.

The Company will always endeavour to support and work with other organisations to offer appropriate support.

6.5 Learning Facilities and Support

6.5.1 Management Responsibility

- The Manager of the Learning Venue is responsible for the admission of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- The Centre Manager is responsible for the assessment and provision of additional support for learners.

6.5.2 Learning Support

- Some disabled learners may receive additional individual tuition sessions.
- All learners undertake an initial diagnostic assessment at the start of their course which enables the Company to plan for individual students' learning needs.

- Additional support may be provided through:
 - Specialist support (communicator, interpreter, note taker)
 - Adaptation of materials (enlarging, tape recording, video etc)
 - One-to-One or small group support
 - Access to online teaching and learning for anyone self-isolating

6.5.3 Staff Expertise and Training and Development of Staff

- All tutors and facilitators have or will receive training in learner support and guidance, Safeguarding and Prevent Duty
- Where specialist support is required the company will contract with its network or other agencies for the services of trained specialist staff.

6.5.4 Technology and Equipment

- MI ComputaSolutions provides learners with a range of equipment to promote access for those with physical disabilities. The Company will aim to meet needs on an individual basis as required.
- The Company has software available to support visually impaired learners and learners with learning difficulties in the use of computers.
- There is some specialist software available for learners with learning difficulties.
- Examples of other support that can be arranged include:
 - Computer Screens - for learners with a photosensitive form of epilepsy who have difficulty with computer screens which appear to flicker.
 - Assessment Arrangements - for learners with diabetes whose blood sugar control is affected by exam stress then special assessment arrangements may be made.
 - Rest breaks - for learners suffering with chronic fatigue syndrome or ME, the Company may be able to make special exam arrangements allowing a rest break.
 - Loan of equipment to enable learners to continue learning through Virtual Learning Environment if self-isolating.

6.6 Counselling and Welfare

Regular reviews take place with learners with learning difficulties and disabilities and the appropriate tutor.

7.0 MONITORING

The Board, Quality Committee and Quality Team is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of this policy.

Tools for monitoring include:

7.1 MIS/Reviews/Teachers' EDMIS/QAR/Self Assessment/

The purpose of this self-assessment tool is to enable the Company to make accurate judgements about the current accessibility of our provision and employment opportunities to people with a wide range of disabilities and learning difficulties and to develop an action plan. The assessment is split into two parts:

Physical Access

The Disability Rights Commission recommends that a qualified professional, such as a local authority access officer, should carry out an audit of physical access to the centre. In addition, an internal assessment may be used as a way of raising awareness of disability. It could be used as a way of giving current disabled staff and learners a real voice in suggesting improvements.

Educational Access

For educational access a judgement will be made about how the additional and support needs of learners with disabilities can be met.

Following these assessments an action plan will be drawn up for improvements.

8.0 RESPONSIBILITY

All staff and learners are required to adhere to this policy. Managers within the centre are responsible for ensuring that this policy is applied within their own area. Any queries on the application or interpretation of this policy must be discussed with the Managing Director prior to any action being taken.

PRACTICAL ADJUSTMENTS TO CONSIDER

Listed below are some examples of how the centre is exploring ways to adapt the working environment for disabled people by making premises more accessible through adaptations and special equipment:

1. Providing automatic doors to entrances;
2. Well defined fire procedures, including vibrating fire alarms (trembler devices), visual signals/alarms and the installation of special evacuation chairs;
3. Level access to all buildings;
4. Wide door and corridors - which are free of blockages;
5. Clear easy to read signs guiding people around a building
6. Adapted office furniture e.g. height adjustable desks and chairs, raised writing boards, lecterns and foot stools;
7. Use of three rather than four drawer filing cabinets;
8. Voice activated word processors;
9. Telecommunications equipment such as text phones, video phones, minicomms, amplifiers and induction loops;
10. Building to be well-lit, light wall coverings to provide maximum light reflection;
11. Provision of a "reader";
12. Provision of additional supervision;
13. Covering the cost of taxi fares for those with difficulty using public transport;
14. Home-working;
15. Flexible hours arrangements;
16. Disabled toilet facilities;
17. Provision of "large monitor" display screens and a range of mobile printing devices;
18. Handrails and barriers;
19. Sign language interpreter on videos, at training events/meetings/conferences
20. Organisation bulletins, manuals, newsletters instruction etc. reproduced on appropriate paper in large print, Braille, or on tape;
21. Reception desks at low level.