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Introduction

At Bytes Software Services (Bytes/Company), we are dedicated to promoting equality, embracing diversity, and fostering inclusion (EDI) in line with the Equality Act 2010 and all other applicable legislation. We uphold a zero-tolerance approach to unlawful discrimination, whether committed, authorised, and/or condoned, ensuring that all concerns are addressed with the utmost support and confidentiality. Breaches of this policy will result in disciplinary action to maintain company standards and drive continuous improvement. Supporting documentation accompanies this policy.

Purpose

This policy ensures that every employee understands their rights and responsibilities in maintaining an ethical, inclusive workplace where all individuals are empowered to contribute and thrive. We are committed to valuing individual contributions, upholding dignity and respect, and embracing diversity as a driver of innovation, better decision-making, and enhanced ability to meet the needs of our diverse customer base. By embedding EDI principles across the organisation, we create a culture where fairness and opportunity are integral to everything we do.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees, including temporary, part-time, and subcontractors. It is communicated to employees via Compass and is available to the public upon request via the Company Website. Our commitment extends to our suppliers, communicated through our Code of Conduct during their onboarding process. We expect our suppliers to uphold the same values, promoting an inclusive and non-discriminative supply chain. Where appropriate, the Speak Up Policy and the Disciplinary and Dismissal Policy will apply.

Policy

Bytes are committed to fostering an inclusive environment that drives innovation, enhance employee satisfaction, and strengthens customer relations. We believe that a culture of EDI not only benefits our organisation but also supports wellbeing and enables our people to work better.

To achieve this, Bytes aims to reflect all sections of society and our customers within the team, creating an environment free from discrimination, harassment, bullying, or victimisation - where everyone feels safe, a sense of belonging, and empowered to reach their full potential.

Additionally, we strive to prevent discrimination against customers and the public, recognising that this approach is both good practice and a sound business strategy.

Terms of Reference

Equality	Fair treatment and equal opportunities for all employees, regardless of background or characteristics.

Diversity	Valuing and embracing differences among employees, fostering respect and inclusion.
Inclusion	Ensuring all employees feel valued, respected and supported, with equal access to opportunities.
Unconscious Bias	Automatic, unintentional attitudes or assumptions that influence decisions and behaviour.
Protected Characteristics	The Equality Act 2010 provides legal protection for nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
Reasonable Adjustments	Changes to remove barriers for individuals with disabilities.
Discrimination	Unfair treatment based on characteristics like race, gender or age, undermining equality and inclusivity.
Direct Discrimination	When someone is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic (e.g., choosing not to recruit someone because they are disabled and assumed "wouldn't fit in" with the team).
Discrimination by Association	When someone is treated less favourably because they are associated with a person who has a protected characteristic (e.g., their partner is transgender).
Discrimination by Perception	When someone is discriminated against because they are perceived to have a protected characteristic, even if they do not (e.g., mistakenly assuming they are gay).
Discrimination Arising from Disability	When someone is treated less well because of something arising from their disability.
Indirect Discrimination	Where a policy or practice applies equally to everyone but disproportionately disadvantages individuals with a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.
Harassment	Unwelcome behaviour that demeans or intimidates based on characteristics like race or gender.
Sexual Harassment	Unwanted sexual conduct creating an intimidating or offensive environment.
Bullying	Repeated, unreasonable behaviour that risks health and safety, such as verbal abuse and intimidation.

Victimisation	When someone treats another person unfavourably because they reported discrimination, bullying, or harassment.
Misconduct	Inappropriate behaviour that breaches company rules or standards and may lead to disciplinary action.
Gross Misconduct	Serious behaviour that may warrant immediate dismissal without notice, subject to a fair investigation.

Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity

- Prohibit unlawful discrimination based on protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- Oppose and avoid all forms of discrimination - whether intentional or unintentional, and whether direct, indirect, by association, or by perception - in all aspects of employment. This includes pay, benefits, terms and conditions, grievances, discipline, dismissal, redundancy, parental leave, flexible working requests, and opportunities for employment, promotion, training, and development. **Examples include**:
    - Steering employees into certain roles based on stereotypical assumptions rather than their individual skills and abilities.
    - Recruiting or promoting individuals based on assumptions about how other employees or clients might react, rather than merit.
    - Applying different performance standards to different groups of employees.
    - Excluding individuals from training or development opportunities because of assumptions about their capability or commitment.
- Employers are legally required to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that no aspect of employment, workplace practices, or the working environment places individuals with disabilities, health conditions, or those who are neurodivergent at a substantial disadvantage. Reasonable adjustments may include changes to working patterns (such as flexible hours or remote work), modifications to the physical environment (like installing ramps or providing ergonomic equipment), and adjustments to job tasks to accommodate individual needs.

Harassment and Misconduct

- Harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic, is a criminal offence.
- Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's disciplinary procedures and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

Reporting Process

Please report any suspected or actual incidents that may conflict with Bytes' EDI Policy by emailing HR@bytes.co.uk. Alternatively, refer to 'POL039 – Speak Up Policy' for details on the confidential reporting mechanism.

Training and Development

- Conduct regular, mandatory training sessions for all employees on inclusive language and behaviour, clearly outlining Bytes' expectations and unaccepted conduct.
- Encourage participation in events and discussions to foster diversity conversations.
- Career development is available to all staff, encouraging them to progress and reach their full potential, ensuring their talents and resources are fully utilised to maximise organisational efficiency.
- Base decisions concerning employees on merit, except where necessary exemptions and exceptions under the Equality Act apply.

Monitoring and Review

- Regularly review employment practices and procedures to identify and address issues, implement improvements and ensure fairness. Update the EDI Policy to reflect these changes and any new legal requirements. Conduct annual reviews to evaluate the policy's effectiveness and act on any identified issues.
- Monitor the composition of the workforce, including factors such as age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief and disability. This helps promote equality, diversity and inclusion, ensuring alignment with the policy's aims and commitments.

Implementation

- Senior Management fully supports the EDI Policy, which has been agreed upon with employee and HR representatives.
- Employees receive details of our grievance and disciplinary procedures when they start, including information on whom to contact (typically their Line Manager).
- Using these procedures does not affect the right to make a claim to an employment tribunal within three months of alleged discrimination.
- Actions range from verbal warnings to mandatory training, and in severe cases, termination.
- Feedback on the policy and its implementation can be provided through HR, Employee Resource Groups, and the Company eForm/Bytes Bot.

Lines of Responsibility

Managing Director	Demonstrate a strong commitment to EDI principles, setting the tone for the Company.

Head of HR	Take all complaints of unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying, or victimisation seriously, whether they come from employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, or the public. Conduct regular training sessions for all employees and maintain records of all reported complaints, investigations, and actions taken to ensure accountability.
Managers/Line Managers	Ensure teams read, understand and adhere to this policy. Managers should advocate for employees who report incidents of discrimination, harassment, bullying, or victimisation, and promote open communication to address any concerns.
Employees	Expected to take personal responsibility for observing, upholding, and promoting, equal opportunities, and for preventing unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying, and victimisation. They should familiarise themselves with this policy during each annual review. Both employees and the organisation can be held liable for any of these acts against fellow employees, customers, suppliers or the public. Sometimes, this may mean allowing for different views and viewpoints and making space for others to contribute. Employees are encouraged to provide feedback on the effectiveness of policies and suggest improvements.

Supporting Documentation

- POL039 - Speak Up Policy
- POL065 - Staff Handbook
- POL066 - Disciplinary and Dismissal Policy
- POL067 - Sexual Harassment Policy
- POL080 - Mediation and Grievance Policy
- POL084 - Neurodiversity Policy
- REC021 - Accessibility Statement