

## UtilitiesADR Equality Policy

UtilitiesADR provides consumers with a free, impartial and independent alternative dispute resolution service of complaints against scheme members. The adjudicator's decisions are designed to achieve a full and final settlement of the dispute and all claims made by either party.

The adjudicator can, where appropriate make compensatory awards in individual cases up to a maximum of £25,000 for actual and quantifiable loss and/or for aggravation, distress and inconvenience caused by the actions of a member.

Valuing diversity is one of UtilitiesADR's core values. This must drive how we treat complainants, the wider public, and one another. In order to handle complaints effectively our policies, processes and interactions must be fair, inclusive, accessible and responsive.

Our commitment to promoting equality and diversity is central to providing excellent customer service. We know that organisations that deliver high standards on equality and diversity deliver high standards for their services generally. We strive to be one of those organisations.

Equality and diversity is at the heart of UtilitiesADR's role as a provider of consumer redress and as an employer.

As an employer, we are committed to eliminating discrimination and encouraging diversity among our workforce. Our aim is that our workforce will be truly representative of all sections of society and that each employee will feel respected and able to give their best.

As a redress provider, UtilitiesADR is called upon to react to a wide range of issues from a wide range of people. We recognise that some complainants will require assistance in order to get the best from our service. If someone feels that they have been badly treated by the actions of another party it is only right that they can have access to our processes and we therefore have a responsibility to ensure that our service is accessible and that all complainants are dealt with fairly and that due courtesy is given to the difficulties they may face.

The purpose of this Equality Policy is to ensure that we are alert to the need to handle different people appropriately and that we are all aware of the obligations placed on UtilitiesADR under the Equality Act 2010 along with an understanding of the importance of everyone who interacts with UtilitiesADR that they are being treated fairly and consistently.

## The Equality Act 2010

A number of separate pieces of equality legislation have been brought together within the Equality Act 2010 and this has also extended and enhanced protection for people in relation to:

- Age
- Race
- Disability
- Religion or belief
- Gender reassignment
- Sex
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy and maternity

UtilitiesADR is a private body which, for the purposes of the Equality Act, provides a public function. As a public function provider, UtilitiesADR is subject to the Act's general public sector duty.

This requires us to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity between those with and without the above characteristics; and
- Foster good relations between those with and without the above characteristics.

UtilitiesADR will comply with the general duty in the way we manage our people and the organisation. Our casework functions are exempt from this general duty so that the adjudicator's independence in decision making is not interfered with. Nonetheless, we will promote equal access to our service for all members of the community and tailor our service to meet people's individual needs.

## Vision Statement

UtilitiesADR will demonstrate excellence in equality and diversity across all areas of policy and practice. In all aspects of our work we will be accessible, inclusive, responsive and fair. UtilitiesADR's vision statement will be achieved by all our staff working together to understand the needs of our consumers, so that we are able to provide an accessible service, by developing a diverse workforce at all levels which reflects the working population at our site, and by engendering an open and inclusive culture in the workplace.

## Key objectives

- To improve access to our service for all sections of the community.
- To promote equality of opportunity, diversity, and inclusion in our workplace.
- To promote equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion when implementing our policies and strategies.