

Diversity and Equality Employment Policy (DEEP)



Introduction

WCS Group is committed both as an employer and as a provider of services to businesses and the wider community, to promoting equality of opportunity. We do this by aiming to ensure that none of our staff, job applicants or customers is discriminated against due to a 'protected characteristic' as defined in the Equality Act 2010. Protected characteristics include race, ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, transgender identity, religion, marital status, age, domestic circumstances or trade union activity – either directly or indirectly.

We recognise that equal opportunities will help staff develop to their best potential which is in the best interests of the company, staff and customers.

This policy is a guide for all staff – particularly those with recruitment, management and line management responsibilities. All staff and members of appointment panels will receive a copy. We expect and hope everyone to read it and observe it fully. Copies are also freely available for job applicants on request.

Monitoring

The Managing Director will assume overall responsibility for the monitoring and annual review of this Policy and other related policies in conjunction with HR, and ensuring that the company does not operate against equal opportunities.

Where it appears that staff or applicants are not being offered equal opportunities, the Managing Director will arrange for an investigation of the circumstances to see where these are justifiable, and whether fault lies within any of our policies or selection criteria. The report will be made available for senior management to action.

Role of staff

All staff will be given guidance and instruction through induction to the company and regular training as to their role and responsibility in promoting equal opportunities for all. In applying this Policy, managers and staff must guard against discrimination on the basis of assumptions that individuals, because of their age, sex, race, marital status etc., possess characteristics which could make them unsuitable for employment. Examples may include;

- Outside work commitments which may interfere with work
- Possess poor intellectual or physical ability
- Perhaps unsuitable because of an assumption the opposite sex or those who are single may be better suited / qualified
- Unable to supervise or manage teams or groups of people
- Possess limited career intentions
- Have limitations imposed by 'traditional/ male / female interests and experience

WCS Group believes that these and other similar preconceptions are unacceptable and strives to be an example of good practice in the field of opportunity.

Discrimination definitions

- a) Direct discrimination – treating a person less favourably than others due to a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have
- b) Discrimination by association – discriminating against an individual because they associate with a person with a protected characteristic
- c) Perception discrimination - discriminating against an individual because others think they possess a protected characteristic. Discrimination can still occur even if the person does not have that characteristic
- d) Indirect discrimination – applying a requirement to a job which discounts a group with a particular protected characteristic from being able to do the job

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- e) Harassment – unwanted conduct which may intimidate, degrade or creates a humiliating and uncomfortable environment for an individual
- f) Third party harassment – the company is aware that its staff spent a large part of their time on customer sites. If an employee is subject to discrimination, harassment or victimisation whilst on a client site they must inform their manager. The company will investigate the incident and work with the client to ensure staff are protected from such discrimination in the future

Recruitment and selection

The Managing Director will ensure that all staff responsible for recruitment and selection are familiar with this Policy and apply it in letter and spirit in conjunction with the recruitment and selection policy in force at the time.

The entire recruitment and selection policy is to be guided and informed by the Equal Opportunities Policy from the initial job description preparation and personnel specifications, through advertising, shortlisting, interviewing and selection. Interviews will be conducted on an objective basis and will only focus on the applicant's suitability for the job and their ability to fulfil the job requirements.

Training

The company recognises that Equal Opportunities responsibilities do not end upon selection and recruitment. The company is committed to ensuring all staff receive the widest possible range of opportunities for advancement and career progression. Management will encourage staff to take advantage of training and development opportunities.

Staff will receive appropriate training to enable them to perform their jobs effectively. Such training will make provision where necessary for individuals returning to work following a break for domestic reasons, professional reasons or returning to work after a period of unemployment. Age limits for entry to training schemes will not be unnecessarily restricted to exclude certain groups of staff.

Promotion and transfer

In order to avoid direct and indirect discrimination, promotion and career development patterns will be reviewed annually to ensure that the traditional qualifications for promotion are justifiable in relation to the job done. Promotion on the basis of length of service alone could amount to indirect discrimination.

The company aims to ensure equality of opportunity in its succession planning and training and development opportunities for staff. There is no arbitrary restriction on transfers between certain jobs.

Positive Action

The company recognises that passive policies will not reverse the discrimination experienced by many groups of people. To this end, if certain groups are under-represented within the Company we will actively seek to encourage applications from those groups.

Any measures taken to encourage applications should not in any way be construed as positive discrimination. The decision as to which applicant is offered a post will be made entirely on the merit of the individual.

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 harmonises previous legislation to ensure equal opportunities and fair treatment of individuals with a protected characteristic. Protected characteristics include gender, disability, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation, marital status, age, and maternity and pregnancy.

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Disability

It is unlawful to discriminate against a person on grounds of disability, or for reasons relating to a person's past or current or future likely disability. This covers both physical and mental impairments. Where a person with a disability is the best person for the job, we will make reasonable adjustments to enable them to conduct their duties. We work hard to ensure job advertisements and job specifications do not indirectly discriminate against those with disabilities, regularly reviewing job requirements to identify necessary tasks.

Sex, Marital Status and Sexual Orientation

It is unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of gender, marital status, or sexual orientation in full or part-time employment and related matters. This also applies to discriminatory advertising. The only exception is where the post merits a General Occupational Qualification.

Gender Reassignment

We also recognise that it is unlawful to discriminate against someone on the grounds of having undergone gender re-assignment surgery, or individuals that choose to live as transsexuals.

Race

Discrimination against an individual due to their colour, nationality, ethnicity or national origins is unlawful.

Age

We recognise our obligations under The Equality Act 2010 which prohibit age discrimination in employment and training. We as a company understand these regulations and give equal opportunity to applicants and employees of all ages. The company recognises the value and contribution of all its employees and is committed to an age diverse workforce.

Religion or Belief

No-one will be discriminated against on the basis of their religion or belief and the company will respect the religious beliefs of all its employees and customers. This also includes discrimination against individuals due to a lack of religion or belief.

Maternity and Pregnancy

We will not discriminate against an individual due to pregnancy, or pregnancy related illness. Please refer to our Maternity Policy for further details.

Equal Pay Act 1970

This Act establishes the right of men and women to equal treatment in relation to contractual terms and conditions of employment when they are employed on the same or broadly similar work or on work which, though different, is of equal value.

Terms and Conditions / Facilities

The Company will aim not to discriminate on the basis of any of the criteria above in the provision of general staff facilities and benefits.

Grievances, Disputes and Disciplinary Procedures

“It is unlawful to discriminate in the operation of grievance, disputes and disciplinary procedures”. Particular care will be taken to deal effectively and seriously with all complaints of discrimination, victimisation or harassment. It must not be assumed that such allegations are made by those who are over-sensitive.

Staff will be advised to use internal grievance procedures where appropriate, although this does not take away an individual’s right to bring a case to an Employment Tribunal. In applying any internal procedures, consideration will be given to communication and comprehension difficulties.

Dismissal

“It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in dismissals or in the application of any other detriment”. Accordingly, care will be taken that members of one sex or racial group, religious group, sexual orientation group, age group, disability or marital status are not dismissed for performance or behaviour which could be overlooked or condoned in other groups.

The application of the Redundancy Procedure will not have a disproportionate effect on a group of staff predominantly of one sex or racial background, for example, part-time workers. Conditions of access to voluntary redundancy / early retirement compensation will be made available on equal terms to all members of staff in the same or not materially different circumstances.

Support

The terms of this policy have been discussed with the staff in the Company and endorsed by the Directors. WCS Group will consult with staff over the introduction of measures to implement the Policy, including procedures for monitoring and review.

In the routine performance of your duties, if you have any questions or points of concern in respect of the above, you can raise them with either your Line Manager or the Managing Director.

Legal Requirements Legislation

Legislation covers age, gender, marital or family status; gender reassignment; race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin; disability; sexual orientation, religion / belief; Trade Union membership or non-membership and in Northern Ireland political opinion. There are significant penalties associated with unlawful discrimination for both the Company and the individual. All employees, therefore, have a duty and a responsibility to respect this policy and act in accordance with it. Behaviour which breaches this policy will not be tolerated and will be regarded as misconduct, which could lead to disciplinary proceedings being taken against the offending employee in accordance with the disciplinary procedure. Under equal opportunities legislation employees can be made personally liable for acts of discrimination.

Personnel Records

1. In order to ensure the effective operation of DEEP (and for no other purpose) a record will be kept of all employees’ and job applicants’ gender, ethnic origin and disability.
2. Where necessary, employees will be able to check / correct their own record of these details. Otherwise, access to this information will be strictly restricted.
3. Such records will be analysed regularly, and appropriate follow-up action taken.

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General

The cooperation of all employees is essential for the success of this policy. However, ultimate responsibility for achieving the policy's objectives, and for ensuring compliance with the relevant legislation as well as the various Codes of Practice, lies with the Company. Behaviour or actions against the spirit and / or the letter of the laws on which this policy is based will be considered serious disciplinary matters, and may, in some cases, lead to dismissal.

This takes into account various EU Employment directives such as:-

Safeguarding employee rights, protection of employees in the event of company insolvency, employee contracts (Employment Rights Act 1996 & Pension Schemes Act 1993), organisation of working time (Working Time Regulations 1998, amended 2002 & 2003), posting of workers (Employment Relations Act 1999 & Equal Opportunities Regulations 1999), directive for parental leave (Maternity & Parental leave regulations 1999), part time work (Part time workers regulations 2000), summertime arrangements (Summertime Order 2002) and the National Minimum Wage Act 1998. Other relevant legislation includes the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the Equality Act 2010.