

Equal Opportunities policy

1. Visually Connected Worldwide (VCW) is committed to a policy of equality of opportunity as an employer regarding our policies and practices for employees and potential employees.

This means that no employee or applicant will be treated less favourably on the grounds of their sex, marital status, race, nationality or ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, religion, working practices or whether they have HIV and/or AIDS.

2. This policy covers all areas of employment: recruitment and selection, terms and conditions, promotion, transfer, training, appraisal and selection for redundancy. The policy outlines what equality of opportunity means within VCW, what we mean by discrimination and harassment, what sort of behaviours and attitudes we wish to promote, and also what procedures and actions you can take if you feel you have been discriminated against, victimised or harassed.

3. The Equal Opportunities Policy will be communicated to all applicants, new appointees during their induction and to all employees. VCW is committed to the recruitment and retention of disabled people and has gained official recognition as an employer who is "Positive About Disabled People".

4. VCW believes that equality of opportunity is vital so that all employees have a fair and equal chance of developing their abilities and realising their expectations and to make full and effective use of their potential. It is VCW's aim to create a working environment free from discrimination and harassment based on respect, and to enable employees to successfully balance home and work commitments.

GENERAL DEFINITIONS AND PRINCIPLES

5. VCW recognises that discrimination exists and, as an employer, is committed to ensuring that such behaviour and attitudes are eliminated.

6. Discrimination and harassment will not be tolerated and will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure.

7. VCW is committed to the principles of equality on the basis of fairness and valuing the contribution of all our employees. However, there are some areas where discrimination and harassment are covered by law, such as the Equality Act 2010 which harmonised anti-discrimination law with effect from 1 October 2010.

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

8. Under the Equality Act 2010 a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities. The list of specific "capacities" under the old legislation (Disability Discrimination Act) has gone making it easier for a claimant to establish disability in



cases to which the closed list of capacities did not easily apply VCW is committed to the recruitment and equal rights of disabled people in the workplace.

9. The Equality Act imposes a duty on employers to make reasonable adjustments in cases where working arrangements or physical features of premises cause substantial disadvantage for a person with a disability. VCW will provide the necessary equipment and facilities for employees, applicants and interviewees with disabilities to enable them to participate successfully in the workplace.

10. VCW will provide job applicants with details of the vacant job, i.e. job description, person specification, application form and information about VCW in alternative formats. We will also make suitable provisions, adjustments etc for interviews and where successful candidates are appointed.

11. If an employee suffers an injury or illness which affects their ability to do the job, we will provide paid disability leave (which will not be counted as sick leave), offer counselling and support and facilitate any adjustments necessary to enable the employee to return to work. This may include a reallocation of duties, flexibility of working hours and adjustments to equipment. Full consultation on the most suitable arrangements will be held with the employee, their Prospect representative, their line manager, and the HR Manager.

12. The Equality Act 2010 introduced four new types of disability discrimination, including associative, perceptive, indirect discrimination and discrimination arising from a disability.

13. Where discrimination “arising from” a disability occurs, under the Act there is no requirement for a comparator. The employer will discriminate against a disabled employee if it treats the employee 'unfavourably' because of something arising from the employee's disability and that treatment cannot be objectively justified as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. For this type of discrimination to occur, the employer has to know, or reasonably be expected to know, that the employee has the disability in question.

COMPLAINTS

14. Should an employee believe they have experienced harassment, bullying or discrimination then they may either attempt to resolve the matter informally or invoke the formal complaint procedure under VCW's Grievance Procedure to pursue their claim. All cases will be taken seriously, dealt with quickly and treated with the utmost confidence. Employees are advised to seek the advice of their Prospect representative at the earliest opportunity.

MALICIOUS COMPLAINTS

15. Whilst we do not wish to deter individuals who wish to make genuine complaints, it should be noted that vindictive or vexatious complaints will be viewed seriously and will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure. Equally unacceptable is the threat of making an unfounded complaint of discrimination or harassment.



MONITORING

16. VCW will monitor equal opportunities by collecting diversity data as appropriate to enable VCW to identify and address issues to provide equal opportunities for all.

