



# DISABILITY POLICY

Volunteer Now/Volunteer Now Enterprises Ltd



# Disability Policy

## Introduction

Volunteer Now/Volunteer Now Enterprises Ltd, which will be referred to as VN/VNE throughout this policy, seeks to ensure equal opportunity for all employees, whether actual or potential, at every stage of their employment with the organisation.

## Policy Statement

VN/VNE is committed to an active equal opportunities policy for all potential, current or past employees including those with a disability. This includes:

- arrangements for recruiting and selecting new staff;
- terms and conditions of employment, including pay, benefits and pensions;
- promotion, transfer or training opportunities;
- work placement opportunities;
- disciplinary procedures;
- performance management and attendance procedures;
- dismissal or redundancy;
- the way that the work is arranged and performed;
- the physical features of an employer's premises;
- beyond end of employment, e.g. employment references;
- protection from bullying and harassment.

Any employee who believes that they have been discriminated against for a reason relating to their disability should use the organisation's **Grievance Policy & Procedure** available on Sharepoint under Policies & Procedures Hub or on Breathe HR.

It is our policy to promote an environment free from discrimination, bullying, harassment and victimisation. Disciplinary action will be taken against any employee who is found to have committed an act of discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation. Serious breaches of this policy will be treated as gross misconduct and may lead to dismissal. See **Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure** for procedures relating to bullying and Harassment available on Sharepoint under Policies & Procedures Hub or on Breathe HR.

## Definitions

A person is defined as having a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

'Long-term' means that the condition must last, or be likely to last, for more than 12 months. 'Normal day-to-day activity' is defined as something you do regularly in a normal day.

If you do not have a diagnosis, you still need medical evidence to show your impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on your ability to do day-to-day activities. VN/VNE may request to see a formal diagnosis or evidence from a relevant medical professional if awaiting diagnosis.

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## Mental Health

VN/VNE is committed to supporting employees with mental ill health. A mental health condition is considered a disability if it has a long-term effect on normal day-to-day activity (see definitions above). This could include, but is not limited to: dementia, depression, bipolar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, schizophrenia. A long-term mental health condition is subject to the same rights and protections as a physical disability and the same procedures apply, as set out in this policy.

In the case of shorter-term mental health problems which do not fall under the definition of a disability, the disability policy reasonable adjustments do not apply. This might include, but is not limited to: stress, anxiety, bereavement. However VN/VNE aims to support any employee experiencing mental health problems and support may be put in place, such as: leave (sickness absence, annual leave, parental leave, bereavement or compassionate leave), a phased return to work following absence, flexibility over working hours, additional one-to-one meetings, etc.

See ***Bereavement and Compassionate Leave Policy*** for procedures relating to leave available on Sharepoint under Policies & Procedures Hub or on Breathe HR.

Where mental ill health is as a result of menopause, employees may wish to refer to the ***Menopause Policy and Adjustment Procedure*** available on Sharepoint under Policies & Procedures Hub or on Breathe HR.

All employees are encouraged to speak to their Line Manager if they are experiencing struggles with mental health and would like to request any support.

Employees may also access the **Employee Assistance Programme (provided by Westfield Health)**, free helpline access to confidential guidance on medical, legal or domestic issues from qualified counsellors, legal advisors and nurses. VN/VNE will not know who has contacted them or why.

Helpline Freephone: 0800 0920987, available 24/7.

## Recruitment and Selection

Employees will be recruited solely on the basis of work criteria and the applicant's abilities and individual merit. A disability will not of itself justify the non-recruitment of an applicant. Direct or indirect discrimination on the grounds of disability is illegal.

Reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process will be made as required to ensure that no applicant is disadvantaged because of their disability. Reasonable adjustments may be requested on the job application form or at any time.

Before a disabled applicant is judged to have failed to meet the requirements of the job description and person specification, or to be less suitable than other applicants, full consideration will be given to whether any reasonable adjustments would make the applicant the best person for that post.

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All disabled applicants who meet the minimum requirements of the job as set out in the job description and person specification will be guaranteed an interview.

## Induction

On starting work the employee's line manager will be responsible, in consultation with the disabled employee, for ensuring such reasonable adjustments are made as are required to enable the employee to work safely and effectively and to secure equal access to the benefits of employment. See below section 'Reasonable Adjustments'.

Where the line manager does not have the relevant knowledge or experience to make the reasonable adjustments they will consult the Corporate Services Manager. Where necessary an outside specialist may be consulted, such as an Occupational Health provider.

## Training and Career Development

All employees will have equal access to training and opportunities for promotion and other aspects of career development based solely on their abilities.

In particular, each element of the promotion procedure and all training will be made accessible to disabled employees by such adjustments as are reasonable.

Where, during the course of employment, a disabled employee recognises the need for a reasonable adjustment to working arrangements or to a feature of the premises, they should discuss this requirement with their Line Manager. The Line Manager will then determine the appropriate action.

## Benefits

Disabled employees will have equal access to all benefits and facilities of employment and reasonable adjustments will be made where necessary.

## Bullying and Harassment

Bullying/harassment is unwanted conduct, whether physical, verbal or non-verbal, that is offensive, humiliating and viewed as unacceptable by the recipient.

Bullying or harassment of disabled employees or any employee will be a disciplinary offence, and may constitute gross misconduct, which could lead to dismissal. See ***Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure*** for procedures relating to bullying and Harassment available on Sharepoint under Policies & Procedures Hub or on Breathe HR.

## Retention

As part of its commitment to equal opportunities for disabled people VN/VNE will ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to retain disabled employees in employment.

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It will be the responsibility of the employee's Line Manager to identify issues of disability and retention with regard to an individual employee, for example where dismissal is being considered on the grounds of sickness or incapacity.

VN/VNE will make such adjustments as are reasonable to enable a disabled employee to carry out their duties. See below section 'Reasonable Adjustments'.

If redeployment is necessary, the disabled employee will be viewed as a priority within the redeployment procedure.

Where the post to which the disabled employee is redeployed is of a lesser grade or salary, we will consider, in line with the reasonable adjustment duty, whether to protect their salary at the former rate for either a fixed or indefinite period.

## **Removing Barriers**

VN/VNE recognises the importance of taking proactive measures to remove barriers from the working environment for disabled people. It is recognised that this will benefit not only disabled employees and prospective employees but also in many cases customers and visitors. It will ensure that VN/VNE is able to recruit and retain the best employees on the basis of their abilities and individual merit.

## **Reasonable Adjustments**

Where an individual requires or may require an adjustment to the working arrangements or environment they should bring this to the attention of their Line Manager. The prime responsibility for arranging appropriate adjustments will lie with the Line Manager. However, in many cases a team approach will be appropriate, for example when arranging training courses where the responsibility may pass to the training course co-ordinator.

The Line Manager responsible for arranging the adjustment will, at all times, consult the employee concerned, whose agreement will be sought. The expertise of the disabled employee concerning their own disability will be recognised.

Where the person with the prime responsibility for arranging reasonable adjustments does not have the relevant knowledge or experience they will consult with the Corporate Services Manager. Where required an outside specialist, such as an Occupational Health provider, may be consulted with the agreement of the disabled employee.

Once an adjustment has been made its operation may need to be reviewed at agreed intervals to assess its continuing effectiveness.

Examples of reasonable adjustments include, but are not limited to:

- allocating some work tasks to someone else
- additional support or meetings with a colleague or manager
- transferring to another post or another place of work
- job redesign
- making adjustments to the place of work

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- providing modified or specialist equipment
- flexibility over working hours, e.g. start and finish times, breaks
- time off for appointments, e.g. assessment, treatment or rehabilitation
- providing training or retraining if unable to perform in current job
- making instructions and manuals more accessible
- providing a reader or interpreter
- remote or hybrid working
- redeployment to a suitable alternative vacancy

The Line Manager, along with the employee making the request, should consider:

- how effective the adjustment will be
- how much it will reduce the disadvantage experienced by the employee
- practical considerations
- the effect on other team members
- possible disruption caused
- whether it will help or benefit other people in the workplace
- the cost involved

Deciding on whether an adjustment is reasonable will depend on the circumstances. All such requests will be judged individually on a case-by-case basis. VN/VNE will make every possible effort to accommodate requests for reasonable adjustments, unless it is not practically possible to do so.

Please refer to the ***Reasonable Adjustment Request Procedure and Request Template*** available on Sharepoint under Policies & Procedures Hub or on Breathe HR.