

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY & PROCEDURE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce organisation is committed to eliminating discrimination and encouraging diversity amongst its workforce. Our aim is that all staff members will be truly representative of all sections of society and that each employee feels respected and able to give their best. At all times the provisions contained in The Equality Act 2010 will be adhered to.

1.1 To that end, the purpose of this policy is to provide equality and fairness for all in our employment and not to discriminate, either directly or indirectly, on the grounds of the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race (colour, nationality, citizenship, ethnic or national origin)
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

1.2 The Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce organisation opposes all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. It is important that all members of staff are aware of the different types of discrimination as follows:

Direct Discrimination

Covers all listed in section 1.1. Someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic (PC)

Associative Discrimination

Covers race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, disability, gender reassignment and sex. It is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.

Perceptive Discrimination

Covers age, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment and sex. It is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic (even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic).

Indirect Discrimination

Covers age, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and marriage and civil partnership, disability and gender reassignment.

Can occur when a condition, rule, policy or practice in the organisation applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic.

Harassment

Covers age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Can occur through unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.

Third party harassment

Covers age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

Can make an employer potentially liable for harassment of its employees by third parties who are not employees of the company (such as customers or clients).

Victimisation

Occurs when an employee is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act; or because they are suspected of doing so.

- 1.3 All employees will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, training or any benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of all staff members will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the company.

2.0 SCOPE

This policy is applicable to all staff employed by Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce. In addition, this policy is also applicable to temporary staff employed through the auspices of a recruitment agency.

- 2.1 Employees of the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce must be aware of the provisions made in section 1.2 (Third Party Harassment) and report any incidents immediately to the Management Team and Human Resources who will then agree on the appropriate course of action.
- 2.2 The term "organisation" will be referred to throughout this policy and therefore relates to the company as stated in point 2.0.
- 2.3 This policy was first introduced on 1st September 2005, amendments and updates may have been made since this date.

3.0 OUR COMMITMENT

The Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce is committed to the achievement of equal opportunities. We recognise and accept our responsibilities within the constraints of employment legislation and believe discrimination and victimisation, either direct or indirect, are unacceptable.

3.1 This policy has a number of aims:

To create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all our staff are recognised and valued.

Every employee is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.

Training, development and progression opportunities are available to all staff.

Equality in the workplace is good management practice and makes sound business sense.

The organisation will continually review all employment practices and procedures to ensure fairness.

Breaches of this equal opportunity policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

This policy is fully supported by senior management

The policy will be monitored at regular intervals as required through the staff handbook.

4.0 **RESPONSIBILITY**

Whilst the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce recognises that the overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy lies with the Senior Management Team, all employees, whatever their position within the company, have some measure of responsibility for ensuring its effective implementation in their day to day activities and working relationships with colleagues.

4.1 All members of the Management Team are responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented in their areas of responsibility.

4.2 Human Resources is responsible for taking action in relation to equal opportunities in employment matters, for monitoring the effectiveness of this policy and for ensuring appropriate provision of supportive staff development.

5.0 **IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY**

The implementation of this policy will support the following operational areas:

5.1 **Recruitment and Selection**

The organisations Recruitment and Selection Policy and Guidelines ensure that the process is conducted in such a way as to promote and adhere to equal opportunities:

Selection criteria, such as Job Descriptions, Person Specifications and Advertisements, will be kept under constant review to ensure that they are justifiable on non-discriminatory grounds.

In most cases, the HR Team and Line Manager, or relevant line management, as a minimum, will be involved in the selection interview and recruitment process.

Short-listing records and Interview assessments on the appointments made will be kept for six months.

Learning and Development

Learning and development has an important role in achieving equality of opportunity and is reflected in the organisation's training processes. Through training and development the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce organisation aims to:

Eliminate actual or potential inequality and make available opportunities to staff to develop skills relevant to their jobs and career development.

Provide specific guidance as appropriate to members of staff involved in recruitment and selection, disciplinary matters, grievance handling and employee development.

Ensure that all training is consistent with this policy and uses non discriminatory language.

Explore all learning and development activities that are requested by staff. This will be carried out by HR both through analysis of training requirements at appraisal sessions and on an as and when basis. In cases of learning and development being both individual and business beneficial, support will be provided within the given financial constraints.

Promotion

The promotion potential of all employees will be non-discriminatory and no assumptions will be made that members of a particular group are unsuitable. Promotion will be made with accordance to an objective selection criterion.

Employment Policies, Procedures and Conditions

Systematic review and monitoring of all existing practices and conditions of service will take place at the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce organisation to ensure barriers are removed in terms of the development of equality of opportunity. A consistent approach in the development and application of policies, conditions and procedures will try to ensure that discrimination does not occur.

Personnel Records

In order to ensure the effective operation of this equal opportunity policy, and for no other purpose, a record may be kept of all employees and job applicants gender, racial origins and disability. Access to this information will be strictly restricted.

Complaints, Grievances, Discipline & Harassment

Any breaches of this policy are a disciplinary offence and will be dealt with under the organisation's Disciplinary Policy. Grievances will be dealt under the specific Grievance Policy or Bullying and Harassment Policy, if applicable.

6.0 MONITORING AND REVIEW

Monitoring is essential to the effective implementation of this policy. It will provide basic information required on all aspects of recruitment, selection, promotion and training and enable Human Resources to make an assessment of equality within the Chamber organisation.

7.0 POLICY COMMUNICATION

This policy and accompanying action programmes will be communicated widely and effectively throughout the Chamber organisation and to potential employees.

8.0 POSITIVE ABOUT DISABLED PEOPLE

The Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce organisation have been awarded the two ticks symbol ✓✓

- 8.1 The disability symbol is a quality statement introduced by the government to help disabled people gain or retain employment.

The system in place allows our organisation to:

- Interview all applicants who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy and consider them on their ability.
- Ask disabled employees at least once a year what can be done to make sure they can develop and use their abilities.
- Make every effort when employees become disabled to make sure they stay in employment.
- Take action to ensure that key employees develop the awareness of disability needed to make the commitments work.

Should you require any further information relating to this Equal Opportunities policy, please contact Human Resources. Likewise, if you have any ideas or suggestions for further. Equal Opportunity initiatives or practices, then please advise your line manager or HR.