



Equal Opportunities Policy

1. Policy Statement

PRP is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all and to promoting a diverse and inclusive work environment free from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, where employees are recruited, developed and promoted based on skills, experience and merit, and where they feel respected and able to do their best.

2. Policy Purpose

The main aims are the following:

- provide understanding and act as a mechanism for prevention by defining types of discrimination against each of the protected characteristic and outlining prohibited acts as set out by the Equality Act 2010;
- emphasise the responsibility all employees have in avoiding unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- promote equality, fairness and respect for all in our employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time.

The Associate Director, HR and L&D is responsible for this policy and any necessary training on equal opportunities.

This policy covers all employees, consultants, contractors, interns, work experience and agency workers.

3. Understanding This Policy

You should familiarise yourself with the key terms and the guidance set out within this policy; and, if in any doubt about what is and is not acceptable, you should seek immediate guidance from the HR team. Related documents such as our Acceptable Behaviour Policy and Diversity and Inclusion statement can be found in the People section of our InSite pages.

All employees should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, clients, customers, suppliers and the public.

If you act in breach of this policy or the law, you may be subject to internal disciplinary action; and, you may also incur personal liability if an employment tribunal finds that you are responsible for a breach of the Act.

4. Neurodiversity

In addition to the protected characteristics (as set out below), PRP also recognises neurodiversity. This relates to brain differences or in other words, natural variations with our brain wiring. With neuro distinct identities such as Autism and Asperger syndrome, ADD and ADHD, as well as learning differences such as Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia and Dyslexia, there may be a requirement for reasonable adjustments to be made at work to ensure employees are not unfavourably disadvantaged. If you think that any of the above applies to you then please contact HR to discuss your position and how we can help.

5. Who Is Protected?

The Equality Act 2010 protects individuals who suffer discrimination, harassment or victimisation because of a "Protected Characteristic".

The "Protected Characteristics" are:

5.1. Age - you must not be discriminated against, harassed or victimised because:

- you are (or are not) a certain age or in a certain age group;
- someone thinks you are (or are not) a specific age or age group, this is known as discrimination by perception;
- you are connected to someone of a specific age or age group, known as discrimination by association.

Age groups can be quite wide (for example, 'people under 50' or 'under 18s'). They can also be quite specific (for example, 'people in their mid-40s'). Terms such as 'young person' and 'youthful' or 'elderly' and 'pensioner' can also indicate an age group.

4.2. Disability - you must not be discriminated against, harassed or victimised because:

- you have a disability or because of something arising from your disability such as your disability requiring you to take more time off or requiring more breaks than a non-disabled colleague;
- someone thinks you have a disability (this is known as discrimination by perception);
- you are connected to someone with a disability (this is known as discrimination by association).

It is not unlawful discrimination to treat a disabled person more favourably than a non-disabled person and it may be necessary to consider if there are reasonable adjustments that can be made for a disabled person.

4.3. Gender re-assignment - you must not be discriminated against, harassed or victimised because:

- of your gender reassignment as a transsexual;
- someone thinks you are transsexual, for example because you occasionally cross-dress or are gender variant (this is known as discrimination by perception);
- you are connected to a transsexual person, or someone wrongly thought to be transsexual (this is known as discrimination by association).

Transsexual, transgender person or trans male or female, is when your gender identity is different from the sex assigned to you when you were born. You do not need to have undergone any specific treatment or surgery to change from your birth sex to your preferred gender. This is because changing your physiological or other gender attributes is a personal process rather than a medical one.

You can be at any stage in the transition process – from proposing to reassign your gender, to undergoing a process to reassign your gender, or having completed it.

4.4. Marriage and civil partnership - you must not be discriminated against, harassed or victimised because you are married or in a civil partnership. Marriage can either be between a man and a woman, or between partners of the same sex. Civil partnership is between partners of the same sex.

4.5. Pregnancy and maternity - you must not be discriminated against, harassed or victimised because:

- you are pregnant;
- for a reason relating to your pregnancy;
- of illness related to your pregnancy;
- you are about to go on maternity leave or are on maternity leave.

Changing or removing your job responsibilities during your pregnancy or maternity leave should mainly be done if:

(i) necessary for health and safety reasons;

- (ii) agreed by you, the employee;
- (iii) to arrange cover just before your maternity leave;
- (iv) following a period of consultation for example in a redundancy or reorganisation exercise;
- (v) after following the procedure set out in one of our policies.

The above list is not exhaustive but we want to assure you that employees are protected against unfavourable treatment from the time they become pregnant to the time they return to work after any period of ordinary or additional maternity leave.

4.6. Race - you must not be discriminated against, harassed or victimised because of your race.

Race can mean your colour, or your nationality (including your citizenship). It can also mean your ethnic or national origins, which may not be the same as your current nationality.

Race also covers ethnic and racial groups. This means a group of people who all share the same protected characteristic of ethnicity or race. A racial group can be made up of two or more distinct racial groups, for example black Britons, British Asians, British Sikhs, British Jews, Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers.

4.7. Religion or belief - you must not be discriminated against, harassed or victimised because:

- you are (or are not) of a particular religion;
- you hold (or do not hold) a particular philosophical belief;
- someone thinks you are of a particular religion or hold a particular belief (this is known as discrimination by perception);
- you are connected to someone who has a religion or belief (this is known as discrimination by association).

Religion or belief can mean any religion, for example an organised religion like Christianity, Judaism, Islam or Buddhism, or a smaller religion like Rastafarianism or Paganism, as long as it has a clear structure and belief system.

The Equality Act also covers non-belief or a lack of religion or belief.

4.8. Sex - you must not be discriminated against, harassed or victimised because:

- you are (or are not) a particular sex;
- someone thinks you are a different sex (this is known as discrimination by perception);
- you are connected to someone of a particular sex (this is known as discrimination by association).

Sex can mean either male or female, or a group of people like men or boys, or women or girls.

4.9. Sexual orientation - you must not be discriminated against, harassed or victimised because:

- you are heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual or another sexuality;
- someone thinks you have a particular sexual orientation (this is known as discrimination by perception);
- you are connected to someone who has a particular sexual orientation (this is known as discrimination by association).

In the Equality Act, sexual orientation includes how you choose to express your sexual orientation, such as through your appearance or the places you visit.

5. Prohibited Acts

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to do a “Prohibited Act”. The following are all Prohibited Acts:

Direct discrimination	<p>Less favourable treatment where the reason for the treatment is <i>because of</i> a protected characteristic.</p> <p>Includes perceptive discrimination and associative discrimination.</p>
Indirect discrimination	<p>Where a seemingly neutral policy or requirement (known as a Provision, Criterion or Practice “PCP”) applies to everyone but disadvantages a group with a particular protected characteristic and this cannot be justified as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.</p>
Harassment	<p>Unwanted conduct <i>related to</i> a protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violating a person’s dignity; or • Creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. <p>Harassment may occur in the workplace as a result of conduct by other employees or third parties who are not employees.</p>
Sexual harassment	<p>Unwanted conduct (as set out above) of a sexual nature.</p>
Victimisation	<p>Subjecting someone to a detriment because they have done a “protected act” or are suspected of doing a protected act.</p> <p>A protected act includes: complaining about discrimination, bringing legal proceedings for discrimination and giving evidence or information on behalf of others complaining of discrimination.</p>

6. Disability

The Act recognises that disabled people are in a unique position and may need extra help to assist them to participate in the workplace. Under the Act, disability is treated slightly differently from the other protected characteristics: there are some provisions that apply only to disability which are explained below.

To ensure that we can best support you at work, we encourage you to tell us about your condition and to discuss any reasonable adjustments that you may need with HR or your line manager, where appropriate.

If you experience difficulties at work because of your disability, you may wish to contact HR to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. HR may wish to consult with you and your medical adviser about possible adjustments. We will consider the matter carefully and try to accommodate your needs within reason. If we consider a particular adjustment would not be reasonable we will explain our reasons and try to find an alternative solution where possible.

We will monitor the physical features of our premises to consider whether they might place anyone with a disability at a substantial disadvantage. Where necessary, we will take reasonable steps to improve access.

<p>Duty to make reasonable adjustments</p>	<p>Where employees are disabled within the meaning of the Act and they are placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to a non-disabled person, an employer has a duty to make reasonable adjustments for them. This is a positive duty to help reduce the disadvantage suffered by a disabled employee in the workplace.</p> <p>Examples of what might be a reasonable adjustment include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • doing things differently such as altering working hours; • altering the physical environment such as access to the building; • providing equipment or aids such as a specific chair or software to support employees in their jobs.
<p>Discrimination arising from disability</p>	<p>Treating a disabled person unfavourably because of a reason <i>arising from</i> the disability rather than the disability itself. For example, dismissing someone because they have had lots of disability-related absence.</p> <p>However, where the treatment can be justified it will not be unlawful. In addition, if an employer does not know (and could not reasonably be expected to know) that the employee is disabled they will not be liable.</p>

7. Employee Responsibility

You are required to ensure that you act within the law when carrying out your duties and to ensure that you treat all job applicants, employees, contractors, clients and others with whom you may come into contact in the course of your employment, fairly, consistently and appropriately at all times.

Where employees are concerned, in particular and without limitation, you should be aware of equality requirements in the following areas:

- Pay and benefits
- Terms and conditions of employment
- Dealing with grievances and discipline
- Dismissal
- Redundancy
- Leave for parents
- Requests for flexible working
- Selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities

8. Recruitment, Training and Monitoring

All opportunities for employment, promotion and training will be based on merit, business needs and relevance to role. We will regularly review job selection and individual appraisal criteria to ensure that they are relevant to the job and promote equality of opportunity. Promotion and training opportunities will be identified through our appraisal process, specifically through reports on Learning and Development Outcomes reviewed by our management teams who are expected to adhere to the principles of equality of opportunity.

Our intention is that where possible, applications for vacancies, promotion and training will be assessed by more than one person, and advertisements for employment use wording which encourages the widest pool of applicants and is free from discriminatory content. Where viable, we will also advertise new employment opportunities as broadly as possible so that they are made available to a diverse cross section of potential applicants and ensure that recruitment agency partners, who support the bulk of our resourcing needs, are also clear of our stance on equality, diversity and inclusion.

Job applicants should not be asked questions which might suggest an intention to discriminate on grounds of a protected characteristic. For example, applicants should not be asked whether they are pregnant or planning to have children.

Job applicants should not be asked about health or disability before a job offer is made, except in the very limited circumstances allowed by law: for example, to check that the applicant could perform an intrinsic part of the job (taking account of any reasonable adjustments), or to see if any adjustments might be needed at interview because of a disability. Where necessary, job offers can be made conditional on a satisfactory medical check. Health or disability questions may be included in equal opportunities monitoring forms, which must not be used for selection or decision-making purposes.

We will conduct right to work in the UK checks with all of our employees irrespective of nationality. All prospective employees are asked to produce original documentation evidencing their right to work before employment starts.

We monitor the diversity of our employee population by inviting applicants to disclose voluntary information about themselves such as ethnic group, gender, nationality, disability and age. This information will not be requested until a formal offer of employment has been made and accepted and an employment contract has been issued to prospective employees. The information is strictly confidential and will be stored, confidentially, by HR and used only as appropriate and in line with our GDPR Privacy Notice. We may also adopt a similar process to monitor access to internal promotion and training opportunities from time to time.

9. Raising Concerns

Where you feel that you have not been treated in accordance with this policy or you suspect there may have been a breach of this policy, you should raise your concerns informally with HR as soon as possible. Alternatively, you may wish to raise a grievance using our standard grievance procedure as outlined in our Employee Manual. A more detailed version is outlined in our Acceptable Behaviour Policy located on in the People section of our InSite pages.

10. Breaches of This Policy

Given the importance that we place on creating an inclusive environment, you may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal if you are found to be in serious breach of this policy. In very serious cases, we may regard a breach of this policy as an act of gross misconduct entitling us to dismiss you without notice or payment in lieu of notice.

Discrimination of any kind will not be tolerated but we would especially like to highlight that there must be no victimisation or retaliation against staff who complain about discrimination. However, making a false allegation deliberately and in bad faith will be treated as misconduct and dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

11. Status of This Policy

This policy is non-contractual and is not a term of employment. It does not confer any additional contractual rights upon any individual. We reserve the right to amend and/or withdraw this policy from time to time for any reason, including, without limitation, to take account of changes to the law, best practice and/or business requirements.

**Senior Partner
Neil Griffiths**

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized initials 'NG' followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that tapers to the right.

02 June 2023