

Code of Practice on the Engagement of Disabled People

We will provide this policy on request at no cost, in large print, in Braille, on tape or in another non written format.

Code of Practice on the Engagement of Disabled People

POLICY PURPOSE AND APPLICABILITY

It is widely recognised that disabled people are disadvantaged in the labour market; whether in access to secondment opportunities, employment or in the type of work obtained, and that they are often under represented in professional or managerial roles.

Wheatley Solutions is committed to equality of opportunity for disabled people within its workforce, in its services and their delivery. We are also committed to identifying and removing practices which discriminate against disabled people.

This Code of Practice takes account of the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and supplements Wheatley Solutions' Equal Opportunities Policy and covers the following:

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SECTION A – DEFINING THE TERM “DISABLED”

The term 'Disabled' is applied to a variety of people with many types and levels of disability.

A person is considered to have a disability if he/she has or has had a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

The effect of impairment is long term if one of the following is true:-

- it has lasted for 12 months;
 - it is likely to last for 12 months;
 - If it is likely to last for the rest of the person's life.
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SECTION B - OBJECTIVES OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE

It is unfair to discriminate unjustifiably against secondees or applicants on the grounds of their disability. Specifically, the objectives of this Code of Practice are to ensure that:-

- disabled people who apply for roles within Wheatley Solutions should know that they will receive fair treatment and be considered against the criteria for the role;
- applications from disabled people for posts will be actively encouraged and, under the 'Double Tick' initiative, applicants who meet the minimum criteria for a post will be guaranteed an interview;
- all disabled secondees will have equal access to training and development opportunities;
- assistance will be given by Employee Relations to disabled secondees as far as is reasonably practicable;
- Positive action policies may be developed, to remedy any under representation of disabled people seconded to Wheatley Solutions.

Every effort will be made to retain a secondee who is or becomes disabled and is no longer capable of carrying out his/her normal duties.

All secondees will be made aware of the Wheatley Solutions' policy on the secondment of disabled people. In addition, disability awareness training will be carried out for secondees.

SECTION C - DUTY TO MAKE REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

If a secondee is disabled, or becomes disabled in the course of his/her secondment to Wheatley Solutions, he/she is encouraged to tell us about his/her conditions. This is to enable us to support you as much as possible.

The duties and working conditions of disabled secondees will be reviewed periodically, in light of any changes in their condition.

Wheatley Solutions will comply with the requirement to make "reasonable adjustments" to working arrangements or physical features of premises where they cause disadvantages for a disabled person. Reasonable adjustments may include:-

- making adjustments to premises;
- allocating some of the disabled person's duties to another person;
- transferring the disabled person to fill an existing vacancy;
- altering working hours;
- assigning the disabled person to a different place of work;

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- allowing the disabled person to be absent during working hours for rehabilitation, assessment or treatment;
- providing or arranging for the provision of training;
- acquiring or modifying equipment or workstations;
- modifying instructions or reference manuals;
- modifying procedures for testing or assessment;
- providing help reading/interpreting from Braille;
- Providing assistance.

We will seek advice and support from Access to Work as appropriate in any such cases and there may be financial support for required modifications. All options such as a re-allocation of duties, re-training or redeployment, must be fully considered. In those instances where these are not possible, Employee Relations must be advised by the line manager, in writing, of the action taken. Where other options are explored and these options include ill health retirement or dismissal on the ground of lack of capability, the secondee will be given reasons in writing and will retain the right to pursue the matter through the usual appeals procedure. Careful consideration will be given to any such proposals and they will be accommodated where possible and proportionate to the needs of the secondee's role. Nevertheless, there may be circumstances where it will not be reasonable for Wheatley Solutions to accommodate the suggested adjustments and we will ensure that we provide secondees with information as to the basis of our decision not to make any proposed adjustments.

If a disabled secondee is unable to continue carrying out existing duties (after any reasonable adjustments have been made), every effort will be made to find suitable alternative role within the Wheatley Group with re-training provided where necessary. This will also apply where a secondee employee becomes disabled during the course of their secondment.

SECTION D - RECRUITMENT

All vacancies will be considered suitable for disabled applicants, unless there are justifiable restrictions, which prevent such a positive stance being adopted.

The Employment Service has developed the 'Double Tick' Disability Symbol so that people with disabilities will know which organisations will be positive about their abilities. The Wheatley Group uses the symbol, reflecting its commitment to good practice in the treatment of disabled people.

All organisations using the symbol are required to commit:-

- to interview all applicants with a disability who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy and consider them on their abilities;

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- to ensure there is a mechanism in place to discuss, at any time, but at least once a year, with disabled secondees what Wheatley Solutions and they can do to ensure that they can develop and use their abilities at work;
- to make every effort when secondees become disabled to ensure that they stay in employment with a Wheatley Group organisation;
- to take action to ensure that key members of Wheatley Solutions develop the awareness of disability needed to make the commitments work;
- Each year, to review these commitments and what has been achieved, plan ways to improve them and let all secondees know about progress and future plans.

Advertisements inviting people with disabilities to apply for opportunities in Wheatley Solutions will be placed in specialist journals if appropriate. Advice can be obtained from Employee Relations. Before a secondment opportunity is advertised, an up to date role profile and person specification will be prepared in line with Wheatley Solutions' Policy on the Recruitment and Selection of Staff. Any factors, which unnecessarily debar or limit the appointment of a disabled applicant who otherwise meets the recruitment criteria as contained in the role profile and candidate specification, will be identified and eliminated, where possible, at this stage.

Where it is not possible to eliminate all restricting factors and a secondment opportunity is unsuitable for applicants with particular types of disability, Employee Relations must be satisfied as to the validity of the restrictions before the secondment opportunity is advertised.

Note:-

No recruitment form will be passed for advertising until it has been checked and authorised by the Workforce Planning Team.

SECTION E - SHORTLISTING

Where an application is received from a disabled person, Employee Relations will inform the manager responsible for shortlisting. Should there be any disabled applicant who fails to be shortlisted for interview; the manager will discuss this with Employee Relations before making any arrangements for interview.

Any disabled applicant who meets the minimum criteria for a post is guaranteed an interview. The only exception is where Employee Relations have agreed to the secondment being unsuitable for applicants with particular types of impairment.

SECTION F - THE INTERVIEW

Candidates invited for interview should be asked if they require any additional arrangements made to enable them to attend or to assist them. During the interview, the Chair of the panel should outline the systems of support available within Wheatley Solutions and should make a note of any facilities which would be required if the candidate were appointed.

Discussions on the requirements relating to the applicant's disability should not impinge on the time allocated for interview.

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SECTION G - RECOMMENDATION FOR APPOINTMENT

Where a disabled candidate has been interviewed and is unsuccessful, prior to any offer of appointment being made, the Chair of the Interviewing Panel should contact Employee Relations and outline the reasons for the selection decision. The reasons will be recorded in detail on the Interview Assessment Form.

SECTION H - APPOINTMENT TO THE POST

Where a disabled candidate is recommended for appointment, the Chair of the Panel should discuss with Employee Relations any requirements needed by the candidate.

If appropriate, and following discussion with the disabled secondee, it may be helpful to advise the line manager and the Health & Safety Department of certain aspects of the secondee's condition.

Employee Relations will provide support and guidance to both managers and the disabled secondee, as requested, to ensure that any arrangements or equipment are working satisfactorily and that any unforeseen problems are being dealt with in a sensitive way.

SECTION I - CENTRAL REGISTER OF DISABLED APPLICANTS

A central register will be held by Workforce Planning detailing all disabled applicants for externally advertised posts.

SECTION J - LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

All Executive Directors and senior managers throughout Wheatley Solutions have responsibility for ensuring that secondees receive such training as will enable them to meet the requirements of their roles effectively, and to ensure that they are kept informed of the opportunities available for career development. It is the responsibility of each Executive Director and senior manager to ensure that all disabled secondees have equality of access to training and development.

When nominating a disabled secondee to attend a course, managers should advise The Academy at least 4 weeks in advance if possible. The Academy will advise training providers of any particular access or other requirements and any necessary arrangements e.g. relocation of a course or transcription of material.

Disability Awareness training will be made available for Human Resource staff, Executive Directors and senior/line managers to enable them to fulfil their roles effectively.

As part of a programme of Positive Action, Disability Awareness training will be made available to all secondees. The training will cover Wheatley Solutions' policies on disability as well as addressing issues associated with disability.

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SECTION K - HEALTH AND SAFETY

It is the responsibility of managers to ensure a safe working environment for all secondees, and that specific arrangements are made for safe access and egress and fire evacuation for all disabled secondees.

Wheatley Solutions' Health and Safety department will provide advice on adaptations to equipment, accommodation or buildings.

SECTION L - CONSULTATION

In line with the requirements of the 'Double Tick' initiative, Wheatley Solutions will consult on a regular basis with representatives of disabled secondees. The purpose of these meetings will be to:-

- improve communication;
- Consult on the effectiveness of Wheatley Solutions' policy with regard to disabled people.

We will undertake to consult with disabled secondees at any time, and at least once a year, about their secondment needs; to ensure that they have the opportunity to develop and use their abilities at work.

SECTION M - MONITORING

Monitoring of the effectiveness of Wheatley Solutions' Equal Opportunities Policy and this Code of Practice will be undertaken as outlined below.

Workforce Planning will prepare an Annual Report for submission to the Management Committee detailing:-

- the number of disabled secondees in Wheatley Solutions (including information on grade, gender and ethnicity);
- the variance from the previous calendar year;
- the number of disabled secondees who applied for vacancies in the last 12 months (including information on the grade of the secondment opportunities applied for);
- the number of disabled applicants who were:-
 - short-listed for interview;
 - appointed to posts;
- the number of secondees who become disabled during the course of their secondment and the action taken;

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- What positive action has been taken to increase the number of disabled secondees over the last 12 months.

Workforce Planning will also prepare an action plan on disability for the following year, which will include:-

- a target number of disabled people to be employed by Wheatley Solutions by the end of the next 12 month period, together with an indication as to how this will be achieved;
- what action will be taken by Wheatley Solutions to eliminate barriers/improve access for disabled people e.g. increasing accessibility to information/buildings, arranging Disability Awareness training for secondees;
- an assessment by Wheatley Solutions of the steps, which it has taken to comply with the provisions of this Code of Practice;
- An analysis will be made on an annual basis, of complaints submitted to Employee Relations under the complaints/grievance procedures to see if any patterns emerge or any changes are required to the provisions of this Code of Practice.

SECTION N - COMPLAINTS

Any secondee/applicant, who considers that he/she has been treated unfairly or discriminated against on the grounds of his/her disability, may raise a complaint through the agreed procedures for dealing with complaints/ grievances.
