

DISABILITY POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Beyond the Blue Limited ('the company') is committed to meeting the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and to the implementation of a policy to achieve equality of opportunity for its employees (to include freelance staff) and customers.

This fundamental commitment is set out in the company's Equal Opportunities Policy, which affirms that discrimination is unacceptable within the company, in that it represents a waste of human resources and a denial of individual opportunity.

Disability discrimination: covers discrimination against people with disabilities who on account of injury, illness or inherited conditions may be disadvantaged in obtaining or keeping employment for which otherwise suitable and from benefiting from services offered by the company to its clients.

Disability covers physical or mental impairment which has a substantial or adverse effect upon the person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities

In relation to disability, discrimination occurs if, for a reason which relates to a disabled person's disability, that person is treated less favourably than others to whom the reason does not apply and this treatment cannot be justified

The following sections aim to give substance to that commitment.

AIMS

The company values the contribution of all individuals irrespective of disability and affirms that employees and customers should be able to participate in the life and work of the company. As such, the company is committed to ensuring that appropriate and reasonable support is offered to individuals with disabilities.

There is a positive duty on all employees, of the company to take into account the needs of individuals with disabilities and to follow the advice laid out in this guide. This includes safety aspects in seeking to establish working conditions which encourage the full participation of people with disabilities and obtaining guidance in relation to reasonable and practicable adjustments to work or to the working environment to meet the ascertained needs of staff.

This guide outlines the support available to ensure that requirements are identified and suitable and appropriate provision is made.

DEFINITIONS

The following definition of disability is drawn from the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), 1995.

A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

Long term means that it must have lasted, or be expected to last, at least 12 months. Progressive conditions can qualify also where there are likely to be future substantial adverse effects.

For the purposes of this policy, however, disability is broadly defined. It includes not only those disabilities which may immediately be apparent, but also conditions such as dyslexia, diabetes, asthma, epilepsy, hearing or sight impairments and mental health difficulties. Employees are encouraged to seek advice, even if they do not meet the formal definition given in the legislation or the condition is not among those listed above. It is the intention of the company to offer appropriate support based on individual requirement.

RECORD OF DISABILITIES

In order to assist in the development of appropriate policies and arrangements to support individuals with disabilities, the company seeks to maintain information on the nature of disabilities experienced by individuals and the number of individuals so affected. The basis of that record is self-assessment by each employee. All colleagues are encouraged to respond positively in providing such data proactively. Any change which may arise in intervening periods should be notified in writing to the Director of the company.

It is in the interests of the company and all its employees that a comprehensive and up-to-date record is maintained in this area and the co-operation of all employees is sought in this regard.

RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND REGISTRATION

The company welcomes applications from those with disabilities and has taken steps to raise awareness of disability within the organisation. In particular awareness training has been targeted at employees involved in recruitment and customer registration.

Applicants are encouraged to provide information on any practical requirements so that the company can take them into account in its application / registration and interview / training arrangements.

The company will consider making supportive arrangements, appropriate to the requirements of an applicant, which may include:

- Provision of post details in an alternative format
- Ensuring ease of accessibility to the interview / training room and building
- Provision of a signer, reader, interpreter or assistant at interview / training.
- Provision of additional aids or equipment for use in assessment tests or the interview

At interview, consideration of candidates and the decision on the appointment to the post in question will be based upon the suitability of the applicant's qualifications, experience and skills for the post.

APPOINTMENT / REGISTRATION

Individuals offered appointment / registration and who may require adaptations will be asked about their needs and whether there is anything that the company will need to be made aware of at the time of taking up post / registration. Where reasonably possible, adjustments and adaptations identified as needed, will be made.

Initial discussions should take place with the Director of the company who may refer the matter where necessary to an appointed person, who may liaise with the individual. As necessary, expert advice may be sought to advice on adaptations.

RETENTION

The company will seek to enable employees who become disabled, or where an existing disability progresses or worsens, to remain in their existing jobs with suitable adjustments, before considering other alternatives.

As appropriate, advice will be sought from Disability Employment Advisors or other organisations and agencies who can offer specialist advice on adaptations, equipment or training.

Sympathetic consideration will be given to requests for reduced or part-time duties whether on a temporary or permanent basis.

ADJUSTMENTS

A confidential discussion will be arranged in which the matter of appropriate adjustments to accommodate a disability can be discussed. Specialist or expert advice may be sought to assist in the process.

Many adjustments cost little or nothing to implement other than the adoption of a positive approach to providing assistance to resolve problems faced by a colleague. In other cases the cost of a reasonable adjustment will need to be identified as part of the assessment process. Examples of the kind of adjustments that may be considered include:

- Adjustments to premises
- Re-organisation of duties
- Alteration to work hours
- Transfer to a different place of work
- Time off for rehabilitation, assessment or treatment
- Acquiring or modifying equipment
- Modifying instructions or reference manuals
- Modifying procedures for testing or assessment
- Enhanced supervision

In the case of some disabilities, it may be possible to obtain from external sources funding to cover either in full or in part adaptations and the costs of providing a reader or interpreter to support the employee concerned.

The company will consider the extent which any step would help to improve the position and how practical it is to take any particular measure. While it may not be possible to do so in all circumstances, the intention is to provide appropriate assistance to employees and to take a positive attitude to making adjustments.

ACCESS AND EGRESS

In addition to access, the company gives due consideration to the problems of egress from buildings faced by disabled individuals given that during an emergency evacuation, lifts will not operate and there will be heavy usage of evacuation routes.

In order to cater for those with disabilities (such as sight, hearing or mobility impairment), the most senior company employee present is responsible for ensuring that there are adequate arrangements for the safe evacuation of such individuals and for the preparation of Personal Emergency Egress Plans (PEEPs).

PEEPs represent an essential step in catering for the needs of individuals with disabilities in the event of emergencies. Details of such plans vary according to the building involved and the nature of individual disabilities. Preparation of PEEPs must involve the employee / customer concerned and the relevant member of the company. Where a disabled person has occupancy of more than one building then separate PEEPs should be prepared to cater for evacuation from each building. Assistance on the design and preparation of such plans may be obtained from the Director of the company.

The company has a programme of Fire Safety training proceeding on a building by building basis and giving consideration to the evacuation of people with disabilities is an integral component of the course.

As far as is reasonably practicable, the company seeks to establish and maintain an environment for staff and customers, that is safe and without risks to health. It also aims to provide and maintain equipment and systems of work that are safe and without risks to health, and seeks to ensure safe means of access to and egress from all places within its control;

The Director of the company and other employees with managerial responsibilities must take into account any temporary (e.g. a broken leg) or permanent disability when carrying out risk assessments so that the appropriate risk control measures can be put into place - for example, visual and other signals for those with impaired hearing who cannot hear alarms.

Information about disability is made available by the Director of the company to all employees who are enjoined to take the necessary steps to comply with the company policy.

ADVICE TO STAFF

Employees wishing on account of a disability to explore the possibility of obtaining adjustments or specialist equipment should discuss the matter with the Director of the company. No action will take place without the express permission of the member of staff.

ADVICE TO STAFF AND SUBCONTRACTED STAFF

The company is committed to providing appropriate support to employees and individuals who have, or who develop disabilities. Advice should be sought from the Director of the company who will be able to advise on the steps which the company can take to assess the position and to respond to identified need.

The Director of the company will organise such identified adaptations or adjustments.

CONTACT POINTS FOR HELP AND ADVICE

The following members of staff will discuss practical issues and problems on a confidential basis.

Director
Beyond the Blue Limited
92 Vegal Crescent
Englefield Green
Surrey TW20 0QF
Tel. - 01784 434 392
E-Mail - p.mayhew@btbl.co.uk

ADVICE SERVICES

- Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Helpline: 0345 622 33
- Benefits Agency (Advice for people with disabilities) 0800 882 200

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Updated – 12th January 2016 – Peter Mayhew