Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

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Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

Part of the Company's Respect at Work Framework

Policy Owner:	Group HR Director
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Related Documents:	Dignity at Work Statement Harassment, Bullying & Victimisation Policy Sexual Harassment Policy Grievance Procedure Disciplinary Procedure Whistleblowing Policy

Version History

Version	Date:	Changes	By:
1	01.04.26	New Format, rewrite + alignment to Respect at Work Framework	Alex W
2	30.10.26	Updated in line with ERA 2025 (30.10.26 updates)	Alex W

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Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

Policy Statement

Vp plc is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion and to creating a workplace where everyone is treated fairly, valued for their contribution and respected for who they are.

We are committed to providing equality of opportunity in all aspects of employment and to avoiding unlawful discrimination in recruitment, selection, terms and conditions, pay, training, promotion, career development, transfer, redundancy, disciplinary action, grievance handling and termination of employment.

We will not tolerate discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment or victimisation.

We recognise that an inclusive workplace is not achieved by compliance alone. It requires fair systems, respectful behaviour, inclusive leadership, objective decision-making and active consideration of barriers that may disadvantage some individuals or groups.

We recognise that some parts of our business may be higher risk situations, including lone working, overnight travel, agency labour, customer-facing roles, site-based operations, workshop and yard environments, and situations where power imbalance may exist. We are committed to taking proactive steps to identify and reduce those risks.

This policy reflects the Company's responsibilities under equality legislation, including the Equality Act 2010.

Failure to follow this policy, or committing, authorising, condoning, or failing to take appropriate action in relation to discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment or victimisation, may result in disciplinary action under the Company Disciplinary Policy, up to and including dismissal.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and the Company reserves the right to amend or withdraw it at any time.

This policy forms part of the Company's wider Respect at Work framework, which promotes dignity, fairness and inclusion across the organisation.

It should be read alongside the following policies and procedures:

- Dignity at Work Statement
- Harassment, Bullying & Victimisation Policy
- Sexual Harassment Policy
- Grievance Procedure
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Whistleblowing Policy

Policy Aims

- Promote a workplace culture that values difference, dignity, fairness and inclusion.
- Make clear that discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and victimisation are not tolerated.
- Ensure fair, transparent and objective employment practices across all parts of the business.
- Support managers to make lawful, fair and inclusive decisions.

- Remove or reduce barriers that may disadvantage employees or applicants.
- Encourage employees to speak up about concerns and trust that they will be taken seriously.

Our Commitment

We are committed to:

- Treating people fairly, consistently and with respect.
- Making decisions based on merit, legitimate business need, objective evidence and lawful criteria.
- Providing equality of opportunity in recruitment and employment.
- Recognising that different people may need different support to achieve fair outcomes.
- Identifying and reducing barriers that may disadvantage particular groups.
- Making reasonable adjustments for disabled employees and applicants.
- Promoting an inclusive environment in which employees feel able to contribute and speak up.
- Challenging discrimination, exclusion and bias where it arises.

Where appropriate and lawful, the Company may also take positive action to support groups that are underrepresented or disadvantaged within the workforce.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees, workers, agency workers, contractors, consultants, apprentices, casual workers, interns, volunteers and job applicants.

It applies across all stages of the working relationship, including recruitment and selection, induction, training, work allocation, pay, promotion, performance management, attendance management, disciplinary processes, grievance handling, dismissal and post-employment references.

It applies across depots, yards, workshops, offices, customer sites, work-related travel, overnight stays, work events and online or digital environments connected to work.

The Company may also collect and review equality-related information, where lawful and appropriate, to help identify barriers, monitor fairness and improve inclusion across the business.

Protected Characteristics

The protected characteristics under equality law are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The Company also expects respectful treatment more broadly and will not accept unfair, demeaning or exclusionary treatment on other grounds even where they do not fall within a protected characteristic.

What is Discrimination

> Discrimination occurs where someone is treated unlawfully because of a protected characteristic.

Discrimination may include direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, discrimination arising from disability, failure to make reasonable adjustments, harassment, sexual harassment and victimisation.

Direct Discrimination

Direct discrimination is treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic. Examples may include:

- Rejecting an applicant because of their race, sex, age, disability, religion or sexual orientation.
- Refusing training, promotion or opportunities because someone is pregnant or on maternity leave.
- Excluding someone because they are trans, married, in a civil partnership, or because of a protected characteristic they are perceived to have.
- Treating someone less favourably because they are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic, such as a disabled child or partner.

Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination occurs where a provision, criterion or practice is applied to everyone, but disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic, and cannot be objectively justified.
Examples may include:

- Applying working patterns, travel expectations or attendance arrangements in a way that places people sharing a protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage without objective justification.
- Requiring all communication or training to take place in one format where this places disabled employees at a disadvantage and support could reasonably be provided.
- Applying promotion or overtime expectations in a way that disadvantages a particular group without proper justification.

Discrimination Arising from Disability

This occurs where a disabled person is treated unfavourably because of something arising in consequence of their disability, and the treatment cannot be justified.

Failure to Make Reasonable Adjustments

Where a disabled person is placed at a substantial disadvantage by a workplace practice, physical feature or lack of support, the Company has a duty to consider and, where reasonable, make adjustments to remove or reduce that disadvantage.

Reasonable adjustments may relate to recruitment, working hours, duties, equipment, PPE, workspace, communication methods, supervision, training, attendance triggers, travel requirements or assessment processes.

Harassment

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that violates someone's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment may also be carried out by third parties, such as customers, contractors, suppliers, visitors or members of the public.

This is covered in more detail in the Harassment, Bullying & Victimisation Policy.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is addressed in the separate Sexual Harassment Policy, which should be read alongside this policy and sets out the Company's approach to preventing and responding to sexual harassment in line with our legal obligations.

Victimisation

Victimisation occurs where someone suffers a detriment because they have raised, supported or participated in a complaint or process under equality law. This will not be tolerated.

Recruitment, Employment & Working Practices

Vp plc will aim to ensure that recruitment, employment and people management practices are fair, objective and inclusive. This includes:

- Using fair and objective job-related selection criteria.
- Avoiding unnecessary barriers in recruitment and assessment.
- Considering reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants and employees.
- Training those involved in recruitment and management decisions where appropriate.
- Making employment decisions on merit, capability, conduct and legitimate business factors.
- Applying policies and procedures consistently.
- Avoiding assumptions based on stereotypes or personal characteristics.
- Considering whether rules, practices or patterns of work may disadvantage particular groups.

Employees involved in recruitment, promotion, pay, training, performance management, disciplinary processes or grievance handling must ensure that decisions are based on relevant evidence and fair process.

The Company will not tolerate:

- Discriminatory comments or assumptions.
- Stereotyping or bias in employment decisions.
- Exclusionary practices.
- Retaliation against someone who raises an equality concern.
- Harassment or victimisation connected to protected characteristics.

In higher-risk or operational areas of the business, managers should be particularly mindful of:

- assumptions about who is "suited" to workshop, yard, depot or field-based roles
- assumptions about women, younger workers, agency workers or minority groups in male-dominated environments
- excluding people from informal networks where information or opportunities are shared
- travel, shift or overtime expectations that may disadvantage some employees without proper consideration
- language or conduct that normalises exclusion under the guise of "culture" or "banter".

Reasonable Adjustments

The Company is committed to supporting disabled employees and applicants and will consider reasonable adjustments where required.
Employees are encouraged to let the Company know if they require support or adjustments. Managers must take such requests seriously and involve HR where appropriate.

Reasonable adjustments may include, for example:

- Adjustments to duties, hours, locations or patterns of work.
- Specialist equipment, software or assistive technology.
- Changes to premises, workstation or access arrangements.
- Adjustments to communication methods or training delivery.
- Additional support, supervision or check-ins.
- Adjustments to attendance triggers or management processes where appropriate.
- Adjustments to recruitment, induction, assessment or travel requirements.

Requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the needs of the individual, the effectiveness of the adjustment, practicability, operational impact and available resources.

Duties & Responsibilities

Inclusive Behaviour Expectations

All employees are expected to:

- Treat others with dignity and respect.
- Use inclusive and respectful language.
- Avoid assumptions based on identity, background or personal circumstances.
- Be aware that “banter” or joking may exclude, demean or stereotype others.
- Challenge exclusionary, discriminatory or offensive behaviour where it is safe to do so.
- Be open to learning and feedback.
- Consider the impact of their behaviour and decisions on others.

Managers and leaders are expected to set the tone and create team environments in which employees feel safe, respected and included.

Employees

Employees are expected to:

- Uphold the Company values & behaviours.
- Ensure they have fully read and understood this policy, asking questions if they are unsure.
- Treat colleagues and others fairly and with respect.
- Avoid discriminatory, harassing or victimising behaviour.
- Raise concerns where they experience or witness inappropriate behaviour.
- Cooperate with any investigation.

Managers

Managers must:

- Ensure fair and consistent treatment within their teams.
- Role model inclusive and respectful behaviour.
- Make objective employment decisions.
- Seek HR guidance where equality issues arise.
- Respond promptly to concerns.
- Consider whether practices in their area may create barriers or disadvantage.

Senior Leaders (EXCO)

Senior Leaders are responsible for:

- Promoting an inclusive culture across the business.
- Ensuring sufficient resources and reporting structures are in place.
- Reviewing people data, trends and risks.
- Supporting improvements where issues are identified.

Group HR Director & HR Team

HR will:

- Support the business in implementing this policy.
- Review employment policies and practices.
- Advise on equality issues and reasonable adjustments.
- Monitor trends and report areas of concern.
- Support training and awareness.

Reporting Concerns

Concerns about discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment or victimisation should be raised as soon as possible through the appropriate reporting route, which may include a line manager, another manager or HR.

Complaints may be addressed under the Grievance Procedure and/or the relevant specific policy, including the Sexual Harassment Policy or Harassment, Bullying & Victimisation Policy.

Employees who raise concerns or support others in doing so in good faith must not be subjected to retaliation or victimisation.

Training & Communication

We will support this policy through:

- Onboarding and induction communications.
- Access to policies and guidance.
- Equality, diversity and inclusion training at appropriate intervals.
- Manager training on fair decision-making, reasonable adjustments and handling concerns.
- Periodic review of workplace practices, themes and data.
- Tailored communication in operational environments including toolbox talks and team briefings.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually and amended where necessary.
The Company may monitor equality-related information, complaints, themes and workforce data, in line with data protection obligations, to help identify barriers, trends, training needs and areas for improvement.