

Equality and Diversity

Date reviewed: January 2010

Next review due: January – March 2011



Purpose of policy:

Voluntary Action Westminster recognises that the society in which it works is socially diverse. VAW aims to reflect the diversity of needs of Communities it works with and in its employment and practices as far as reasonably practicable. VAW values individual attributes, such as skills, knowledge and background, and seeks to nurture these differences, for optimal working conditions for both VAW and the individual.

VAW will provide employment equality to all, irrespective of:

- Gender (including persons who intend to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment).
- Pregnancy or Maternity Leave.
- Marital status or Civil Partnership or family status.
- Religious or other belief.
- Political opinion.
- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins).
- Disability.
- Sexual orientation.
- Age.
- Having or not having dependents.
- Having caring responsibilities

Equal Opportunities:

Policy Statement

VAW is an Equal Opportunities Employer and as such VAW management will rigorously observe the principles and actively pursue the objectives set out in the discharge of their responsibilities so that this policy is fully implemented.

VAW is opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. All full-time and part-time employees and job applicants (actual or potential) will be treated fairly and selection for employment, promotion, training or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability.

We are committed to:

- Promoting a good and harmonious working environment in which all persons are treated with respect and dignity, and in which no form of intimidation or harassment will be tolerated.
- Preventing any form of direct or indirect discrimination or victimisation.

- Promoting equal opportunities for everyone.
- Promoting equal opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Promoting equal opportunities for the beliefs of all individuals.
- Promoting equal opportunities for ethnic minorities.
- Promoting equal opportunities for people of all sexual orientation.
- Fulfilling all legal obligations under the relevant legislation and associated Codes of Practice.

Any act which contravenes the equal opportunities policy and practice will be regarded as gross misconduct and could lead to disciplinary action including dismissal being taken against an employee in breach of the procedure.

Implementation

The Trustee Board has specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy. The Strategic Leadership Team and all other line managers have responsibilities and it is expected that all employees abide by the policy and help create the equality environment which is its objective.

In order to implement this policy, VAW will ensure that:

- 1) The policy is communicated to all employees through induction training and will be contained in the staff handbook and made known to job applicants.
- 2) Line managers are aware of their responsibilities through appropriate training.
- 3) Staff involved in assessing candidates for recruitment or promotion will be trained in non-discriminatory recruitment and selection techniques.

Monitoring and Review

VAW's Trustee Board will establish a system that will evaluate the results of implementing the policy, enabling recommendations for change to be made and areas for development to be identified. Regular surveys will be used to monitor the operation of this policy.

Complaints

Employees who believe that they have suffered any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation are entitled to raise the matter through the agreed procedures. All complaints of discrimination will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially.

These internal procedures do not replace or detract from the right of the employees to pursue complaints under the legislation.

Every effort will be made to ensure that employees making complaints will not be victimised. Any complaint of victimisation will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially. Victimisation will result in disciplinary action and may warrant dismissal.

Direct Discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another on the grounds of their gender, marital or family status, religious belief or political opinion, disability, race or ethnic origin, nationality, sexual orientation and age.

Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination can occur when a requirement or condition, which cannot be justified on grounds other than gender, marital or family status, religious belief or political opinion, disability, race or ethnic origin, nationality, sexual orientation and age is applied equally but has the effect in practice of disadvantaging a considerably higher proportion of persons in one or other of the above groups.

Disability Discrimination

Disability discrimination occurs when for a reason related to their disability, a disabled person is treated less favourably than other people, and this treatment cannot be justified. It also occurs when an employer fails to comply with the duty to make a reasonable adjustment in relation to the disabled person, and the failure cannot be justified. An employer cannot justify less favourable treatment if, by making a reasonable adjustment, it would remove the reason for the treatment.

Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another because that person has, for example, asserted rights under any of the discrimination laws or has helped another person to assert such rights or given information to the relevant statutory body, or because it is suspected that the person might do any of these things.

Diversity Management:

VAW views different perspectives positively and individuals are valued for their unique combination of attributes. VAW will actively nurture the skills of employees so that each can contribute at their optimum level for the organisation.

Voluntary Action Westminster seeks to be a model of good diversity practice. It will regularly monitor and evaluate the implementation of this policy through its policies and procedures and staff survey, and will report upon its findings. Voluntary Action Westminster welcomes any comments regarding the implementation of its diversity policy and will deal with any complaints about the organisation rigorously in accordance with the Grievance procedure.

Relevant Legislation

- Equal Pay Act 1970 (Amended)
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999
- Race Relations Amendment Act 2000
- Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) Regulation 2003
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulation 2003
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulation 2003
- Gender Recognition Act 2004
- Civil Partnerships Act 2004:
- The Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulations 2005
- Disability Discrimination Amendment Act 2005
- Equality Act 2006
- Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulation 2006