

Equalities Policy

The Venture Community Association is committed to encouraging equality and diversity among our workforce and eliminating unlawful discrimination. The aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and our customers, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

The VCA - in providing goods and/or services and/or facilities - is also committed against unlawful discrimination of customers or the public

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide equality, fairness and respect for all in our employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time
- Not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation.
- Oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities

The VCA commits to:

- Encourage equality and diversity in the workplace as they are good practice and make business sense.
- Create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.
- Ensure that members of staff and users are encouraged and supported to achieve their potential
- Assist in the identification of possible barriers to equality of opportunity for users and staff and to ensure that these barriers are addressed where possible
- Increase the participation of black and minority ethnic people in different activities
- Achieve a workforce that reflects the ethnic diversity of the relevant wider population and of the communities we serve
- Prevent direct and indirect, overt and covert discrimination on any grounds
- Continue to develop systems and procedures for the collection and use of monitoring data about staff and users and to use this information to develop our services for the users

- To identify the functions (and the activities which contribute to the delivery of those functions) which are most relevant to the achievement of our duties under the Equalities Act and to set our priorities for assessing and monitoring the delivery of these functions
- Amend policies and procedures where impact assessments, the outcomes of monitoring, or other information identify a need for change to avoid any discrimination, potentially discriminatory practice, or other adverse impact

This commitment includes training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the equality policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

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

- take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities

Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and any appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice

Further, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence:

- Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the VCA.
- Decisions concerning staff being based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act)
- Review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law
- Monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation) and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality policy

Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues

The equality policy is fully supported by senior management. As an organisation we will ensure all people, trustees, volunteers, employees and the public are treated fairly and consistently without discrimination.

Reviewed: 01/01/2024