



**VOLUNTARY ACTION
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COMMITMENT

VAMT is committed to creating a culture in which diversity and equality of opportunity are promoted actively and in which unlawful discrimination is not tolerated. VAMT is a learning organisation and encourages continuous improvement in equality and diversity and all other areas encouraging and supporting employees and volunteers alike to reach their full potential.

VAMT will ensure that all volunteers, employees and visitors, both actual and potential are treated equally and valued for the diversity which they bring to the organisation. VAMT recognises the organisational benefits of having a diverse community of employees and volunteers and as such, continues to work towards building and maintaining an environment which values diversity.

VAMT is also committed to ensuring that no policy, procedure, provision or criterion will be imposed on any worker without justification if it would put that worker at a disadvantage under any of the following protected characteristics as stated in the Equality Act 2010.

- a) Age;
- b) Disability;
- c) Gender reassignment;
- d) Marriage and civil partnership;
- e) Pregnancy and maternity;
- f) Race;
- g) Religion or belief;
- h) Sex; or
- i) Sexual orientation.

VAMT aims to create a working environment in which;

- a) All people are able to give their best;
- b) Bullying, harassment and discrimination are not tolerated;
- c) All decisions are based on merit;
- d) All employees have the opportunity to fulfill their potential; and
- e) Every individual's contributions to the achievement of VAMT's mission are recognized and encouraged.

To this end VAMT will aim to ensure that all individuals are treated fairly, with dignity and respect regardless of their age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, children/family intentions, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, trade union activities, political beliefs.

VAMT will ensure that there is no discrimination against anyone applying for a job, existing employees, customers or anyone who comes into contact with VAMT.

VAMT recognises the value of older employees who keep their skills updated and encourages their continuing employment.

VAMT encourages the employment of young people starting out in their careers by offering training and development and opportunities for in house mentoring.

The employment of people who identify themselves as disabled is encouraged.

PURPOSE

- a) Ensure that no volunteers, employees, service users or others who come into contact with VAMT receive less favourable treatment due to their personal characteristics or circumstances.
- b) Promote equality of opportunity in all aspects of VAMT's activity, and create a culture in which diversity is not merely accepted but encouraged.
- c) Prevent harassment or bullying taking place, and ensure that any discriminatory behaviour by any volunteer, employee, service user or visitor will not be tolerated.
- d) Provide effective means of redress if any aspect of the policy is infringed.

PRINCIPLES

- a) All volunteers, employees and service users enjoy a safe environment free from discrimination, harassment and bullying.
- b) All employees have equal access to opportunities for personal and professional development, progression, promotion and career opportunities.
- c) Employees at VAMT reflect the diversity of talent, experience and skills of the communities in which we work.
- d) Where appropriate, positive action initiatives can be used to redress inequalities and discriminatory practice.
- e) The successful implementation of this policy relies on the prioritisation of equality and diversity issues within strategic and operation planning processes.

RESPONSIBILITIES

VAMT's Board has overall responsibility for ensuring VAMT meets its legal obligations in respect of the Equality Act 2010 and for ensuring the communication of this policy to all employees.

MANAGERS RESPONSIBILITIES

- a) Fostering a culture in which compliance with this policy is regarded as integral to the work of VAMT and in which equality and diversity issues are actively promoted;
- b) Ensuring employees are encouraged, supported and enabled to reach their full potential; and
- c) Identifying appropriate development for themselves and their employees to meet the needs of their respective areas.

EMPLOYEES RESPONSIBILITIES

- a) Supporting and implementing the aims of this policy;
- b) Promoting equality of opportunity;
- c) Contributing to an environment free of fear or intimidation;
- d) Recognising and encouraging diversity;
- e) Ensuring that their behaviour and actions do not amount to discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation in any way;
- f) Identifying appropriate development for themselves and their employees to meet the needs of their respective areas; and
- g) Identifying appropriate development for themselves to meet the needs of their respective areas.

RECRUITMENT

VAMT's objective is to facilitate the recruitment and selection of appropriately skilled staff and qualified employees who can contribute positively to our business objectives, values and culture. VAMT, therefore, applies good equality principles to ensure that the most capable person is selected for a position on the basis of merit and not individual characteristics or circumstances.

VAMT intends not to discriminate intentionally or unintentionally against any individual or any section of society in its employment practices.

VAMT will avoid discrimination both direct and indirect.

DIRECT DISCRIMINATION

This is not employing someone because that person has a protected characteristic, i.e. is a member of a particular group as specified above. For example we all have protected characteristics as we are all a sex and an age.

INDIRECT DISCRIMINATION

This is described as an unjustified provision, criterion or practice that is to the detriment of a larger proportion of one group of people with protected characteristics (e.g. women, disabled people) than another group (e.g. men, able-bodied people). An example of indirect discrimination is specifying that to apply for a position individuals have to work until 6pm every evening even though it is not necessary for the job. This may indirectly discriminate against parents with school age children or someone with a disability.

VACANCIES

It is VAMT's aim to employ the most suitable person for the job. To enable VAMT to do this, information about vacant posts will be circulated as widely as possible so that it may reach as wide a group of people as possible.

No recruitment literature or advertisements will imply a preference for any one group of applicants unless there is a general occupational qualification, which limits the post to this particular group, in which case this must be clearly stated.

Job descriptions will include only those requirements, which are necessary for the effective performance of the role. All selection interviews and short-listing will be conducted on an objective basis and deal only with suitability for the job. Any questions asked in respect of personal circumstances will relate purely to the job requirements and be asked of all candidates for the post.

Vacancies are given as wide internal circulation as possible, and all employees will be considered on their merits and skills for career development and promotion without discrimination.

Questions asked at interview are consistent with this equality and diversity policy, and are purely relevant to the candidate's ability to perform the job for which they have applied. Any areas that have no bearing on the applicant's ability to carry out the job are avoided. These include:

- a) marriage/civil partnership;
- b) Sex;
- c) Age;
- d) pregnancy and maternity;
- e) gender reassignment;
- f) occupation of spouse;
- g) number of children, family intentions or domestic arrangements;

- h) ethnic or national status;
- i) sexual orientation;
- j) trade union activities;
- k) political beliefs; or
- l) religion or beliefs.

DIVERSITY MONITORING

All applications packs include the equality and diversity monitoring form. This is detached from the rest of the application before short listing and by a person not involved in the short listing. All monitoring forms are confidential and kept separate from application forms.

As an equal opportunities employer, VAMT only asks monitoring questions to ensure they are attracting applications from a wide cross section of the community and not just particular groups of people.

TRAINING AND PROMOTION

All employees will be provided with the appropriate training for their needs. These needs will be discussed during annual appraisals and employees are encouraged to approach their manager to discuss any identified training requirements.

GRIEVANCES

All grievances should be reported to your line manager or if in relation to your line manager, to the Chief Officer. All complaints will be investigated in accordance with VAMT's grievance procedure.

BREACH OF THE POLICY

VAMT will take seriously any instances of non-adherence to the equality and diversity policy by volunteers, employees, service users or visitors. Any instances of non-adherence will be investigated and where appropriate disciplinary action will be considered.

With regard to any breach of the policy by volunteers, employees, service users or visitors, VAMT will take appropriate action in relation to the nature of the incident.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

VAMT's Board will monitor this policy on an annual basis to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with legislation.