



Hart Voluntary Action Limited Equality and diversity policy

1. Introduction

HVA is an equal opportunities employer. At Hart Voluntary Action (HVA) we are committed to equality of opportunity and to providing a service which is free from unfair and unlawful discrimination. The aim of this policy is to ensure that no person receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which are not relevant to performance. It seeks also to ensure that no person is victimised or subjected to any form of bullying or harassment.

2. Definition

2.1 The terms equality, inclusion, diversity and equity are at the heart of this policy.

- **Equality** means ensuring everyone has the same opportunities to fulfil their potential free from discrimination.
- **Inclusion** means ensuring everyone feels comfortable to be themselves at work and feels the worth of their contribution.
- **Diversity** means the celebration of individual differences amongst the team.
- **Equity** means recognising barriers and that some groups are more advantaged than others, and putting measures in place to eliminate these barriers, ensuring equal opportunities for all.

2.2 We will actively support diversity, equity and inclusion and ensure that our workforce and service is valued and treated with dignity and respect. We want to encourage everyone in HVA and our service to reach their potential.

3. Scope

HVA values people as individuals with diverse opinions, cultures, lifestyles and circumstances. This policy covers all members of staff, trustees, members, contractors, volunteers, casual workers and service users and it applies to all areas of employment including recruitment, selection, training, deployment, career development, and promotion. These areas are monitored and policies and practices are amended if necessary to ensure that no unfair or unlawful discrimination, intentional, unintentional, direct or indirect, overt or latent, exists.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 The Chief Executive has particular responsibility for implementing and monitoring the Equality and Diversity policy and, as part of this process, all HR policies and procedures are administered with the objective of promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating unfair or unlawful discrimination. You have a responsibility to comply with both the 'letter and the spirit' in all aspects of their work, individually and collectively.

4.2 In particular, you must:

- Not encourage or condone discrimination in any form through your own actions;
- Take prompt action to challenge and stop discrimination as soon as it is identified;
- Take allegations of discrimination seriously and ensure there is no victimisation of any member of our team who makes or assists someone in making a complaint;
- Ensure no offensive or potentially offensive material is displayed at work;
- Voice opinions which are discriminatory or unlawful and
- Make clear that discrimination in any form is unacceptable in particular in relation to any other protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, and that it will be dealt with seriously.

4.2 All members of staff, trustees, volunteers, workers or self-employed contractors whether part time, full time or temporary, will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment,

promotion, training, or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. You will be helped and encouraged to develop your full potential. The talents and resources of our team will be fully utilised to maximise the success of HVA.

4.3 If you are a manager, you must set an appropriate standard of behaviour, lead by example and ensure that those you manage adhere to the policy and promote HVA's aims and objectives with regard to equal opportunities. You will be given appropriate training on equal opportunities awareness and equal opportunities recruitment and selection best practice.

5. Our Aim

5.1 Equality of opportunity, valuing diversity and compliance with the law is to the benefit of everyone in HVA as we seek to develop the skills and abilities of our people. While specific responsibility for eliminating discrimination and providing equality of opportunity lies with managers and supervisors, individuals at all levels have a responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect. The personal commitment of everyone to this policy and application of its principles are essential to eliminate discrimination and provide equality and equity throughout HVA.

5.2 All members of staff, trustees and volunteers are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved by contacting our Chief Executive.

6. HVA Commitment as an Employer

HVA is committed to providing equal opportunities in employment and ensuring its workforce is as diverse as the community it serves. To ensure that equality underpins all aspects of its employment policies, procedures and practices. We are committed to:

- creating an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of our team are recognised and valued
- everyone is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated
- providing training, development and progression opportunities to all staff
- reviewing all our employment practices and procedures to ensure fairness and inclusion for all
- taking steps to ensure equity amongst our workforce such as ensuring that our vacancies are advertised to a diverse range of potential candidates and, where relevant, to particular groups that have been identified as disadvantaged or underrepresented in HVA, taking positive action to recruit disabled people and ensuring there are no unlawful barriers to accessing our employment opportunities, training, progression opportunities, benefits and facilities
- diversity in our workforce will be regularly monitored to ensure equal opportunities throughout HVA. Where appropriate, measures will be taken to identify and remove unnecessary obstacles and to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups

7. Our commitment as a service provider

One of HVA's roles is the provision of direct services, particularly where there is no existing service to meet a particular need. To ensure and promote equality and diversity in the provision of services, HVA is committed to:

- providing services to our community based on need regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation
- making sure our services are delivered equally and meet the diverse needs of our service users and clients
- taking steps to ensure equity amongst our clients and service users such as removing any unlawful obstacles to accessing our services or facilities. Where appropriate, measures will be taken to identify and remove unnecessary barriers and to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups
- ensuring our services are accessible through a range of options including telephone, email, appointment, drop-in and outreach and providing clear information regarding services provided

- promoting a working environment which promotes positive images and language and avoids stereotyping
- working with organisations, agencies and individuals to promote equality of opportunity

8. Our Commitment in Membership

HVA is committed to ensuring and promoting equality and diversity amongst our membership and commit to:

- Taking positive steps to encourage as wide and diverse a membership as possible.
- Ensuring conditions for membership are as minimal as possible to allow easy access for small or minority groups.
- Taking positive action to reach out to minority or disadvantaged groups, encouraging them to become members and actively participate in meetings and events.

9. Complaints

9.1 Anyone, regardless of status, who believes they have been discriminated against or are aware of an act of discrimination affecting others, must raise the matter with their manager or the Chief Executive who will consider the necessary action to be taken.

9.2 Managers are to inform the Chief Executive of any complaints or alleged discrimination brought to their attention. If you believe that you have suffered discrimination, or if this policy has been breached, you can raise the matter through our Grievance Policy and Procedure or through our Harassment and Bullying Policy as appropriate. All complaints and allegations will be taken seriously and fully investigated.

9.3 Breaches of this policy will be dealt with in accordance with our Disciplinary Procedure. Serious cases of discrimination may amount to gross misconduct resulting in dismissal without notice.

9.4 Individuals who raise an issue or brings a complaint under this policy will not suffer any form of victimisation or detriment for having done so in good faith. If after a full investigation it is found that your complaint is both untrue and has been brought with malicious intent, disciplinary action will be taken against you.

10. Equal opportunity policy statements

10.1 **Age** - We will:

- ensure that people of all ages are treated with respect and dignity
- ensure that people are given equal access to our employment, training, development and promotion opportunities and
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about younger and older people.

10.2 **Disability** – We will:

- provide any reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled people have access to our services and employment opportunities. If we feel that a particular adjustment would not be reasonable, we will discuss this with you and try to find an alternative solution where possible
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about disabled people
- seek to continue to improve access to information by ensuring availability of loop systems, braille facilities, alternative formatting and sign language interpretation.
- If you are disabled or become disabled, we encourage you to tell us about your condition so that we can support you as appropriate
- We will keep the physical features of our premises under review to consider whether they might place anyone with a disability at a substantial disadvantage. Where necessary, we will take reasonable steps to improve access.

10.3 **Race** - We will:

- challenge racism wherever it occurs
- respond swiftly and sensitively to racist incidents and
- actively promote race equality and inclusion in HVA

- take positive action to redress the negative effects of discrimination against everyone
- offer equal access for everyone to representation, services, employment, training and pay and encourage other organisations to do the same.

10.4 **Gender** - We will:

- challenge discriminatory assumptions about gender
- take positive action to redress the negative effects of discrimination against everyone
- offer equal access for everyone to representation, services, employment, training and pay and encourage other organisations to do the same and
- provide support to prevent discrimination against transgender people who have or who are about to undergo gender reassignment.

10.5 **Sexual Orientation** - We will:

- ensure that we take account of the needs of everyone, including the LGBTQ+ communities
- promote positive images of the LGBTQ+ communities
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about the LGBTQ+ communities
- take positive action to redress the negative effects of discrimination against everyone and
- offer equal access for everyone to representation, services, employment, training and pay and encourage other organisations to do the same.

10.6 **Religion or belief** - We will:

- ensure that employees' religion or beliefs and related observances are respected and accommodated wherever possible and
- respect people's beliefs where the expression of those beliefs does not impinge on the legitimate rights of others.

10.7 **Pregnancy or maternity** - We will:

- ensure that people are treated with respect and dignity during pregnancy or maternity leave
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about pregnancy or maternity and
- ensure that no individual is disadvantaged during pregnancy or maternity leave and that we take account of the needs of our employees' during pregnancy or maternity leave.

10.8 **Marriage or civil partnership** - We will:

- ensure that people are treated with respect and dignity regardless of marriage or civil partnership status
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about the marriage or civil partnership of our employees and
- ensure that no individual is disadvantaged as a result of their marriage or civil partnership status.

11. Part time and fixed term work

Part time and fixed term staff should be treated the same as comparable full time or permanent staff and enjoy no less favourable terms and conditions (on a pro-rata basis where appropriate), unless different treatment is justified.

12. Equal pay

We will ensure that all members of staff have the right to the same contractual pay and benefits for carrying out the same work, work rated as equivalent work or work of equal value.

This policy is reviewed on bi-annual basis by the Trustee HR and Governance sub-committee to ensure it remains up to date and to monitor its effectiveness. Any changes required will be implemented and communicated to you. It is adopted on a non-contractual basis and therefore does not make up part of your contractual terms and conditions however, it does determine our culture so you are fully expect to behave in accordance with it.