

VetPartners Equality diversity & Inclusion policy

1. Aims

This policy sets out VetPartners group approach to equality, diversity & Inclusion. We recognise that all of our people contribute to the way we work, and a diversity of backgrounds and experience benefits us all.

We are committed to providing equal opportunities across our company, and we will take action to remove any discrimination.

We aim to make sure no-one experiences direct or indirect discrimination (see section 4) for any reason, including those which are legally protected characteristics (see section 5).

These include, age, disability status, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, pregnancy, maternity/adoption, marital status, and anything else that makes us unique.

VetPartners culture values and recognises what each and every one of us brings, and we want all of our people to feel comfortable to be who they are at work.

2. Responsibilities

All directors and managers will make sure this policy is applied across our whole company in line with current legislation and our culture.

All senior managers are responsible for making sure this policy is used properly and fairly across their practice or location/department.

The People team are responsible for advising managers and colleagues on legislation and good

However, it is the responsibility of every individual one of us to act in accordance with this policy, to ensure all our colleagues do not feel discrimination in the workplace.

You must not discriminate, or encourage anyone else to discriminate, against colleagues, potential employees or anyone you come into contact with while you are at work.

3. Principles

We should all work in an environment that promotes dignity, equality and respect for everyone. As such, we will not tolerate any acts of unlawful or unfair discrimination (including harassment) against an employee, contractor, job applicant or visitor because of a protected characteristic, or any other reason.

We recognise how employing, developing and keeping people who reflect the broad cultural diversity of our communities greatly benefits the care of our clients and other service users and the quality of our services.

This policy applies in the workplace, outside the workplace (when dealing with service users, patients, suppliers and other work-related contacts) and on work-related trips or events, including social events.

This policy applies to all areas of our company. It covers:

- recruitment and selection.
- terms and conditions of employment.
- access to training.
- Performance and development reviews; and
- promotion and changes in role.

4. Types of discrimination and definitions

Discrimination may be either direct or indirect and may include victimisation, harassment or bullying.

a) Direct discrimination

Direct discrimination is the legal term which means to treat someone less favourably than you have treated (or would treat) someone else because the person belongs to one of the protected groups (see section 5). For example, unless there is a genuine occupational requirement to do so, refusing to employ someone because of their race or sex is treating them less favourably than others and so is unlawful. An example of a genuine occupational requirement is that an organisation for deaf people is allowed to employ a deaf person who uses British Sign Language (BSL) to work as a counsellor to other deaf people whose first or preferred language is BSL.

b) Indirect discrimination

Indirect discrimination is the legal term that describes situations which happen when an organisation, or employee, makes a decision, or puts in place a particular policy, practice or procedure which appears to treat everyone equally but which, in practice, leads to people from a particular group being treated less favourably than others.

An example of indirect discrimination is a minimum height requirement for a job where height is not relevant to the role.

c) Victimisation

Victimisation is when an employee is treated less favourably than others because they have asserted their legal rights against our company or helped someone else to do so.

An example of victimisation is an employee telling us they have experienced racism from another employee, and then being ignored by colleagues as a result.

d) Harassment

The Equality Act 2010 defines harassment as:

‘Unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the complainant, or violating the complainant's dignity (this applies to all the protected characteristics apart from pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership).’

It is important to remember that harassment happens when the person experiencing it believes they are being harassed, regardless of whether the other person actually intended to harass them.

Some examples of harassment are:

- making unwanted sexual advances.
- making suggestive, improper, coarse or insulting comments.
- using foul language.
- showing or distributing pornographic or sexually suggestive pictures or articles.
- making sexually suggestive or offensive gestures.
- unwanted physical contact, or unnecessary touching or brushing against another person; or
- excluding someone from something they should be a part of.

e) Bullying

Bullying means misusing power and being aggressive in a way which is intended to hurt and belittle an individual or group of individuals.

5. Protected characteristics

There are nine protected characteristics described in discrimination law, which are outlined below in accordance with how they are legally defined.

I. Age

Age discrimination is where you're treated unfairly because of your age or because you are part of a particular age group.

II. Disability

Under section 6 of the Equality Act 2010, you are disabled if you have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term negative effect on your ability to carry out day-to-day activities. Some impairments are automatically treated as a disability. You'll be protected by discrimination law if you have:

- cancer, including skin growths that need removing before they become cancerous.
- a visual impairment (certified as blind or partially sighted, or as having a sight impairment);
- multiple sclerosis.
- an HIV infection – even if you don't have any symptoms; or
- a severe, long-term disfigurement – for example, severe facial scarring or a skin disease.

III. Gender reassignment

Gender reassignment is a personal process rather than a medical one. You don't have to undergo medical treatment or be under medical supervision to be protected under the Equality Act as a transgender person.

IV. Marriage and civil partnership

You're legally married if your relationship is recognised as a marriage under UK law, even if you didn't get married in the UK.

A civil partnership means a registered civil partnership under the Civil Partnership Act 2004. This also includes civil partnerships registered outside the UK.

V. Pregnancy and maternity

Pregnancy and maternity discrimination are when you're treated unfairly because you're pregnant, breastfeeding or have recently given birth. You must suffer a disadvantage as a result of the unfair treatment. Unfair treatment means that you're worse off because of the discrimination – for example, by not getting a promotion at work. All you need to show is that you were treated unfairly because of pregnancy and maternity.

VI. Race

Race discrimination is when you're treated unfairly because of your:

- colour.
- nationality.

- ethnic background; or
- national origin (the country you were born in or where your ancestors lived).

VII. Religion or belief

Discriminated against because you belong to an organised religion, for example:

- Islam.
- Christianity.
- Judaism; or
- Hinduism.

VIII. Sex

If you're treated unfairly because you're a man or a woman, this is sex discrimination. It applies to men and women of any age and includes girls and boys.

IX. Sexuality

Your sexuality depends on who you're sexually attracted to. This may be:

- people of your own sex (if you're gay or lesbian).
- people of the opposite sex (if you're heterosexual); or
- people of both sexes (if you're bisexual).

6. What this diversity policy covers

This diversity policy applies to everyone across the VetPartners group, but we cannot give a complete list of every situation when it will apply. While we will try to make sure there is no discrimination in any area of the group, there are some key areas where this policy always applies.

a) Recruitment and selection

The purpose of the recruitment process is to make sure we choose the most suitable person, with the correct skills and knowledge, to fill a vacancy. The only time we may choose one applicant instead of another because of a protected characteristic is if we have to by law or because there is a statutory reason.

We will ensure that all job adverts, application forms, our website and any other promotional materials reflect our commitment to recruiting a diverse workforce.

c) Access to training

We are committed to supporting learning and development for everyone in our organisation.

We will monitor the training we provide to make sure everyone has equal access to the training they need.

d) Promotion and changes in role

We will base all decisions for promotions or changes in role on the person's skills and knowledge.

7. What will happen if you don't follow this diversity policy

If colleagues do not follow this policy, we will act under our disciplinary procedure, which could include dismissal.

If you tell us about discrimination, we will not allow anyone to victimise you or retaliate against you as a result.

However, if you make a false allegation of discrimination deliberately and in bad faith, the actions detailed in our disciplinary policy and procedure will apply to you.

Please read our disciplinary policy and procedure for more information

If you want to make a complaint about discrimination you should use our grievance policy and procedure, which is available on VetNet.

We will review this policy regularly to make sure that it aligns with current laws and best practice.

VetPartners Values



Approachable

We create a culture of warmth & belonging

We have a personal approach, an open & inclusive environment for you to thrive in.

Respectful

We respect one another

Everyone makes the tea here. We listen - everyone's opinion counts. We act with humility, empathy & integrity.

Collaborative

We work together

We're called VetPartners because we believe in true partnership working, with support & collaboration to deliver our mission. You are part of our family.

Supportive

Learning is part our DNA.

We develop individuals, practices & teams.

Dedicated

We're solution focused and accountable.

We look for better ways to do things, our actions matter. We're resilient, adaptable & self-aware.

vetPartners