

AGE DISCRIMINATION POLICY

1. Introduction

Veritech is committed to providing equal opportunities to all and to actively pursuing the elimination of all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination, harassment or victimisation within the organisation.

Veritech recognises that everyone is different and that we must value and respect this diversity in order to ensure that staff are encouraged to realise their potential. By capitalising on the knowledge and skills of our staff this will in turn enable Veritech to maximise efficiency and ensure delivery of an optimum service to our clients.

Veritech is committed to developing and retaining a workforce that is representative of the community that it serves, in order to ensure that the diverse needs of different groups and individuals are met.

2. Scope

The policy applies to all actual and potential employees and workers of Veritech.

3. Legislation

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations, which came into effect on the 1st October 2006, make it unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly on the grounds of age. This policy will ensure that the Veritech is compliant with all aspects of these regulations.

The Regulations protect staff of all ages and apply to all aspects of the employment relationship including recruitment and selection, training and development, promotion and reward.

In keeping with other equality legislation (race, sex etc) the Age Regulations make direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of age unlawful. These are defined in Appendix 1

4. Aims of the Policy

- To prevent direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation for all staff and potential employees.
- To ensure equality by eliminating conditions, requirements, procedures and practices that are discriminatory and unjustified
- To recruit, develop and retain a high quality workforce which is representative of and appropriate to the diverse needs of our patients
- To ensure that staff have access to development and are supported to realise their potential, which will enable Veritech to continuously improve services.
- To ensure all staff have ongoing training with FIR (Fairness Inclusion & Respect)

5. Key Areas

5.1 Recruitment and Selection

- Job Descriptions and person specifications must not include any age related criteria or request particular qualifications (i.e. GCSE) that would disadvantage people of different ages.
- Where specific qualifications are requested managers must be able to justify their need in objective terms and make it clear that equivalent qualifications and where appropriate experience, will be considered
- Vacancies must be advertised in a way that is accessible to a large audience in order to attract people from a variety of ages
- Shortlisting panels must consist of at least two people, at least one of whom has undertaken equality and diversity training. Decisions must be based on skills and ability alone, must be clearly recorded and will be audited to ensure that they are unbiased
- Interviewers and those concerned with selection must focus on competence relevant to the job and not be subjective or make assumptions on the basis of any physical characteristics or assumptions.
- Where more than one applicant demonstrates the required competence, the individual who is more competent or offers the best skill mix should be appointed
- All recruitment decisions must be clearly recorded in order to enable audit and monitoring.

Fairness, Inclusion and Respect (FIR) Code of Conduct and Ethics and the Anti-Corruption Code serve as a reminder that belonging to Veritech Systems involves more than just strict adherence to applicable laws and regulations. They set out the ethical principles that guide our behaviours and the expectation that everyone demonstrates exemplary conduct based on transparency, integrity, fairness and respect.

We are actively committed to advancing FIR among our workforce and our supply chain, where everyone is recognised for having their own characteristics, background, experience and abilities. With our customers we consider the diverse nature of communities when we make decisions to become more effective at attracting, recruiting and retaining a representative workforce.

The Equality Act protects people against discrimination.

Under the Equality Act, there are nine protected characteristics: ● Age. ● Disability. ● Gender reassignment. ● Marriage and civil partnership. ● Pregnancy and maternity. ● Race. ● Religion and belief. ● Sex. ● Sexual orientation.

All employees are made aware of and must comply with the latest legislation and best practice in this area. The behaviours of our people help to embed FIR across the business, reflecting one of our core values Integrity.

5.2 Learning and Development

- Opportunities for training and promotion must be made known to all employees and be available to everyone on a fair and equal basis
- Take up of training courses should be monitored to ensure that all groups are taking part.
- The style and location of training should also be reviewed in order to ensure that there are no barriers to any age group participating, the training is suitable for people of all ages and that everyone is encouraged to participate.
- Equality and diversity training must be available for all staff to access in order to reduce the likelihood of discrimination, harassment and victimisation taking place and limit liability if a complaint is made
- The performance appraisal system must be regularly audited to ensure that it is working fairly and without bias and that managers are not making any judgments on the basis of preconceptions.

5.3 Redundancy

- Selection processes for redundancy must be free from age discrimination. Practices such as last in and first out and using length of service in any selection criteria are likely to be age discriminatory
- When releasing employees, managers must take into account the organisation's future needs for knowledge, skills and competency
- Where possible, alternatives to redundancy should be considered, for example, shorter hours, part time working, secondments and employment breaks

5.4 Respect at Work

- All members of staff have the right to be treated fairly and with dignity and respect and Veritech will not tolerate bullying and/ or harassment in any form
- All members of staff are responsible for their own behaviour and must ensure that they are familiar with their responsibilities.
- Staff should report any incidents of bullying and harassment which come to their attention to the appropriate manager.
- All allegations raised regarding bullying and harassment will be taken seriously, treated confidentially and investigated properly.
- Every effort will be made to ensure that there is no victimisation against an employee making a complaint, or against employees who support a colleague in making a complaint.
- Bullying and harassment may be treated as a disciplinary offence and where allegations are founded may lead to dismissal. Disciplinary action may also be taken if a complaint is found to have been submitted maliciously.

5.5 Policies and Procedures

- All policies and procedures will be reviewed for age bias

5.6 Retirement

- Veritech is committed to providing equal opportunities for staff and recognises the value of retaining skilled and able workers
- Veritech is committed to allowing sufficient flexibility, in order where possible, to accommodate the needs of both the individual and the organisation
- Veritech's Retirement Policy and Procedure provides guidance for both managers and staff on options for retirement and the procedures that must be followed to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006.

5.7 Roles and Responsibilities

5.7.1 Managers

- Ensure that this policy is implemented within their area of responsibility and that all staff are aware of what it means to them
- Raise awareness of diversity, acting as a role model for others and developing their skills to deal with issues relating to discrimination and harassment
- To work with HR to ensure the resolution of issues relating to harassment and discrimination within their work area.

5.7.2 Employees

- Maintain a professional working environment, treating other employees and service users with respect
- To comply with and promote Veritech policies and procedures, be aware of their responsibilities under the policy and report any inappropriate behaviour to the appropriate person

5.8 Monitoring and Review

- This policy will be monitored on an ongoing basis in order to assess Veritech's performance and effectiveness. A formal review will take place, initiated by the Human Resources department, twelve months following introduction.
- All policies, procedures and practices will be reviewed to ensure that they do not have an adverse impact on any of the quality categories
- If a policy, procedure or practice is found to have an adverse impact, the author/s must consider all other alternatives which may more effectively achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity. This may include the development of specific measures to mitigate the adverse impact.
- Veritech will collect, analyse, interpret and publish all relevant data.

Appendix 1: Definitions of Discrimination

- **Direct Discrimination**

When a person is treated less favourably on the grounds of their age, compared to how a person of a different age is treated in the same circumstances. For example, rejection of a job application on the grounds that the applicant is "too young" or "too old".

- **Indirect Discrimination**

When a criterion, provision or practice is applied to everyone, but has the effect of disadvantaging people from a particular age group, when compared to others.

For example, requesting a particular qualification for a post, which people from a younger or older age group are less likely to possess.

- **Harassment**

Unwanted conduct on the grounds of age that has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

- **Victimisation**

The less favourable treatment of a person as a consequence of action taken by that person under the Age Regulations.

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