

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION POLICY

Vocational Training Services Care Sector Ltd (VTS) is committed to providing a high-quality education & training delivery service throughout Essex and into the surrounding counties. We are a small independent training provider delivering peripatetic, work-based education & qualifications (mainly apprenticeships) to learners of all ages. Training predominantly takes place on employers' premises; however, learners do attend one of our offices from time to time to attend learning sessions and sit online assessments.

Integral to our ongoing success is the need to ensure that we treat our staff, learners, employers and visitors with dignity and respect in accordance with all relevant legislation in this country. Currently the legislation providing the foundation for our approach is the Equality Act 2010.

This document sets out our approach to providing an inclusive environment where diversity is embraced, and equality of opportunity is firmly embedded within our operations. It has links with the following policies and should be read in conjunction with them:

- Safeguarding and Prevent Policy
- British Values & Personal Development Policy

POLICY STATEMENT – *what we aim to achieve:*

- Provide an inclusive working and learning environment which provides equality of opportunity for our staff, learners, and employers regardless of their age, disability, gender, marital status, race, religion, creed, sexual orientation, culture, class, learning ability or political beliefs.
- Provide a working and learning environment where diversity is celebrated and staff, learners and employers are encouraged to speak freely without fear of recrimination or reprisal
- Provide a working and learning environment where staff and learners are encouraged to fulfil their potential and strive for excellence.
- Provide an environment and spaces for learners and staff to have access to a quiet space should they wish to Pray whilst using our facilities.
- Ensure that we identify and eliminate (within the company and operations) any unlawful discriminatory practices, procedures and attitudes against people with the protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, race, gender, pregnancy, gender reassignment, religion or belief, marital status and sexual orientation.
- Ensure that all staff, learners, employers and visitors are aware that they have a responsibility to adhere to this policy in the course of their day-to-day activities
- Ensure that our staff are fully trained and aware of their responsibilities in implementing and upholding this policy.
- Ensure learners and employers understand their rights under the Equality Act 2010 and how VTS is making sure we operate in accordance with this.
- Make this policy readily available to all staff, learners and employers and regularly promote it to maintain awareness.

- Ensure we firmly embed the principles of the Equality Act 2010 when recruiting new staff and considering existing staff for promotional job opportunities within VTS.
- Ensure we firmly embed the principles of the Equality Act 2010 within our operations, for the benefit of our learners and employers.
- Regularly obtain feedback from our staff, learners, and employers to ensure their understanding and invite comments.
- Ensure that we deal with any non-compliance with this policy (whether intentional or not) promptly and with sensitivity and understanding to all parties involved in the non-compliance.

DEFINITIONS – *what we mean by certain terms in the context of this policy.*

Inclusive working and learning environment – is an environment which is welcoming to everyone, flexible and responsive to people’s needs. It is free from barriers, discrimination and intolerance and accommodates the differences in the way people are.

Equality of Opportunity - is a state of fairness where everyone is given the same opportunities, unhampered by artificial barriers, prejudices or preferences. If necessary, for persons with a disability, reasonable adjustments may need to be made for that person in order to ensure them equality of opportunity compared to persons without a disability.

Diversity - means people from a range of different backgrounds, ages, cultures, genders, political and social beliefs etc.

Unlawful discriminatory practices – as defined by the Equality Act 2010, these are:

- *Direct discrimination*, when a person with a protected characteristic (or someone associated with that person) is treated unfairly or less favorably than others in comparable circumstances
- *Indirect discrimination*, when a person with a protected characteristic is put at a disadvantage by a situation or practice which is seemingly otherwise equal
- *Harassment*, which is unwanted behaviour (linked to a protected characteristic) which violates someone’s dignity or creates an offensive environment for them
- *Victimisation*, where someone is treated unfairly because they have complained about discrimination or harassment
- *Discrimination arising from a disability* – which is when a person with a disability is treated less favourably than someone without a disability. This includes where the employer/learning provider fails to make reasonable adjustments in order to ensure equality of opportunity for the person with the disability

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION – *what we have put in place to achieve our aims*

In order to achieve the aims of this policy we have taken the following approach:

OUR SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM:

- The senior management team (SMT) is responsible for ensuring the implementation, monitoring and review of this policy.

- The SMT responds quickly to any legislative updates, arranging extra training as necessary for staff and updating the policy.
- The SMT arranges induction and ongoing training for all staff (in relation to this policy).
- The SMT ensures this policy is promoted throughout the company and to our learners and employers. The policy is published on our website, is signposted in the staff and learner handbooks and forms an important part of learner and staff induction activities. Progress reviews include activities to ensure learners' understanding and encourage open discussion and exploration of their views. Employer information packs include details of our approach and this policy.
- The SMT arranges for feedback from staff, learners and employers, then reviews this feedback and uses it to continuously improve our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion
- The SMT regularly analyses learner achievement and satisfaction data to ensure consistency of achievement and satisfaction between different groups of learners. This is reviewed on a quarterly basis and any emerging disparity is fully investigated, with remedial action being taken as necessary through the Quality Improvement Plan. (QIP)
- The SMT has ensured that the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion have been embedded in our curricula wherever possible and incorporated in learning activities and lesson plans.
- The SMT will put in place reasonable adjustments necessary for any staff member with a disability, in order to ensure equality of opportunity for that staff member.

OUR STAFF:

- When recruiting new staff, we operate an impartial approach when viewing applications. We consider only an applicant's qualifications and experience compared to the job specification and will offer the job role according to competence displayed, taking no account of an applicant's age, gender, disability, marital status, race, religion, creed, sexual orientation, culture, class or political beliefs, and being prepared to put in place reasonable adjustments for applicants with a disability in order to offer them equality of opportunity
- When considering existing staff for an internal vacancy we adopt an impartial approach and consider only their competence and ability in relation to the job on offer. If more than one existing staff member is applying for the same role, we adopt a competence based, transparent approach to selection
- All staff receive comprehensive induction training, part of which is to ensure they are familiar with this policy and know where to locate it for reference purposes
- All staff receive ongoing training for Equality, diversity and inclusion. Thought provoking CPD activities are included at every monthly staff meeting in how we are meeting all our learner and workplace needs.
- All staff are expected to fully support and uphold the policy as they perform their day-to-day job role. It is part of their job description and is included in their accountabilities for their regular observation of practice by a senior IQA.
- Staff will be invited to participate in an annual survey and state their views on our approach to inclusive and impartial practices.

OUR LEARNERS:

- Before enrolment, our learners receive a comprehensive initial assessment including an evaluation for learning support funding and a screening for health issues or disabilities which may affect their learning. As a result of this, if necessary, we will discuss and agree with the learner and employer, reasonable adjustments which could be made to the learning plan to ensure equality of opportunity for that learner
- At enrolment, learners receive a comprehensive induction, part of which is to explain in detail our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion through implementation of this policy. Learners are signposted to the website where they will find this, and our other policies, and they can request paper copies if desired.
- After enrolment, learners receive a handbook which contains more information and signposting to our website. Learners are made aware that it is their responsibility to uphold the policy and discuss any concerns they may have with their tutor in the first instance.
- Whilst on programme, learners receive a progress review every 12 weeks; part of this review is to challenge and test their understanding of British Values and how it relates to them personally and their apprenticeship.

OUR EMPLOYERS:

- Employers receive an information pack containing details of our policies and procedures and signposting to our website.
- Employers receive regular newsletters; we include in these any legislative updates or articles of interest relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- Employers are included in learners' initial assessment discussions and agreeing any reasonable adjustments which may be appropriate for that learner in order to provide them with equality of opportunity, both in their learning programme and in the workplace.
- Employers are invited to take part in regular surveys and provide feedback on the effectiveness of our approach to ensuring their understanding of equality, diversity, and inclusion.

IMPACT OF OUR POLICY – *how we will judge achievement of our aims*

- Different groups of learners will achieve at broadly the same rate as each other
- Analysis of data will show that we quickly identify any emerging disparity in achievement between different groups of learners and take action to address issues through the QIP
- Learner feedback will show that our learners have a good understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion and feel they have been treated fairly, with dignity and respect throughout their learning programme.
- Employer feedback will show employers are happy with our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion and that our policy has been implemented effectively.
- Staff feedback will show that they feel valued and are treated fairly and with dignity and respect, and that the aims of this policy are being achieved.

IF THINGS GO WRONG – *what people can do if they are not happy*

Despite our best efforts in implementing and upholding this policy throughout our operations, if a learner, employer or any other person who has had dealings with VTS considers that they or

someone else has been unfairly treated, discriminated against, harassed or not given equality of opportunity, they shall be entitled to make a complaint and should refer to the relevant policy which can be found on our website. Any such complaint will be dealt with sensitively, confidentially and in accordance with our complaints policy.

Any staff member who feels they have been discriminated against, treated unfairly, harassed or not given equality of opportunity should raise a grievance under the staff grievance procedure.

Any breach of this policy by a staff member will be taken very seriously, investigated thoroughly in accordance with the relevant procedure and could result in disciplinary action.

REVIEW AND VERSION CONTROL

This policy is reviewed annually and update as necessary.

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