



**EQUALITY, INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY  
STRATEGY  
2011-2014**

AvMA Council Meeting 26<sup>th</sup> January 2011, incorporating draft action plan

# EQUALITY, INCLUSION & DIVERSITY STRATEGY 2011-2014

## 1) INTRODUCTION

AvMA welcomes its statutory obligations under equalities legislation, but wishes to go further where possible. Our aim is to ensure that equality & inclusion are embedded and integral to everything we do.

As a national charity committed to social justice we recognise the importance of equality and diversity, and aim to provide innovative and responsive services which meet the needs of the diverse communities we serve.

We are committed to treating everyone fairly and without discrimination. Specifically, we aim to ensure that:

- Our services, employment and voluntary opportunities are accessible to all and are taken up by a diverse range of people
- Clients, staff, volunteers and trustees are treated in a way that is fair, equal and inclusive
- In line with our public sector associates, we will promote respect and positive relations with people from all communities and across the “protected characteristics” spectrum defined in the Equality Act 2010. The protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010 are - Age, Disability, Sex, Race, Religion and Belief, Sexual orientation, Gender reassignment, Civil partnership & Marriage and Pregnancy & Maternity.
- Everyone is treated with dignity and respect
- AvMA complies with the relevant Equality and Human Rights legislation

All staff, volunteers and trustees are expected to promote these values, to comply with the requirements set out in this strategy, and share responsibility for successful implementation of the relevant action plans.

## OUR VALUES AND VISION

- Our vision is to meet the needs of clients, with staff who are well trained, caring, enthusiastic and proud of the job that they do
- Our values underpin everything we do, how we deliver our services and how we work with each other
- We believe in treating people with respect and courtesy and in valuing equality, diversity and human rights.

- We encourage communication and teamwork and expect our staff to act with integrity
- We welcome innovation and new ideas and want all our staff to provide the most expert and professional services possible.

## 2) WAYS IN WHICH WE WILL PROMOTE EQUALITY, INCLUSION & DIVERSITY

### 2a) As a provider of services to the public-

- our clients (service users) and potential clients will be made aware that our services are available to all, that everyone is welcome and that we will endeavour to ensure they can access our services
- we will provide services in ways and at places that are accessible to all
- we will strive to make our information accessible to all. Information will be made available in different formats and in different languages when needed
- we will reflect our commitment to equalities, inclusion and diversity in the policy and campaigning work we do and in the way we work with other bodies.

### 2b) As an employer-

We aim to become an employer of choice for those who support our objects and vision. We wish to attract talented people from all communities and will support all employees to develop their potential to the benefit of their fellow staff, clients and the organisation. We will:

- promote the diversity of our workforce and create a working environment where everyone feels included and appreciated in their work
- promote and provide training and employment opportunities equally across the protected characteristics and in line with the relevant human rights articles and any other aspect of an individual person's background or identity
- recruit staff and volunteers so as to reach the widest and most diverse range of people and not exclude particular groups or individual. (see AvMA protocol on recruitment of staff through agencies).
- devise criteria for selection and recruitment of staff and volunteers which focus on people's abilities and potential.

- Ensure we follow good equal opportunities practice in the short listing and selection of staff and volunteers and in line with equality legislation guidance formulated by the Equality & Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and Government Equalities Office (GEO).
- foster creativeness and innovation in our working environment, to ensure that each member of staff can give of their best and move AvMA forward in its equality & inclusion goals
- Provide opportunities for our staff, volunteers and clients across all the relevant protected characteristics in order to engage with them and thereby enable them to have influence on the AvMA's policies and decision-making.
- ensure that wherever possible our office buildings and meeting places are accessible to all

**2c) As a procurer of goods and services, and as a recipient of financial or other support-**

AvMA will aim to ensure that organisations from whom we procure goods or services are compliant with equalities legislation, are aware of and share our aspirations set out in this strategy.

Likewise, we will aim to ensure the same with regard to organisations from whom we receive sponsorship, financial and other forms of support.

**3) REVIEWING OUR STRATEGIES, POLICIES AND PRACTICES**

AvMA will assess our strategies, policies and practices to ensure that they promote and support the delivery of equality of opportunity with regard to all protected characteristics. Specifically:

- Each new policy or consultation response will consider implications for equality, inclusion and diversity
- Our strategic plan and annual plans will include consideration of how this strategy is being facilitated within each department
- All relevant policies, functions and strategies will be subject to equality screening and where relevant a full Equality Impact Assessment.

#### 4) EQUALITY, INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

Accompanying this strategy will be an *Action Plan*. The Action Plan will incorporate our priorities for action, highlighted by Trustees, staff, volunteers and clients. The *Action Plan* will include key activities AvMA plans to undertake over the next three years in order to implement this strategy successfully and ensure compliance with relevant legislation.

Where appropriate, our action plan will include positive action to address inequalities or under representation of particular groups identified in any aspect of our operations and through diversity monitoring data.

#### 5) COLLECTING AND EVALUATING EQUALITIES INFORMATION

In order for us to determine whether our policies and services are achieving the aims of this strategy, we will ensure that we have access to up-to-date, comprehensive, quantitative and qualitative data. Areas covered will include access to our Helpline and Casework services; conferences; employment, AvMA panel, Lawyers Service, volunteering and trusteeship.

AvMA will endeavour to collect data across all relevant protected characteristics where possible. All data will be maintained in line with the data protection act. The information collected will be consistent with the statutory obligations of public sector bodies set out within the code of practice for single equality duty, as defined under the Equality Act 2010.

#### 6) TRAINING

AvMA is committed to providing fair access to training to enable staff and volunteers to develop their skills, effective work practices, areas of speciality and professional development, and also to providing training to enable successful delivery of this strategy.

By developing the potential of staff and volunteers, we believe we can achieve a more creative and productive organisation, which in turn will result in improved services to all our clients.

We recognize the importance of staff and volunteers and trustees having sound and consistent training in equalities legislation and in AvMA's Equality, Inclusion & Diversity Strategy and Action Plans so that they can perform in their roles to the best of their abilities and provide sensitive and appropriate services to all clients.

## 7) OPENNESS

AvMA seeks to be as open and transparent as possible, and believes this approach supports equality, inclusion and diversity. AvMA policies and reports will be available on our website and on request in alternative formats. Diversity monitoring data will be available on request.

## 8) RESPONSIBILITY FOR DELIVERING THIS STRATEGY

AvMA as an organisation will actively drive forward our equality, inclusion and diversity goals. Specifically:

### Managers

Managers will ensure that staff and volunteers are aware of their responsibilities and that departmental plans and arrangements are in place for staff to carry out their responsibilities under this strategy and action plans

### All staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers are expected to actively contribute to and comply with the equality and inclusion goals of AvMA and will receive appropriate training where required

## GOVERNANCE & MONITORING THE STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

The Trustees will oversee governance of AvMA's Equality, Inclusion & Diversity Strategy and Action Plans. An annual review on the progress of this Strategy and our Action Plans will be conducted, which will draw on equalities monitoring information; complaints and other feedback received.

## COMPLAINTS

AvMA sees all feedback, including complaints as important indicators of client, staff and volunteer satisfaction and as a means of identifying any possible discrimination and ensuring continuing improvements in the way AvMA delivers services. We will respond to any complaints we receive promptly, effectively and fairly and identify issues relevant to this policy for any possible remedial action and for monitoring and review purposes.

## APPENDIX 1 - EQUALITY & INCLUSION STRATEGY - ACTION PLAN TARGETS

### DRAFT EQUALITY, INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2011-2012

ACTION	LEAD PERSON(S)	TARGET FOR COMPLETION	COMMENTS
Ensure access to AvMA office and meetings for all.	PW	December 2011	<p>Seeking to buy accessible office building.</p> <p>All meeting venues are assessed for accessibility. Only buildings fully accessible for disabled people are hired.</p>
<p>Ensure access to AvMA services/ Review online and written information</p>	LP/HW	December 2011	All literature and website site resources are produced in a form or can be provided in a way that includes all.

Priority to be given to the review of Advice and Information Services			Will obtain feedback from clients on usefulness of our literature.  To consider a rolling programme of establishing contact with other organisations especially black and ethnic minority organisations working with specific communities.
Review monitoring information collected by Advice & Information, Conferences, Lawyers Service and n recruitment. Bring in line with equality strands and implement workable and relevant methods of data collection	HW with Department Managers	April 1 <sup>st</sup> 2011	Biggest challenge for A&I. Agreed not to ask monitoring questions to helpline callers over the phone but to send callers a written questionnaire.
Analysis of Monitoring Data	Department Managers:  LP  EM	A&I: October 2011 + six monthly review.  Conferences: each conference review	Data will be provided to Trustees every six months.

	CH	Lawyers Service: October 2011 + six monthly	
	CB	Recruitment: after each recruitment exercise and annual	

Agree protocol on use of recruitment agencies	HW/Management Team	May 2011	Some groups of staff are more readily recruited through agencies rather than newspaper/journal ads. We need to be sure that they are not discriminating.
Commence undertaking equality impact assessment of each new policy agreed or reviewed and consultation responses.	Trustees/Author of policy or document	Starting April 2011 meeting	Trustees will review all policies to assess whether any need a more urgent review

<p>Arrange training for staff, volunteers and trustees on equalities/inclusion and AvMA's strategy and policy.</p>	<p>PW</p>	<p>October 2011</p>	<p>To consider whether long term strategy should include training somebody in-house to deliver equalities training for other staff and for volunteers and trustees.</p>
<p>Review of Action Plan</p>	<p>Trustees</p>	<p>Each Council meeting.  Annual Review April 2012.</p>	

