



EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

About this policy

We're committed to being an equitable, diverse and inclusive organisation.

This means:

- being fair, impartial and providing equal opportunities
- recognising, respecting and celebrating our differences
- creating an environment where everyone feels welcomed and valued.

This policy helps us put this commitment into practice. It sets out:

- definitions for key terms used throughout the policy
- the law on equity, diversity and inclusion
- our commitment to prospective and current volunteers and employees
- your responsibilities as a volunteer or employee
- how we work with service users, suppliers and others
- how we monitor and review this policy.

We're also committed to ensuring our organisation is free of harassment and bullying and that everyone's treated with dignity and respect.

Definitions

Protected characteristics

A **protected characteristic** is a human characteristic that's safeguarded against discrimination by law. There are nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act:

- age
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or on maternity leave
- disability
- gender reassignment
- race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin)
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

Types of unlawful discrimination

- **Direct discrimination** is where someone's treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic. Direct discrimination may be lawful when a particular protected characteristic is essential for a role (when it's an occupational requirement). For example, a refuge for women who have experienced domestic violence might advertise for female support workers.
- **Indirect discrimination** means putting in place a rule, policy, or way of doing things that has a worse impact on someone with a protected characteristic than someone without one (and this can't be objectively justified).
- **Harassment** is where someone receives unwanted behaviour related to a protected characteristic that violates their dignity or creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. This counts as

harassment regardless of whether the person responsible intended harm.

- **Sexual harassment** is where someone receives unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature. Employers have a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of employees within the workplace.
- **Associative discrimination** is where someone experiences discrimination because of their association with someone who has a protected characteristic (for example, the parent of a disabled child).
- **Perceptive discrimination** is where someone experiences discrimination because they're perceived to have a protected characteristic.
- **Third-party harassment** is where an employee is harassed by someone who comes into contact with their organisation, due to a protected characteristic. Some examples of third parties include service users, suppliers and staff from partner organisations.
- **Victimisation** is where someone's treated less favourably because they've taken action relating to the Equality Act or are suspected of doing so. For example, they may have supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Act. Employees aren't protected from victimisation if they act maliciously or make or support a false complaint in bad faith.
- **Failure to make reasonable adjustments** is where an organisation fails to remove or reduce the barriers someone faces at work because of a protected characteristic. Under the Equality Act, workplaces are legally required to make reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities. It's best practice to provide similar support for people with other

protected characteristics too. Examples include introducing gender neutral toilets and allowing staff to take time to pray during the working day.

Reasonable adjustments

A reasonable adjustment is a change to remove or reduce the effect of:

- an employee's disability so they can do their job
- a job applicant's disability when applying for a job.

What's deemed 'reasonable' will depend on the circumstances of each case.

Examples of reasonable adjustments include:

- making changes to someone's physical working environment
- changing the ways things are done
- providing an employee or job applicant with extra equipment or assistance.

When deciding whether an adjustment is reasonable, we'll consider:

- how effective the change will be in reducing the disadvantage the employee would otherwise experience
- its practicality
- the cost
- our resources and size
- the availability of financial support.

As far as possible, we'll aim to remove or reduce any substantial disadvantage a disabled employee or job applicant faces, which would not be faced by a non-disabled person.

The law on equity, diversity and inclusion

It's unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly during recruitment or employment because of a protected characteristic.

Discrimination after employment can also be unlawful. For example, it's unlawful to refuse someone a reference for a reason linked to a protected characteristic.

It's also unlawful to discriminate against or harass a volunteer, member of the public or service user when providing services or goods, or to fail to make reasonable adjustments.

Our commitment to prospective and current employees

We will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment, including:

- recruitment
- promotion
- opportunities for training
- pay and benefits
- discipline
- selection for redundancy.

As part of this commitment, we'll avoid including unnecessary requirements (anything unrelated to effective performance) in our person specifications.

We aim to attract applicants with the knowledge, skills and experience required for the job, irrespective of their background. Having a diverse team helps us better understand the needs of our diverse range of stakeholders.

Because of this, we may take 'positive action' (appropriate steps to improve the diversity among our volunteers or staff). We'll also take steps to anonymise applications before shortlisting.

We'll base decisions on objective criteria. And we'll make reasonable adjustments in recruitment as well as in day-to-day employment.

We'll provide information and guidance to staff involved in recruitment or other roles where equal opportunities issues are likely to arise. We're committed to helping people in these roles understand their responsibilities and avoid the risk of discrimination.

Your responsibilities as a volunteer or employee

All staff and volunteers are responsible for supporting our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion. If you see or experience something you disagree with at work, please let your manager or a trustee know.

Reporting discrimination

If you believe you've been discriminated against, you should report this to your line manager or the chair of trustees.

If you witness something you think is discrimination you should report it to your line manager or the chair of trustees as soon as possible.

We take every complaint seriously. You won't be penalised for reporting a concern unless it's false and made in bad faith.

Service users, suppliers and others

We will not discriminate unlawfully against service users using or seeking to use our services.

If you're bullied or harassed by a service user, supplier, contractor, visitor or others, or if you witness someone else being bullied or harassed, you should report this to your manager or a trustee. They will take appropriate action.

Monitoring and reviewing this policy

We'll monitor this policy periodically and update it if the law changes.

Policy: Equity, diversity and inclusion

Date issued: 28/03/2025

We'll use any information job applicants and employees provide for monitoring purposes only for these purposes and handle it in line with data protection legislation.

Approved by (signature)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JHarris', written over a faint rectangular box.

Approved by (Name & Role)

Jacqueline Harris

Chair of Board of Trustees, Friends of Berrycroft

Date : 08/04/2025