

Bridge the Gap – Families in Need

Equality and Diversity Policy

May 2020

1. Policy Statement

Bridge the Gap – Families in Need (“Bridge the Gap”) is committed to achieving an inclusive environment which provides equality of opportunity and freedom from unlawful discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, pregnancy and maternity, marital or civil partnership status, gender reassignment, disability, religion or beliefs, age or sexual orientation. This Policy aims to remove unfair and discriminatory practices within Bridge the Gap and to encourage full contribution from its diverse community. Bridge the Gap is committed to actively opposing all forms of discrimination.

Our Equality and Diversity Policy sets out our commitment to creating an inclusive environment for everyone who works within and accesses our organisation and services. We are committed to encouraging equality and diversity among our wider workforce and eliminating unlawful discrimination.

Recognising, embracing and valuing difference leads to improvements for all, including: a more vibrant staff and volunteer population; a better working and volunteering environment; and the ability to attract and retain the very best people.

We are fully committed to compliance with all relevant equality legislation, (including the Equality Act 2010, codes of practice and best practice guidance) and this policy builds on the statutory position to ensure effective policies and practice that promote equality and inclusion.

2. Principles

- We have a culture in which everyone is treated with respect, valued and rewarded for what they contribute, with zero tolerance of unfair discrimination at every level.
- We always take any discrimination / sexual harassment complaints seriously, respond sensitively and quickly and, if proven, ensure that the action taken is prompt and effective.
- Staff recruitment is openly advertised, using communication channels and language that will both reach and engage under-represented groups.
- Our volunteer recruitment uses messaging and advertising methods appropriate to

our target audience, including under-represented groups.

3. How we will do this

We are committed to providing equality of opportunity for all, irrespective of:

- age
- caring responsibilities
- disability
- economic hardship / poverty
- gender reassignment
- marriage or civil partnership status
- pregnancy or maternity
- race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

We will pro-actively tackle discrimination or disadvantage and aim to ensure that no individual or group is directly or indirectly discriminated against for any reason regarding employment, volunteering or accessing our services.

We will ensure we do not discriminate against you on any of the above grounds when we recruit you (job applicants, staff and volunteers), when we promote internally, when we allocate training, when we appraise you; or when we make any other decisions about your volunteering with us.

We will:

- ensure that all staff, volunteers and trustees are aware of the duty on them to treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and to never discriminate against or harass anyone associated with Bridge the Gap in any capacity
- take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, volunteers, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of Bridge the Gap's work activities.

We all have a personal responsibility to:

- read and understand this policy and act in a manner that is consistent with our values and behaviours at all times
- complete mandatory equality and diversity learning when starting working / volunteering with us as well as completing refresher training on a periodic basis
- report any instances of behaviour that is contrary to this policy to our own manager or another manager we feel comfortable with
- understand there could be legal implications for us personally (as well as for Bridge the Gap), and that we could be held criminally liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination against anyone associated with Bridge the Gap
- understand that our responsibility extends to social events and contact with colleagues outside of the workplace if they are considered to fall within the course of employment, volunteering or other connection to Bridge the Gap.

4. Who this policy is applicable to

This policy is applicable to all employees, agency staff, casual workers, contractors, volunteers, job applicants and trustees (as applicable).

5. Definitions

Equality can be described as breaking down barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity and access for all groups both in employment, and to goods and services; the basis of which is supported and protected by legislation.

Diversity is defined as celebrating differences and valuing everyone. Each person is an individual with visible and non-visible differences and by respecting this everyone can feel valued for their contributions which is beneficial not only for the individual but for the wider organisation.

Direct discrimination occurs where a person is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics set out above. For example, rejecting an applicant on the grounds of their race because they would not "fit in" would be direct discrimination.

Indirect discrimination occurs where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice is applied equally to all groups of people but puts a particular group sharing a protected characteristic at a disadvantage when compared with other people. For example, a requirement to work full time may put women at a disadvantage because they generally have more childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement would need to be objectively justified.

Discrimination by association is a type of direct discrimination. It occurs where a person is treated less favourably because they associate with someone who possesses a protected characteristic.

Perception discrimination is also a form of direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic. If you discriminate against people because you think they are transgender or LGBTQ, for example, then they will be protected even if they do not have these protected characteristics.

Harassment can be described as unwanted behaviour, including for example emails, remarks or gestures, which are intended or have the effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person. This can be related to gender, sexuality, race, religion or other “protected characteristics” and it includes but is not limited to sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment may be both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in the case of allegations of sexual assault. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 — which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic — is a criminal offence.

Victimisation broadly refers to derogatory treatment directed towards someone who has made or is believed to have made or supported a colleague's complaint under the Equality Act. It can also include situations where a complaint hasn't yet been made but someone is victimised or treated unfairly because it's suspected they might make one.

6. Monitoring

We monitor the diversity of our workforce measuring and reviewing information such as age, disability, ethnic background, gender, religion or belief and sexual orientation in encouraging equality and diversity, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in this policy.

7. Breaches of this policy

Whilst the aim of the policy is prevention, if you believe you have been the subject of discrimination, harassment or victimisation you are encouraged to report it.

Any such proven breaches of policy will be regarded as misconduct except for serious offences such as discrimination on protected characteristic grounds; serious offences including harassment, bullying, or victimization, which will be treated as gross misconduct and may lead to disciplinary action including dismissal from your employment or volunteering without notice.

8. Exceptions to this Policy

Discrimination by or against a member of staff, agency staff, contractors, casual workers, volunteers, job applicants and trustees is generally prohibited unless there is a specific legal exemption.

There are certain circumstances when organisations might be within their legal rights to treat an individual less favourably and where these instances will not be counted as discrimination.

For advice about whether such exceptions are applicable you should contact your manager / supervisor.

9. Advice and Support on Discrimination

Staff and volunteers may contact their staff or trade union representative if access to such an individual is possible.

Other contacts include:

Equality and Human Rights Commission

London

Fleetbank House

2-6 Salisbury Square

London

EC4Y 8JX

Helpline Telephone Number:

Phone: 0808 800 0082

Textphone: 0808 800 0084

Website: www.equalityhumanrights.com

Citizens Advice Bureau

3rd Floor North

200 Aldersgate Street

London

EC1A 4HD

Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Community Legal Services Direct

Telephone: 0845 345 4 345

Website: www.clsdirect.uk

10. The Extent of the Policy

10.1 Bridge the Gap seeks to apply this Policy in the recruitment, selection, training, appraisal, development and promotion of all staff and volunteers. Bridge the Gap offers services in a fashion that complies with the spirit of this Policy.

10.2 This Policy does not form a part of any employment contract with any employee and its contents are not to be regarded by any person as implied, collateral or express terms to any contract made with Bridge the Gap.

10.3 Bridge the Gap reserves the right to amend and update this Policy at any time.

This policy has been approved & authorised by:

Name: Melissa Francis

Position: Lead Coordinator

Date: 16th May 2020

Signature:

Staff Signature: