



Brighton and Hove Speak Out

Policy: Equality and Diversity Policy

Agreed by Governance Board: Oct 25th 2021

Staff Annual Review: Oct 2022

Next Board review: Oct 2024

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to provide equality and diversity at Brighton and Hove Speak Out to all in employment and services. We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination.

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1. Policy Statement

Equality

Equality means ensuring every individual has equal opportunities. By being conscious of, and actively challenging bias or prejudice, we make sure no-one is treated less favourably because of who they are or what makes them different from other people. This requires a proactive approach to make reasonable adjustments that address the visible and invisible barriers people face.

Diversity

Diversity means having differences within an organisation or setting. Diversity recognises we are all different in many ways. People with differing identities, backgrounds and experiences should all have equitable access to resources, decision-making and opportunities.

Brighton and Hove Speak Out is committed to providing both a working environment and advocacy services where employees, volunteers, and beneficiaries of our services can realise their full potential and contribute positively irrespective of their sex, gender, sexuality, marital status, civil partnership, parent status, pregnancy, race, disability, age, religion, or political belief. We are committed to providing a harmonious environment that respects, values, and celebrates each other's differences, that promotes dignity, equality and diversity, and that encourages individuals to develop and maximise their true potential.

We aim to remove any barriers, bias or discrimination that prevent individuals or groups from realising their potential and contributing fully to our organisation's performance and to develop an organisational culture that positively values diversity.

We are committed wherever practicable, to achieving and maintaining a workforce and a Board that broadly reflects the local community in which we operate.

This will be achieved by (although this is not an exhaustive list) by:

➤ Gender

All genders are fully and properly represented and supported at all levels of B&H Speak Out through:

- Challenging gender stereotypes
- Supporting employees in balancing their life at work and at home
- Supporting employees who become pregnant and taking active steps to facilitate their return to work after parental leave.

➤ **Transgender Status**

People who plan to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone gender reassignment are protected against all forms of discrimination and harassment.

B&H Speak Out will take positive steps to:

- Support a transgender person working, volunteering or using Speak Out services and ensure they are treated with dignity and respect
- Challenge stereotypes and discrimination

➤ **Marital Status**

People are treated fairly and equally in the workplace irrespective of their marital, civil partnership or family status.

➤ **Race**

The racial and cultural diversity of our communities is represented at all levels of B&H Speak Out Up through:

- Understanding, respecting and valuing different racial / cultural backgrounds and perspectives
- Challenging racial stereotypes
- Recognising the value of differences in the workforce

➤ **Disability**

The abilities of people with a disability are recognised and valued at all levels of B&H Speak Out through:

- Focusing on what people can do rather than on what they cannot
- Challenging stereotypes about disabled people
- Making appropriate adjustments in the workplace to help disabled people achieve their full career potential.
- Recognising the value of differences in the workforce

This will be achieved through consultation with the employee to ascertain what extra support they might need in order to do their job, e.g. additional practical or technical support.

➤ **Age**

Age diversity within the workforce is promoted and valued through:

- Recognising the value of differences in the workforce
- Challenging age stereotyping

➤ **Religious Belief and Political Opinion**

People are treated fairly in the workplace irrespective of their religious beliefs and practices or political opinions by recognising individuals' freedom of belief and right to protection from intolerance and persecution.

➤ **HIV**

Discrimination against an employee, or potential employee, on grounds that he or she has, or is thought to have, HIV or AIDS is not acceptable, and confidentiality will be respected in line with the wishes of an individual with HIV or AIDS.

➤ **Sexuality**

People are treated fairly in the workplace irrespective of their sexuality through:

- Respecting different lifestyles
- Challenging negative stereotypical views.

2. General Application of Policy

We all have a responsibility to embrace and support this vision and must continue to challenge behaviour and attitudes that prevent us from achieving this. Using fair, objective and innovative employment practices, our aim is to ensure that:

- All employees and potential employees and volunteers are treated fairly and with respect at all stages of their employment.
- All employees and volunteers have the right to be free from harassment and bullying of any description, or any other form of unwanted behaviour, whether based on sex, trans-gender status, marital status, civil partnership status, pregnancy, race, disability, age, political or religious belief or sexuality.
- All employees and volunteers have an equal chance to contribute and to achieve their potential, irrespective of any defining feature that may give rise to unfair discrimination. Specifically, B&H Speak Out aims to ensure that no employee or job applicant is discriminated against, either directly or indirectly. This commitment applies to all the aspects of employment outlined below.

A copy of this policy will be made available for all board members/ trustees, employees, volunteers and made known to all applicants for employment. Accessible summary information about the policy will be available for service users. Breaches of the policy will lead to disciplinary proceedings and, if appropriate, disciplinary action (see below).

The policy will be implemented in accordance with the appropriate statutory requirements and full account and consideration will be taken of all available guidance and in particular any relevant codes of practice which support best practice.

3. Recruitment and Selection

The recruitment and selection process is crucially important to any Equality and Diversity policy. B&H Speak Out will endeavour through appropriate training to ensure that employees making selection and recruitment decisions will not discriminate, whether consciously or unconsciously. These principles also apply to any process adopted for selection of redundancy.

We will have a clear and transparent competency-based system for defining job roles (see Staff and Volunteer Recruitment policy). All job descriptions and person specifications will be in line with, and support, our Equal and Diversity policy and job requirements will be reflected accurately.

Anyone who considers that they have been discriminated against in the recruitment and selection process will have the right of appeal to the B & H Speak Out Governance Board.

We will make reasonable adjustments to the various stages of the recruitment and selection process as well as within employment as needed. B&H Speak Out will support applications from new employees, and existing employees if needed, to Access to Work to enable them to fulfil the duties on their role.

4. Terms and Conditions of Employment (Staff handbook)

B&H Speak Out will ensure that terms and conditions of employment and access to employment related benefits and facilities will not discriminate. The Governance board will review and develop the conditions of service in the staff handbook regularly, according to agreed policy review schedule, to ensure that they are not discriminatory.

It is a condition of service that all Governance Board members, staff and volunteers adhere to the Equality, Diversity Policy. Failure to do so may result in measures being taken in line with Speak Out's Disciplinary procedures or Volunteer Policy.

5. Employee's Responsibilities

Co-operation between staff and Management is essential to a successful Equal and Diversity Policy. Staff will be consulted on the policy and its implementation when it is reviewed every 3 years.

Employees will:

- Not discriminate against colleagues, volunteers or services users.
- Abide by B&H Speak Out's Diversity Policy Statement.
- Challenge and/or report racism and discrimination from all other staff, volunteers and service users and provide an account of any incidents.
- Attend diversity training, disability equality and other equal opportunities training as and when required.
- Work to identify ways in which this policy can be made increasingly effective and to identify areas of service delivery based on need.
- Participate in monitoring of service delivery and implementing the organisation's annual Equalities Action plan.

6. Training

B&H Speak Out acknowledges the importance of diversity training as a key factor in the implementation of an effective Equality and Diversity Policy. Training on Equality and Diversity must be integrated into all training concerned with selection skills, staff assessment, coaching, staff development and the management or supervision and appraisal of staff. Provision will be made for staff and Governance Board members to receive equality and diversity training through local training networks. B&H Speak Out's Equality and Diversity policy will form part of the induction training for all staff, volunteers, and trustees/board members.

Managers will support staff through supervision to consider equalities issues in the course of their day-to-day work, including access to services, information and events. Ongoing training needs will be identified through supervision and staff

appraisals. Support mechanisms, including supervision, are in place to help staff, Governance Board members and volunteers to confront prejudice if or when it arises in work situations.

Promotion

It is in B&H Speak Out's interest to provide equal opportunities for promotion and career development to all employees. Managers must continually assess the promotion potential of all employees and all promotion decisions must be made in accordance with objective selection criteria.

7. Grievance, Discipline and Complaints

Employees or volunteers who believe that they have experienced unfair or unlawful discrimination, or racist or sexist abuse or harassment should raise their concern through the grievance procedure. Where such grievances may concern the normal line of supervision or management, individuals may approach a more senior manager.

Breaches of B&H Speak Out's Equal and Diversity policy and procedures, and any unfair or unlawful discrimination, will not be tolerated and will be dealt with under Speak Out's Disciplinary procedures or Volunteer Policy. In serious cases, this could lead to dismissal of the relevant individual. Employees, volunteers, or beneficiaries who witness any discrimination, racist or sexist abuse, harassment, or bullying against an employee, volunteer, or beneficiary, can use B&H Speak Out's Whistleblowing policy and procedure to report any such incident.

Any issues or complaints relating to equality or diversity will be addressed in a timely fashion following the above processes or in line with B&H Speak Out's complaints procedure, as appropriate. Speak Out's Governance Board (via the Operations subgroup) will be notified of any formal complaints, grievances or disciplinary action.

8. Service Provision

As an Organisation serving the learning-disabled community, B&H Speak Out's overall aim is to further the human rights of people with learning disabilities and work within the ethos of the social model of disability. B&H Speak Out therefore strives to ensure that its services, events, buildings, community venues, information provision and staff and volunteer support are accessible and welcoming to all.

Fair access to our services is supported by widely publicising our services and ensuring that appropriate accessible information is available for communities of interest. Outreach is targeted to promote the service to harder to reach groups.

Referral protocols set out clearly the process by which referrals will be prioritised (see B&H Speak Out's Referral and Prioritisation Policy).

Our services are fully accessible through one-to-one visits, group meetings and activities that take place in our fully accessible meeting room or in accessible community venues. We ensure that all our information, letter and email communication is available in a variety of formats e.g. larger print or easy read summaries where appropriate.

Where relevant an interpreter, for those whom English is not their first language, or for hearing impaired clients, can be arranged with notice. Accessible, picture supported directions to our offices/ venues are available on request.

As part of our service offer B&H Speak Out provides easy read services and training to organisations that want support to improve accessibility of their information for people with learning disabilities.

9. Support for Volunteers

B&H Speak Out will endeavour to offer individual flexible support to our volunteers to enable them to be part of the organisation and fulfil the duties of their allocated role. If a volunteer needs specific support to carry out their duties, he/she will be supported through supervision and/or mentoring until they feel comfortable and appropriate access support is in place.

Volunteers will be allocated their preferred role where there are vacancies and, if appropriate, they have the necessary skills, and if all access needs can be met. If this is not possible, they will be allocated another role within the organisation or signposted to another organisation. Support is offered by the Volunteer Co-ordinator through supervision to ensure the placement is appropriate and accessible.

10. Service User Involvement

B&H Speak Out is committed to involving service users throughout the organisation; as Governance Board members and as paid employees, sessional workers, volunteers, as well as on project steering groups.

Appropriate support will be provided for services users in these roles which may include:

- Mentoring from a volunteer or another Board Member

- Information, agendas, meetings, notes etc to be in an accessible format. Other documents to have an accessible summary as necessary and support to prepare for meetings and debrief afterwards
- Meetings will be made accessible (including Governance Board and steering group meetings and staff meetings when necessary) – See Speak Out’s full guidelines for making information and meetings accessible.

11. Monitoring and Evaluation

Speak Out recognises that acceptance of an Equality and Diversity Policy is not an end in itself. It is the effective implementation and development of the policy that matters. This cannot be achieved without monitoring.

Speak Out, through the Governance Board, Managers and other staff is responsible for carrying out monitoring and evaluation of all functions of the organisation including employment and service delivery.

The objectives of monitoring are:

- To identify areas of, and reasons for under-representation of particular groups in the workforce and amongst Trustees, volunteers and services users;
- To assess the effect of employment procedures and practices and identify any unintentional impact on particular groups.
- To enable appropriate corrective action to take place, including defining targets for future change.
- To enable the Organisation to review and reshape its Equality and Diversity Policy and programme of action.

In order to monitor effectively it is necessary to use data provided by employees, volunteers and service users for measuring the effectiveness of the Organisation’s Equality and Diversity Policy. Speak Out uses equalities monitoring forms agreed in line with partnership arrangements (see appendix 1). An accessible version will be used with services users.

An explanation of how Speak Out will use the data and information received from employees, volunteers and service users, and how long it will retain the information will be explained in a privacy notice issued to all parties. This is now be required under changes in the data protection regulations which came into force from May 2018. Please see B&H Speak Out’s Data Protection Policy for further information and related documents.

12. Developing Good Practice - Equality and Diversity Report and Action Plan

Equalities data will be analysed regularly (in line with funder requirements). An annual Equalities Report and Action Plan will be prepared by the Speak Out's senior staff team and presented to the Operations sub group of the Governance board for approval. This will set a plan, including steps needed to address any underrepresentation of equalities groups amongst staff volunteers, trustees and service users within the organisation.

The Operations sub-group will oversee any issue that arise in relation to this Equality, Diversity policy, including any complaints or grievance issues. Managers will work with staff, Trustees and any other parties involved to ensure that any issues are resolved effectively and in a timely fashion.

13. Positive Action

Under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 it is allowable to use positive action specifically in the process of recruitment and promotion. This means that employers can discriminate in favour of a minority candidate who is as qualified as another candidate for a role in order to redress issues of under representation. Positive Action is a legal term, which refers to a number of methods designed to counteract the effects of past discrimination and to help abolish stereotyping. Action can be taken to encourage people from particular groups to take advantage of opportunities for work and training. This can be done when underrepresentation of particular groups has been identified in the previous 12 months.

Positive Action is often confused with Positive Discrimination. In recruitment terms, Positive Discrimination would generally mean employing someone because they come from a traditionally disadvantaged group irrespective of whether they have the relevant skills and qualifications. This is unlawful and is not supported by B&H Speak Out. Positive Action is not about giving more favourable treatment to particular groups in the recruitment process. Selection for recruitment must be based solely on merit. It is important to note that Positive Action is not a legal requirement for employers but does provide a means to embrace equality in the workplace.



Speak Out Equalities Monitoring Form 2021

Please use this form to help us gather equalities information about our services. You are not obliged to fill this in, but it helps us to ensure that our services are open to everyone in the city and that we treat people fairly and appropriately.

Please tick or circle the following. This information will be stored confidentially and securely on our database. It is collated anonymously and used in monitoring reports for funders and for us to review which groups in the city are involved in our organisation. We will only use it to make our services better.

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Your name: | | |
| What age are you? | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say | |
| What gender are you? | <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Other – please state <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say | |
| Do you identify as the gender you were assigned at birth? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say | |
| How would you describe your ethnic origin? | | |
| White <input type="checkbox"/> English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British <input type="checkbox"/> Irish <input type="checkbox"/> Gypsy <input type="checkbox"/> Traveller <input type="checkbox"/> Polish <input type="checkbox"/> Portuguese <input type="checkbox"/> Sudanese <input type="checkbox"/> Any other White background (please give details) Other Ethnic Group <input type="checkbox"/> Turkish <input type="checkbox"/> Arab <input type="checkbox"/> Japanese <input type="checkbox"/> Any other ethnic group (please give details) <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say | Black or Black British <input type="checkbox"/> African <input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean <input type="checkbox"/> Sudanese <input type="checkbox"/> Any other Black background (please give details) Mixed <input type="checkbox"/> Asian & White <input type="checkbox"/> Asian & Black <input type="checkbox"/> Asian & Black Caribbean <input type="checkbox"/> Black African & White <input type="checkbox"/> Black Caribbean & White <input type="checkbox"/> Any other mixed background (please give details) | Asian or Asian British <input type="checkbox"/> Bangladeshi <input type="checkbox"/> Indian <input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese <input type="checkbox"/> Any other Asian background (please give details) After you have ticked a box: If there is an ethnic category that is not included here that you think should be, please tell us what it is: |

Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

- ☐ Heterosexual/ Straight
☐ Lesbian/ Gay woman
☐ Gay man
☐ Bisexual
☐ Other (please state)
☐ Prefer not to say

What is your religion or belief?

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have no particular religion <input type="checkbox"/> Buddhist <input type="checkbox"/> Christian <input type="checkbox"/> Hindu <input type="checkbox"/> Jain <input type="checkbox"/> Jewish <input type="checkbox"/> Muslim | <input type="checkbox"/> Pagan <input type="checkbox"/> Sikh <input type="checkbox"/> Agnostic <input type="checkbox"/> Atheist <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other philosophical belief (please state) <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
|--|--|---|

Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

- ☐ Yes a little
☐ Yes a lot
☐ No (Do not answer the next question)
☐ Prefer not to say (Do not answer the next question)

If you answered 'yes', please state the type of impairment. If you have more than one please indicate all that apply. If none apply, please mark 'other' and write an answer in.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Impairment <input type="checkbox"/> Sensory Impairment <input type="checkbox"/> Learning Disability/Difficulty <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state) | <input type="checkbox"/> Long-standing Illness <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Condition <input type="checkbox"/> Developmental Condition |
|---|---|

Are you a carer?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say

If yes, do you care for a.....?

- ☐ Parent
☐ Child with special needs
☐ Other family member
☐ Partner / spouse
☐ Friend
☐ Other (please give details)

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <p>Are you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently serving in the UK Armed Forces? • A veteran/ex-serviceman or woman of the UK Armed Forces? • A member of a serviceman or woman's immediate family? • A reservist or in part time service (eg: Territorial Army)? | <table> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> No</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> No</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> No</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> No</td> </tr> </table> | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
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